Allegories of Imperialism: Barbarians and World Cultures

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Originating from the Latin word *imperium*, the concept and practice of imperialism, like that of empire, is a bio-political production (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 2001: 29) that refers to the "polity of extending a country's power and influence through colonization, use of military force, or other means" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1998: 877). Although since the 18th century, European expansion has been at the center of debates on imperialism and colonialism, the imposition of foreign control over other territories is a practice that has always existed. The prototype of imperialism can be referred back to the Roman Empire, which set up *coloniae* in many areas, of the conquests of Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire, the Persian and the Egyptian Empires, the Aztec the Incan Empires, and many others all over the world. Geographical extension, dynamics of rule, as well as exploitation, and even extermination of certain groups, are among the hegemonic and coercive socio-political structures put forth by empires within their conquered territories. In the case of the Romans, for instance, they established tribute systems, degraded heterogeneous groups to the condition of the slaves, and sent military forces to cripple and humiliate those beyond their borders, regulating their rights "with the most scrupulous exactness," and showing "neither mercy nor justice for foreigners" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 38).

All empires were characterized by the reinforcement of internal rule, the development of highly centralized cultures, and the control over the borders. In all the cases, the empires tried to integrate their neighboring cultures into their own orbits of dominance. An important factor was to

put in motion cultural politics that emphasized the superiority of the conquering nation, perverted the traits of the colonized, and used certain forms of naming to degrade the status of the Others. In naming, demonization rather than valorization was a common practice. This was achieved by means of discursive tropes such as the term "barbarian," borrowed from Greek and originally signifying the heterogeneous quality of those who could not speak that language. The term "furor barbaricus" came to signify the uncivilized and untamed nature of populations that threatened the realm of civilization, such as Scythians, Celts, Germans, Vikings, Huns and other tribes beyond the Greco-Roman Empire. This is seen, for instance, in the rhetoric of naming and the description of barbarians as described by Roman historians and writers such as Publius Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 56 – after 117) and Diodorus Siculus (90–30 BC), among others. Tacitus classifies the *barbarus* according to the regions they inhabit, and his descriptions of barbaric behavior are tinted with moral assertions; as when he praises the Roman soldiers fighting with *gloria* while he uses the word *praeda*, meaning plundering and greediness, to describe the barbarians, including the Iceni, the Parthians, and the Gauls, among others, who are also seen as lacking of self-discipline (*Hist.* 4.78).

All empires went to great length in promoting cultural politics of difference and prerogative power, employing sophisticated mechanisms for defining and constructing the identities of barbarian aliens. Denigration, marginalization and obliteration are the core concept created by imperialists and oppressors (Simerka, 2003: 2-15). In the territories conquered by imperial powers worldwide, barbarian histories were wiped out, and similar politics to those displayed by the Roman Empire were adopted in East Asian, where civilizing politics involving neighboring countries were practiced by the Han and Tang dynasties of China. Like the Romans who subdued the nomads, the emperors of prosperous Chinese dynasties would use strategies of legitimation to "civilize" their barbarian neighbors and make them into their loyal subjects, allies or tributary states.

After the consolidation of nation states throughout the world and the gradual abandonment of forms of conquest, various other mechanisms of sophisticated political and cultural configurations to control and legitimize dominance have been put in motion, including globalized mechanisms for economic and technological supremacy.

The German economist and sociologist Andre Gunder Frank (1998) has argued that globalization began with the rise of trade links between Sumer and the Indus Valley civilization in the 3rd millennium B.C.E, when a series of urban centers sprung along the axis of Greek culture between India and Spain, including the ports of North Africa such as Alexandria. Covering the time span between 1600 and 1800, early forms of modern proto-globalization were introduced as trade and cultural exchanges intensified with the rise of maritime empires such as the Portuguese and he Spanish, as well as the chartered companies like the British East India Company (founded in 1600) and the Dutch East India Company (founded in 1602), with global hegemony located in Western Europe (Hopkins, 2003: 4-5). During the 19th century, industrialization consolidated grand-scaled production and significant advances in transportation, facilitating imperial expansion towards Africa and Asia. In the 20th century, World War I and II had a global impact, and subsequent forms of economic hegemony emerged in the following decades.

Since the 1970s, cheaper aviation and low cost flights have contributed to the competition of global markets, as well as the movement of peoples across world zones (Ritzer, 2011). In the 1990s, the growth of digital networks and online computer communication became a prominent feature in establishing global forms of interconnectedness, as well as enhancing the digital gap between rich and less developed countries (see Internet World Stats, 2014). Among the sociologists that have spoken about the impact of technological advance upon contemporary transnational identities and transcultural affiliations is Arjun Appadurai (1996), who has brought to the fore the differences across world zones. Although the term "transmigrant" has been used in order to highlight the difference between contemporary migrants and their ancestors (Schiller, Basch, Szanton-Blanc, 1995: 52), for some theorists such as Appadurai and Ulf Hannerz (1996), transnational studies continue to be built upon the continued significance of the national, since the concept of diaspora, whilst focusing on transnational processes, does so by deploying a version of ethnicity which continues to focus on the point of origin in constructing identity. Transnationalism focuses on diaspora and immigration studies in order to explore multidirectional socio-cultural networks, and reveals the uneven circuits of culture and capital in the process. Thus, these relations among patriarchies, colonialisms, racisms and other forms

of domination, bring to the fore "the asymmetries of the globalization process" (Grewal and Kaplan, 2001: 664).

Alongside cultural theorists, intellectuals and artists contribute to call attention to the tropes of colonization and postcolonization. Discourse devices such as "allegory," from Greek ἀλληγορία (*allegoria*) meaning veiled and figurative language (from both ἄλλος *allos* = another, different, and ἀγορεύω *agoreuo* = to speak in the assembly or ἀγορά *agora*) have been widely used to tell stories with hidden political meanings, alternative to the centralized grand narrative of history. Thus, Juan Luis Vives' (1493–1540) counter-epic texts can be seen as pioneer forms of anti-imperialist discourse within Spanish expansionism (Noreña, 1970: 16), and the same can be said of texts by writers from very varied locations, such as Georg Büchner, Derek Walcott, or Yun Lu Ke, among others.

In *Texts and Pretexts*, Aldous Huxley remarked that "Nations are to a very large extent invented by their poets and novelists," (Huxley, 1932: 50) an assertion that anticipated Benedict Anderson's seminal work on the impact of cultural imagination upon the creation of a national identity. Indeed, in their sustained attention to the social, cultural and political relationships, artists and audiences, writers and readers, reveal the unique characteristics of national and transnational relations in the use of certain tropes and character types that become emblematic (Corse, 1997: 3-4). Kwame Anthony Appiah also emphasizes the role of creative works in forging transnational connections and cosmopolitanism, asserting that

> conversations across boundaries of identity – whether national, religious, or something else – begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks to some place other than your own. (Appiah, 2006: 85; see also Grewal, 2005: 36)

This idea of transnationalism as an imaginative and creative practice has opened up interdisciplinary connections between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Peter Hitchcock has argued for the centrality of literary studies in the creation of a transnational imaginary, lamenting for a long time qualitative analysis was ignored, and explaining that "the marginalization of the literary or its reduction to sociological method seriously underestimates the value of the literary for knowledge" (2003: 9). Hitchcock adds that "the leading figures in postcolonial and diasporic culture include creative writers and not only anthropologists or sociolo-

gists," (Hitchcock, 2003: 9) and that literary texts not only serve as representations of transnational subjects and themes related to cross-border movements, networks, and affiliations. They become transnational connections in themselves.

Some papers included in this thematic issue of Cultura journal study the differences in race, language, and culture between the coloniser and the colonised that facilitate the intellectual construction and manipulation of the Other as inferior or less advanced, in preparation for totalizing political and economic exploitation, as demonstrated by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Thus, the distinction between resistance and subversion becomes important in this volume. In resistance, the regional and the local merely struggles to maintain the differential gap. Subversion involves the expansion and reduplication of the differences (mainly language and culture) in order to expose hybridity within the global and the fraud of metropolitan discourse as a form national unity. For this reason, some papers focus on unstable identities, hybridisation and deconstructive forms of mimicry, the appropriation of imperial patterns, and their distortion, thus exposing the destabilization of power relations and hegemonic discourse as Homi Bhabha indicated in *The Location of Culture*. The papers in the collection disturb the "ideological manoeuvres through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha, 1994: 213) by examining national counter-narratives that evoke and erase its totalising boundaries, and by taking the perspective of marginalised groups or the "subaltern," as argued by of Gayatri Spivak, in order to show how more or less subordinate communities might destabilize central power.

Looking at world cultures in a panoramic approach, this thematic issue of *Cultura* explores the rhetoric of imperialism and barbarism, its inversions, the hierarchies of knowledge, and the relations between colonizer and colonized, Eastern and Western, North and South, developed and underdeveloped, covering related topics such as ethnicity, minorities, multiculturalism, tolerance, xenophobia, and the varieties of detachment and belonging that emerge as peoples and cultures interact at local and global levels (Said, 1994: 21-39). Thus, the volume expands on the strategies developed for inverting imperial rhetoric in the first half of the 20th century, when Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago* (1929) used metaphors of primitivism and cannibalism in his assertion of Brazil's identity versus European postcolonial cultural domination. A few years

later, in 1955, Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* implicated Europe and labeled the colonizers "barbaric" and "morally diseased" for their colonial treatment. By equating racism, barbarism and colonialism, Césaire claimed colonization to be a form of dehumanization, and showed that the persecution of the Jews during World War II by the German Nazi Party's might be contemplated as a colonial strategy applied to Europe itself (Césaire, 2000: 36). In this vein, the volume contains many examples ranging from novels such as the 1980 *Waiting for the Barbarians*, by 2003 Nobel Prize J. M. Coetzee, to cinematographic examples.

The volume engages discussions across disciplines and world regions on the effects and experience of empire, establishing a dialogue between metropolitan cultural practices and inter-civilizational imperialism, including forms of transnational and intra-civilizational imperialism by examining forms of territorial annexation within the shifting borders of modern nation-states of independent regions and neighbouring territories, who might share similar ethnic, linguistic and cultural traits. Here, differences are not maintained but rather erased in assimilation. Regional variants, for instance, struggle to maintain their own forms of language and culture within the nation, but their resistance is not necessarily seen as "an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the *content* of another culture," (Bhabha, 158), since forms of resistance depend on striking cultural differences, that in the intra-civilizational sphere might be too small to be recognized.

The dispute between nationalism viewed as a form of imperialism (see Said's *Culture and Imperialism*) or, on the contrary, as a form of emancipation that creates solidarity among the previously oppressed, connects some papers in the volume with the topic of cosmopolitanism. Scholars working on cosmopolitanism, "as an area both within and beyond the nation (and yet falling short of *humanity*)" (Robbins, 2012: 12), are concerned with creating benevolent and hospitable modes of thought and action adequate for the modern globalized world, since collaboration and solidarity amid particular groups might not work in the benefit of all parties involved, and instead contribute to undermine trust at different levels (see also Appiah, 2006).

The first paper in the volume, "Sovereignty, Linguistic, Imperialism and the Quantification of Reality" by David Lea, discusses Giorgio Agamben's concept of the bio-political with regards to states of exception declared by sovereign authorities, thus moving beyond identitarian

politics and the distinctions of Western political and legal categories. Similarly, Adobo Kumbalonah's "The Invention of a Philosophy: Postcolonialism in the Context of Akan Proverbs" situates the debate on the philosophy of indigenous thought systems within the context of postcolonial theory and shows that postcolonialism is a replication of a preexisting indigenous Akan oral tradition of colonialism. Thus, the paper advocates that scholarship in postcolonial theory should be concerned with the oral-based philosophy of colonized (and/or formerly colonized) people in the same way as it is with their text-based thought systems. Antonia Peroikou brings to the fore this debate by exploring the figure of Friday, a speechless cannibal, who is Robinson Crusoe's slave and who allegedly had his tongue severed by slave-traders, in "Speaking (of) the Unspoken: Exploring the Mystery behind Friday's Severed Tongue in Coetzee's *Foe*".

Moving to South-Eastern Nigeria and trans-national identity in Africa, Temisanren Ebijuwa and Adeniyi Sulaiman Gbadegesing point out the lack of a sustainable culture of dialogue suitable for the mitigation of ethnic conflicts and explore indigenous mediation strategies within the Igbo community. Within fictional grounds, Shiuhhuah Serena Chou explores "Indigenous Knowledge, Spiritual Ecology, and the Emergence of Eco-cosmopolitanism" in James Cameron's movie *Avatar* (2009), in the work of North-American novelist Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985), comparing these works to Taiwanese writer Mingyi Wu's science fiction *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (*複眼人*, 2012). These texts illustrate how indigenous thinking has very often been transformed from place-bound, native cultural traditions to an embodiment of Euro-American transcultural eco-spirituality. In the context of terrorism, Stephen Joyce's paper "The Fearful Merging of Self and Other: Intra-civilizational and Inter-civilizational Colonial Cultures in Richard E. Kim's *Lost Names*" argues for a practices of beneficence in the struggle against fear. Joyce indicates that postcolonial theory is overwhelmingly dominated by cases of inter-civilizational imperialism, and that a new theoretical framework is needed to describe cases of intra-civilizational colonial encounters because the psychological conflicts of the intra-civilizational colonial sphere and their political ramifications function differently to those described in postcolonial theory. Drawing on Nobel Prize nominee Richard E. Kim's memoir of growing up in Korea during the Japanese Occupation from 1910-1945, this article explicates the pri-

mary differences between the two forms of imperialism and their impact on colonial subjects with reference to Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry. It argues that without a visible racial difference between coloniser and colonised, hybridity and mimicry are imperial strategies of assimilation rather than native strategies of resistance and that the growth of cultural nationalism is a logical response. Finally, it examines the difficulty of shifting from such nationalistic views to cosmopolitan modes of thinking within the time frame of transitions of political power.

Focusing on the topic of hybridization, Oxana Karnaukhova traces the roots of colonial history and Orientology in Russia, contemplating its relation to European development as well as with similar situations in other parts of the globe. Her review of intellectual discussions on the topic and of Russian Orientology in particular show that the complexity of Russian national identity can be traced back to contradictions within the process of European intellectual colonization, as well as to Russia's realization of the Orthodox civilizing mission in its own empire. The author proposes the expression 'secondary orientalism' to refer to the Russian situation.

Turning to the Caribbean, Mary Theis explores isolation as a form of postcolonial freedom in the plays of Aimée Césaire, Anne Hébert, Wajdi Mouawad and Azouz Begag and in francophone films by Raoul Peck, Bertrand Tavernier, Claire Denis, Rachid Bouchareb, Ousmane Sembène, Michael Haneke, and Mathieu Kasovitz. Michaela Keck focuses on "Culture-Crossing in Madison Smartt Bell's Haitian Trilogy and Neo-Captivity Narrative" to argue that captivity triggers culture-crossing in a reversed Hegelian master-slave dialectic.

Maximiliano Korstanje dedicate his paper to the topic of "Hospitality: the Case of Argentina" where he archives the bloody past of hospitality as an ideological field that facilitated conquest. The author studies *Viaje a caballo por las provincias Argentinas* [*Journey on horseback across the provinces of Argentine*] by William McCann, a British businessman who visited the country between 1947 and 1948, illuminating the diverse mechanisms of manipulating hospitality.

Looking at Central Asia and moving to intra-civilizational colonialism, Liudmila Baeva and Anna Romanova focus on the Caspian Sea Region in Southern Russia in order to explore the conceptual apparatus of frontier theory and its usefulness. Soon-ok Myong and Byong-soon Chun, high-

light how the Kazakhs, the indigenous ethnic group that emerged as the leading subject of society in the Republic of Kazakhstan after independence from the former Soviet Union, reclassify and remodel their self-culture in the new socio-political context by resuscitating the Islamic tradition, shrunk under colonial domination. Paradoxically, Kazakhstan territorial location, amid radical Islamist nations, has given way to fear of radical Islamism, causing the exclusion of certain groups such as Hijabed Muslim women. Continuing with ex-Soviet territories, Nurlykhan Aljanova and Karlygash Borbassova explore "Etiquette Rules and Intercultural Relations in Kazakh Society after Independence from the Soviet Union" within the complicated process of interethnic relations and hospitality.

The last papers of the collection explore the topic of imperialism in East Asia. Thus, Jinghua Guo argues for a "Multi-dimensional Model of Cross-Cultural Interpretation as an Anti-centralist Tool in World Literature Perspectives" in a desire to recover more positive approaches to the East/West dichotomy. The paper explores how Chinese folk culture is exported to the West in the form of movie adaptations and multiple opera versions of Shakespeare's plays in the East. Moving to the topic of Chinese and Japanese relations, Huiyong Wu explores Confucianism in relation to the topic of hospitality and the representation of Japanese imperialism in Chinese cultural products, particularly popular cinema. The paper illuminates Sino-Japanese relations in the context of Confucianism and collectivism, extending the argument to include the international community at large. Finally, Simon C. Estok engages with the topic of eco-criticism and cosmopolitanism revealing how global food monopolies destroy possibilities for national self-sufficiency, and exposes corporate neo-imperialism in seed patenting.

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