

A Fabulous Speck: Oriental Imaginaries of Macao as the Veiled Other in Post-WWII Western Cinema

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Abstract: Since the return of Macao to China in late 1999, the various narrations and geographies of the city of Macao over the centuries have been under intense debate within circles of social, political, economic and cultural critics. By making critical use of Edward Said's conception and critique of Orientalism, this paper examines how Macao, over the centuries of colonial rule since the settlement of the Portuguese in the territory in 1557, has become fabled for both its riches as the city of indulgence and for its sins as the wickedest city in the Far East. As a colonial settlement, Macao has been the focus of interchange between Europe and China throughout its history. There has indeed accumulated an extensive record of images, documents and narratives about Macao in Portuguese, Chinese, English and many other languages, with a strong presence, at different historical moments, of pirates, gamblers, gangsters, opium eaters, criminals, fugitives, triads, explorers, corrupt policemen and officials, romantic heroes and heroines, saints and sinners, artists, poets and writers. Making critical use of Edward Said's conception and critique of Orientalism, this paper specifically looks at how some Post-World War II films in the West (i.e. Portuguese, British, French, and American films) have imagined and re-constructed Macao as the Other, and at the complexities behind such fascinating but Eurocentric narratives about Macao.

Keywords: Macao, Oriental imaginaries, cinema, representations

1. "The Orient"

To understand the representations of Macao in Post-World War II Western cinema, we need to, first of all, understand the complexities of what has been called "the Orient" in dominant oral and written discourses in modern literary and cultural studies. "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences", (Edward Said 1995, p.1). "Orientalism" is a system of representations, thoughts or narratives invented/projected by the Europeans in the last two or three hundred years from the privileged vantage point to be imposed on the East and Eastern people. The purpose of this projection and imagination of the East as the Orient was, quite simply, to facilitate colonial expansion and imperial domination.

According to Said, the Orient is more a cultural and political conception than a geographical one, as it is the 'Other' which can hardly exist independent of the opposite, the "Occident"/West. In other words, there is never such an objective entity in the world, but only a series of references in the imagination of the Europeans and of the Anglo-Americans, which amount to an "imaginative geography". And the imagined features of the Orient also find their symmetrical

but negative responses in relation to Europe: the Orient (East) is primitive, backward, irrational, despotic, sensuous, barbarous, and Orientals are unable to control themselves, whereas the Occident (West) is civilized, advanced, rational, peaceful, democratic, and Occidentals are good at administration.

In Said's view, Orientalism has several overlapping dimensions: historically, it connotes the two hundred years of imperialist domination, culturally, economically and politically; academically, it means a discipline engaged and authorized in the study of the various subjects of the Orient. Ideologically, Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the "Orient" and the "Occident", and accepted and transplanted in the works of writers who in turn broaden and deepen the awareness of thought. Politically as well as methodologically, Orientalism, as a strategy of dealing with the Orient, is characterized by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, etc. In short, it is a textual style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. It can be understood as a discourse or the enormously systematic discipline imposed upon the East, by which the European culture assumes its cultural supremacy.

Said points out the "fictional" or "imaginative" nature of the assigned role or identity to the geographical "other", based on Levi-Strauss' notion of the mind in need of order and security. He argues that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, with only a fictional reality while appearing to exist objectively. Thus, making geographical distinctions such as designating in one's mind a familiar space as "Ours" and rejecting unfamiliar space as "Theirs" can be very arbitrary. The boundary set up in the mind gives the space beyond ours only a negative identity according to "our" imagination: all kinds of suppositions, associations and fictions that crowd the space. It is on the basis of this mentality that the European domestication and containment of the East occur, ever since the very beginning of Western canonical literature. It is also true of the representations of Islam and many other cultures of the East. The "Orient" is associated with strangeness, despotism, difference, and exotic sensuousness, and is made symmetrical yet inferior to the Occident. Macao, as a long-standing colonial settlement of the Portuguese, has been part of such a typical cultural space within the Orientalist imagination and construction, especially in cinematic representations.

2. Macao as an Exotic, Seductive and Hellish Gambling Paradise

Before we look at how cinemas in the West (i.e. Portuguese, British, French, and American films) have represented Macao, let us read a poem by W. H. Auden (1907-1973) who travelled to the Far East in January 1938 to report on the Chinese war against Japan, which resulted in a book called *Journey to a War*, co-authored with Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986). The book includes entries from Isherwood's diary with Auden's sonnets from a sequence titled "In Time of War", and one of those sonnets is called "Macao". Auden arrived in Macao in 1938, just a few months after Shanghai had fallen to the Japanese. He found Macao frivolous:

A weed from Catholic Europe, it took root
Between the yellow mountains and the sea,
And bore these gay stone houses like a fruit

And grew on China imperceptibly.

Rococo images of Saint and Saviour
 Promise her gamblers fortunes when they die;
 Churches beside the brothels testify
 That faith can pardon natural behaviour.
 The city of indulgence need not fear
 The major sins by which the heart is killed,
 And governments and men are torn to pieces:

Religious clocks will strike; the childish vices
 Will safeguard the low virtues of the child
 And nothing serious can happen here.

(Quoted in Pittis & Henders 1997, p. 2)

For Saint Francis Xavier (1506-1552), Macao almost became a tomb. In Auden's view, Macao is childish, frivolous and sinful, therefore one cannot be serious about it. In the same tone and manner, the British novelist and adventurer Crosbie Garstin visited Macao in 1920s and called Macao "a hell on earth" (Pittis & Henders 1997, p. 57).

In the first half of the 20th century, beginning with the very first black and white American film *River Scene at Macao, China* (silent, 1898), Macao was generally represented as a Portuguese colony in the Far East that was odd, exotic and seductive, with feature and documentary films such as *Aspectos de Macau* (silent, B/W, 1923, Portugal), *Macau* (silent, B/W, 1928, Portugal), *Porto de Macau* (B/W, 1935, Portugal, directed by M. Antunes Amor) and *Macau, Cidade do Santo Nome de Deus* (1952, Portugal, directed by Ricardo Malheiro). But perhaps the most representative and influential film produced in this period was the French movie *Macao, l'enfer du jeu* (*The Gambling Hell*) in 1939, directed by Jean Delannoy. (The images in Figures 1, 3, 12, 17 and 18 are from Wikipedia.)



Figure 1. Two Film Posters of Macao, *L'enfer du Jeu*

The historical setting of the film was the war against the invasion of the Japanese during the Second World War. The film opens with plumes of smoke rising in front of typically “oriental” decorative designs. It is immediately replaced with images of Japanese aerial bombardment on a Chinese town in Southern China. A pair of war refugees (Mireille Balin as a cabaret dancer and Erich von Stroheim as an arms dealer) finds themselves in Macao, where their fates intertwine with that of Ying Tchai (Sessue Hayakawa as a sinister racketeer), lord of all vices in the “city of sin” where the spin of the roulette wheel offers neither escape nor redemption. This is the first of Jean Delannoy’s many great film triumphs. In this sexy, funny and dark adventure-melodrama laden with menace, mistrust, betrayal and destruction, Jean Delannoy tells a complex story about the mysterious, violent, dark, exotic and seductive Macao.



Figure 2. Two Typically “Indulgent” Scenes from *Macao, L'enfer du Jeu*

In the 1950s, the best known film about Macao from the West is a black-and-white adventure film called *Macao* (1953, USA) directed by Josef von Sternberg and Nicholas Ray.



Figure 3. Left: The Film Poster; Right: A Shot from the Black and White Film *Macao* (1953)

Based on a story by Bob Williams and the screenplay by Stanley Crea Rubin and Bernard Schoenfeld, the film opens with a series of images of old Macao accompanied by a journalistic male voice-over:

“This is Macao, a fabulous speck on the surface of the earth, just on the south coast of China, a thirty-five mile boat trip from Hong Kong. It is an ancient Portuguese

colony, quaint and bizarre, at the crossroads of the Far East, its population a mixture of all races, and nationalities, mostly Chinese. Macao, often called “Monte Carlo of the Orient”, has two faces, one calm and open, the other veiled and secret. Here millions in gold and diamonds change hands, some across the gambling tables, some mysteriously in the night. Macao is a fugitive’s heaven. At the Three-Mile Limit the authority of the International Police comes to an end.”



Figure 4. Some Shots of Macao in the 1950s from the American Film *Macao*

Three strangers (Americans) are on the same ferry boat that left Hong Kong for Macao – Nick Cochran (Robert Mitchum), a cynical-but-honest ex-serviceman, Julie Benson (Jane Russell), an equally cynical, sultry night club singer, and Lawrence Trumble (William Bendix), a good-natured traveling salesman who deals in both silk stockings and contraband. They all have different reasons for choosing to come to Macao. Corrupt police lieutenant Sebastian (Thomas Gomez) notifies casino owner and underworld boss Vincent Halloran (Brad Dexter) about the new arrivals. Halloran is central enough in international crime circles to attract the authorities, who cannot touch him in Macao. He has already had one New York detective killed and expects another to arrive. Having been tipped off about an undercover New York City policeman out to lure him into international waters so he can be arrested, he is keeping an eye on any suspicious, unfamiliar Westerners arriving, which leads him to Julie, Cochran, and Trumble. With only three strangers to choose from, Halloran assumes Nick is the cop. He tries to bribe a puzzled Nick to leave Macao, but Nick is interested in getting to know Julie better and turns him down. Halloran hires Julie as a singer, in part to find out what she knows about Nick.



Figure 5. Three Americans Arriving at Port of Macao: Nick (Left), Trumble and Julie

Later, Trumble offers Nick a commission to help him sell a stolen diamond necklace. However, when Nick shows Halloran a diamond from the necklace, Halloran recognizes it; he had sent the jewelry to Hong Kong only a week earlier to be sold. Now sure of Nick's identity, he has the American taken prisoner for later questioning. Nick is guarded by two thugs and Halloran's jealous girlfriend, Margie (Gloria Grahame).



Figure 6. Macao Casino Owner and Underworld Boss Halloran (Right) and Margie

Worried that Halloran is planning to dump her for Julie, Margie lets Nick escape, with the two guards close behind. When Trumble runs into the late-night chase, he tries to help Nick and is killed, mistaken by the local Chinese thugs for Nick. Before he dies, he tells Nick about the police boat waiting offshore. When Nick tries to get Julie to go away with him, he learns that Halloran has invited her on a trip to Hong Kong (to retrieve his property). With this information, Nick is able to dispose of Halloran's murderous henchman, Itzumi (Philip Ahn), and take the helm in Halloran's boat. He steers for the waiting police and hands Halloran over to them. With all the typical ingredients of film noir, the film is an embodiment of Western imaginations about the dark and mysterious Macao that represents the "Orient".



Figure 7. Left: Corrupt Police Lieutenant Sebastian; Right: Local Chinese Thugs

Although there were films in the 1960s such as *Via Macao* (1965, France/ Portugal, directed by Jean Leduc), *Operação Estupefacientes* (1966, Portugal, directed by Miguel Spiguel) that tried to give a more objective depiction of Macao, these stereotypical Eurocentric representations of Macao as an exotic, seductive and hellish gambling paradise have continued to dominate later films in the West such as *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974, UK, directed by Guy Hamilton), *Macao sans retour* (2004, France/Portugal, directed by Michale Boganim) and *Skyfall* (2012, UK/USA, directed by Sam Mendes). But the American film *Macao* seems to have been a “pioneer” and owns most of the credits in stereotypically representing Macao as “a hellish paradise”.

3. Macao as an Imagined Stage for Fairy Tales without its Identity

The American film director Orson Welles once claimed that the Danish writer Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen) was his favorite writer. He hoped to produce a television series in France based on her stories, but only made one film *The Immortal Story* (French: *Une histoire immortelle*) in 1968. The film was originally broadcast on French television and was later released in theaters. It was based on a short story by Isak Dinesen. As the first film in color, *The Immortal Story* tells the story of a wealthy old merchant in Macao, Mr. Clay (Orson Welles) at the end of his life. His only constant companion is his bookkeeper, a Polish-Jewish emigrant named Elishama Levinsky (Roger Coggio). One evening, Levinsky tells Mr. Clay a story about an old man who hires a sailor to impregnate his wife, and, for his own amusement, takes measures to make the tale come true.



Figure 8. Two Scenes from *The Immortal Story*

To play the various parts, he decides to hire a real sailor and a woman who will play the part of Clay’s wife. Mr. Clay does not know that the young woman called Virginie Ducrot (Jeanne Moreau) is bent on revenge against Mr. Clay’s past transgressions. It turns out that she was the daughter of Clay’s one-time business partner. Clay’s ruthless dealings drove Virginie’s father into bankruptcy and suicide, and she is eager to get her revenge. The destitute sailor, a young Englishman named Paul (Norman Eshley), is discovered on the street and recruited. Virginie and Paul find an emotional bond in their brief union, but go their separate ways – Virginie is exorcised of her bitterness against Clay while Paul disappears into Macao’s teeming streets. Before the sailor leaves, he is told that he can now tell his story around the world, and the

legend will come true. The sailor states that he has no intention of telling the story and that no one would believe him anyway. Levinsky goes to inform Clay about what took place, but discovers the old merchant has died. Basically, the film is about the conflict between the cold-blooded realism of the merchant and a romanticism he refuses to accept and, inevitably, the myth that he has been so obsessed with turns upon him with irony and cruelty.

The Immortal Story is shot on a smaller scale than Welles' other films, but it has all of Welles' hallmarks, including cavernous shots and startling angles. Welles' Mr. Clay seems deliberately stuck, physically and emotionally immobile in the center of all this deeply felt drama. It is interesting to know that much of the film was shot in Welles' home, located outside of Madrid, Spain. Exterior scenes depicting Macao were not shot in Macao at all but in Chinchón, a town near Madrid. Welles used Chinese restaurant waiters from Madrid as extras to recreate the setting for Macao as a Portuguese colony in the 19th century. In other words, the story has almost nothing to do with Macao except that its name lends an exotic and mysterious feel to the film. Macao, treated as nothing but an empty concept for staging a fairytale-like drama of the West, has no soul or identity.

This Eurocentric "tradition" of representing Macao in cinema continues even today in films such as *Skyfall* (2012, directed by Sam Mendes). Part of the movie story goes like this: In Istanbul, James Bond and Eve Moneypenny chase Patrice (a mercenary) who has stolen a computer hard drive containing details of undercover agents placed in terrorist organizations by NATO states. Patrice wounds Bond in the shoulder and, as the two men fight on top of a train, Eve inadvertently shoots Bond, allowing Patrice to escape. Bond falls into a river and goes missing, presumed to be dead. Having used his supposed death to retire, Bond eventually returns to London. Although he fails a series of physical and psychological examinations, his boss M approves his return to the field and he is ordered to go to Shanghai, to identify Patrice's employer, and to recover the stolen hard drive and kill Patrice.



Figure 9. A Shot of Bond in Shanghai in *Skyfall*

In Shanghai, Bond follows Patrice into a skyscraper, from which Patrice shoots his target. He and Bond then begin to fight, but Patrice falls to his death before Bond can learn of his employer. Searching Patrice's equipment, Bond finds a gambling chip intended as payment for the assassination, which leads him to a casino in Macao.



Figure 10. Bond in the Exotic “Oriental” Dragon-boat Casino of Macao in *Skyfall*

Bond approaches Sévérine, whom he witnessed as an accomplice in the assassination, and asks to meet whomever she and Patrice work for. She warns him that he is about to be killed by her bodyguards, but promises to help Bond if he will kill her employer. Bond defeats his attackers and joins Sévérine on her boat. They travel to an abandoned island off the coast of Macao, where they are taken prisoner by the crew and delivered to Raoul Silva. A former MI6 officer who had previously worked under M, Silva has turned to cyber-terrorism, orchestrating the attacks on MI6. Silva kills Sévérine, but Bond overpowers his guards and captures Silva for removal to Britain.



Figure 11. Left: Bond Captured by Raoul Silva; Right: M Confronting Raoul

The candlelit dragon-boat floating casino of Macao in the film *Skyfall*, with deadly Komodo dragon mascots, was actually a constructed set at London’s famous Pinewood Studios. The film version of a Macao casino is but an imagined space of glamour, terror and darkness for staging part of Bond’s new mission against terrorists on behalf of his lost empire. Now we need to ask: why does Macao generally have such negative or shallow images in most of the representations in Western films such as those in the previous two sections? What lies behind these stereotypical images? And what should we do about it? And here lies the logic of narrating empires in Western, especially Hollywood, cinema.

4. Beyond the Impenetrable Macao: Cinematic Narratives of Empires

From *Macao* to *Skyfall*, Post-World War II Western films have dominated non-Western cinema in their representations of Macao as an Oriental Space. This fully reflects the huge impact of Western culture on other cultural communities which is all too evident throughout the world today; and key constituents of contemporary “global” popular culture such as film, television and popular music have been dominated by products “Made in Germany”, “Made in France”, “Made in the UK”, “Made in the U.S.A.”. Youngsters in Macao, for example, may generally care very little about whether President Obama has succeeded in getting the American economy back on track during his second term in office or in winning the war on international terrorism. But they would be gravely concerned if Adele should wait for another year before the release of her new album. It seems that the world’s “immune system” has now been fatally invaded by the media of the American Semiotic Empire because few people can resist the power of American popular culture, particularly the power of Hollywood (see Douglas Gomery & Tino Balio, 1998). This power resides predominantly in its ability to turn pleasure into a product we can buy in the entertainment market – capitalism at its finest, and its comprehensive invasion of the human body – its emotions, dreams, anxieties and desires as well as the socio-cultural space of the Other.

If we believe that globalization and new media technologies have already begun to reshape our vision of the so-called “global culture” which is largely Eurocentric in real political and cultural terms, Hollywood has then semiotically manufactured some of the most powerful images in its editing and re-writing of history as “universal inheritance”. It is those electronically mediated images, this paper contends, that represent one of the most potent arms of cultural hegemony in the 21st century. While exploring the issue of who has the power and control over the conditions necessary for the production of valid knowledge in the postcolonial context, this section further extends the examination of the politics of cinematic representations (as those in Hollywood’s appropriations of Ian Fleming’s novels in the Bond series) that almost lay bare their own practices in relation to the dominant relations of material, social and cultural production.

Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, once called Macao “a paradise”. Like James Bond, he was fascinated with wealth, gambling, tycoons, women and gold. He visited Macao in 1959, collecting materials for a series of reports on the world’s “thrilling cities” for the Sunday Times (Pittis & Henders 1997, p. 61). He even had lunch with the Gold King of the Orient – the enigmatic Doctor Lobo of the Villa Verde in Macao, who echoes Oddjob from *Goldfinger*, the Bond novel about gold smuggling. And in the film *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974, directed by Guy Hamilton), we have Lazar (Marne Maitland), the Portuguese gunsmith living in Macao who manufactures golden bullets for the famed assassin Francisco Scaramanga. In this 9th 007 spy classic, the man with the golden gun turns out to be the evil Scaramanga. Bond is threatened with assassination by a golden bullet engraved with 007, which lures him into a deadly game of cat and mouse involving nuclear power (“Solex Agitator”), “Red China”, conspiracy, revenge and love.

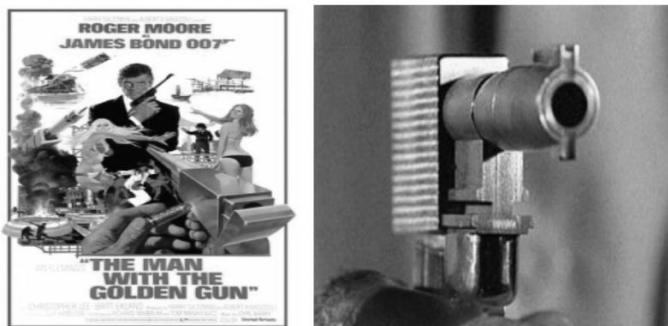


Figure 12. The Film Poster and an Image of the Golden Gun

James Bond is led to believe that he is targeted by the world's most expensive assassin and must hunt him down to stop him. After retrieving a spent golden bullet from a belly dancer in Beirut, he tracks its manufacturer to Macao and sees Andrea Anders, Scaramanga's mistress, collecting golden bullets at a casino. Here are a few shots of the scenes in which Bond comes to Macao to find Lazar:



Figure 13. Left: The First Image of Macao when James Bond Arrives; Right: James Bond Moving Around in Macao by a Local "Taxi"



Figure 14. A Shot of the Chinese when James Bond Is in Macao Looking for Lazar



Figure 15. James Bond Meeting the Portuguese Gunsmith Laz



Figure 16. James Bond Pulling the Trigger to Get Information About Scaramanga

Although it reflects the then-popular martial arts film craze, with several *kung-fu* scenes and a predominantly Asian location (being shot in Thailand, Hong Kong, and Macao), the film fully captures the binary thinking of the Cold War in the 1960s and 70s and presents Macao as the impenetrable “Orient” (partly seen from the dull and somewhat hostile expressions on the faces of Lazar’s family) and as a sinister and seedy place harbouring criminals that undermine international (i.e. Western) law and order.

In other Bond movies such as *Licence to Kill* (1989, directed by John Glen), we see Bond setting off to unleash vengeance on a drug lord who had tortured his best friend, a CIA agent, and left him for dead and had murdered his bride after he helped capture him. In *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997, directed by Roger Spottiswoode), Bond heads to stop a media mogul’s plan to induce war between China and the UK in order to obtain exclusive global media coverage. In *Skyfall* (2012) Bond’s loyalty to M is tested when her past comes back to haunt her and MI6 comes under attack. 007 has to track down and destroy the threat, no matter how personal and huge the cost might be. We see the British agent James Bond as the most powerful and desirable “White Saviour” of world civilization.

In the rest of this section, I will make use of some concepts and ideas from critics such as Ziauddin Sardar, bell hooks and Arjun Appadurai to illustrate the power of such an imperial image of British and American popular culture. Attention will be directed at a critique of globalization, dimensions of global culture, and Hollywood as a Media/Semiotic Empire, which not only promotes a voracious, scopic consumption of images, but also inserts Western

visualizations into circuits of dominant, multiple discourses, so as to generate a transnational memory for the citizens of the “Global Village”.



Figure 17. James Bond as “Saviour”: S. Connery, R. Moore (Centre) & P. Brosnan

Writing as early as in 1990 on the ambiguous nature of “globalisation” – its mixture of risk and opportunity and its dual capacity to enable and to disempower between what has been called the “information rich and the information poor”, Anthony Giddens (1990, pp. 51-53) elaborates on the “gradual decline in European or Western global hegemony, the other side of which is the increasing expansion of modern influences world-wide”, and also on the “declining grip of the West over the rest of the world” or “the evaporating of the privileged position of the West”. Four years later, Giddens (1994, p. 96) adds,

The first phase of globalisation was plainly governed, primarily, by the expansion of the West, and institutions which originated in the West. No other civilization made anything like as pervasive an impact on the world, or shaped it so much in its own image... Although still dominated by Western power, globalisation today can no longer be spoken of only as a matter of one-way imperialism... increasingly there is no obvious ‘direction’ to globalisation at all and its ramifications are more or less ever present. The current phase of globalisation, then, should not be confused with the preceding one, whose structures it acts increasingly to subvert.

Indeed, since the early 1990s, “globalisation” has been the mantra for the huge expansion of international trade and investment and the integration of markets, no matter whether it is capitalist or socialist (as in the Chinese phrase or slogan, “Socialist Market Economy with Chinese Characteristics”). Currency traders see the same information at the same time and can act on it simultaneously whether they are in Hong Kong, London or New York. Billions of dollars move at the push of a button. Work is networked among Asia, Europe and North America via computer. And even the very idea of a corporate headquarters is beginning to become a metaphysical concept. “We” are now beginning to witness a reality beyond globalisation – the world of “globality” which is not so much a process as a condition, a Western-dominated world economy in which traditional and familiar boundaries are being surmounted or made irrelevant.

Increasingly, the corridors in which managers, politicians, scholars and other professionals run into each other are less physical than electronic. But it is my contention that the process of “globalising modernity” in its successful dissemination of Western institutional forms does not yet show a significant decline in economic, political and cultural differentials between the West and the rest of the world. In other words, geographical patterns of dominance established in early modernity – the elective affinity between the interests of capitalism and of the West, are challenged but not fundamentally changed. In fact, since the world of “globality” is beginning to make nation states lose most of the sovereignty they once had and, particularly, as it has been tremendously influenced by rapid developments in systems of communication, globalisation will have huge cultural implications. In this respect, much of the “Third World” will continue to be marginalized by Western globalising technologies.

In the 18th Bond movie, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, Elliot Carver proudly declares: “Caesar had his legions, Napoleon had his armies and I have my divisions: News... TV. Magazines. Eight thousand journalists in 132 countries around the globe... In the next century, Mr. Bond, the great battles won’t be fought over land or politics but over people’s minds. How they think, what they eat, what they wear, what they buy. Information is power”. Here, because of the inequality between dominant and dominated, developed and developing countries and regions, globalisation has to be re-examined as a complex set of processes which operate in a contradictory or even oppositional fashion, pulling away power from local communities and nations into the global arena while creating new pressures for local autonomy. In this respect, globalisation is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world, thus creating new economic, political and cultural zones within and across national boundaries. To many living outside Europe and North America, globalisation is almost another name for “Westernisation” or “Americanisation”, since the US is now the only superpower with a dominant economic, military, political and cultural position in the global (dis)order. In other words, globalisation threatens to destroy local cultures, widen world inequalities and worsen the lot of the impoverished Third World. By the late 1990s, the share of the poorest fifth of the world’s population in global income, for example, had dropped from 2.3% to 1.4% over the preceding 10 years, while the proportion taken by the richest fifth had risen from 70% to 85% (Giddens, 1999). In the last 15 years, “wealth continues to be highly concentrated in a few Gulf states, Europe and North America”, as Tina Aridas and Valentina Pasquali (2013) have observed:

Poverty remains extensive throughout the world, particularly in South Asia and Africa, which dominate the bottom of the ranking, occupying 9 of the last ten spots. The Democratic Republic of Congo is last with a per-capita GDP (PPP) of less than 400 dollars. Zimbabwe, Burundi and Liberia come just before it.

To some critics, this translates into a global “pillage” rather than a global “village” and forces us to rethink national and cultural identities and to reevaluate new forms of “colonisation” in this global cosmopolitan society. In spite of all kinds of resistance, this brave new world is emerging in a haphazard fashion, carried along by a mixture of economic, technical and cultural imperatives, often beyond our comprehension.

If one believes that the modern world has been dominated by the legacy of Western imperialism, Hollywood then can be readily cited as one of the best instances of Western cultural imperialism. Although the conception of “imperialism” has been “so fraught with all sorts of questions, doubts, polemics, and ideological premises as nearly to resist use altogether”, as Edward Said (1993, p. 360) puts it, one would tend to agree with Said that “imperialism” can be understood not only as a set of colonial phenomena in economic, political and military domains, but also as sort of mindset, a leading notion and general practice in the fields of knowledge, culture and technology.

Cinema is “the schema to control the subjugated people alongside colonial domination, the scientific and esthetic disciplining of nature through classificatory schemas, the capitalist appropriation of resources, and the imperialist ordering of the globe under a panoptical regime” (Shohat & Stam 1994, p. 100). For example, adopting the popular fictions of colonist writers and absorbed conquest fictions of the American southwest, the cinema, with its images of the “boys” of the imperial ideal stories of adventure, permeates a “fantasy of far-away regions” and an imagined space for the fulfillment of European masculinity. In many respects, Hollywood cinema, with its white supremacist narrative tropes, can be “read” as the forger of hegemonic and imperialist discourses. These, in turn, shape the conception of history through the sequence of events as the configuration of our comprehension. Hollywood has become a “common” visual language with its power to (re-)shape the collective consciousness of real and imagined communities. From D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to Alan Parker’s *Mississippi Burning* (1988), from Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* (1941) to Ridley Scott’s *1492 (Christopher Columbus)*, from James Bond to Indiana Jones, the cinema relays projected narratives of nations and empires, fostering a consciousness of nationhood which is visually and seductively embodied by irresistible images of masculinity, as seen in the 007 series.

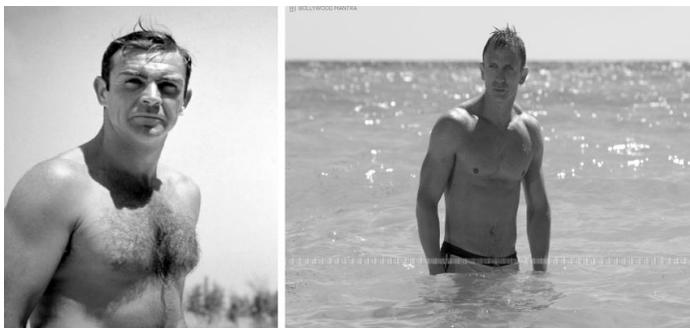


Figure 18. The Forever Desirable Body of James Bond for the Entire Planet

In postcolonial terms, cinema also constructs a “mapped history” of unbalanced power for the audience in the non-European world with its apparatus of the camera, projector, screen and the spectator as the desiring subject. The motivated photography presents images of other lands and all cultures beyond the limits of time and space and entails a prescribed relationship of power in the mediated topography of images – “alien”, “uncivilized”, “strange” and “subhuman”. This spectacle is consistent with the discourse of primitivism and exoticism, and also congruent

with the imagined extension of empire. With the point-of-view conventions and the scientific apparatus, it consistently favors the Euro-American protagonists who are centered in the frame. Their desires drive the narrative when “the camera pans, tracks, and cranes to accompany their regard” (Shohat & Stam 1994, p. 120). As a result, that apparatus, in an imperial context, “tended to be deployed in ways flattering to the imperial subject as superior and invulnerable observer”, “affirming their sense of power while turning the colonies into a spectacle for the metropole’s voyeuristic gaze”(p. 104).

This colonial/imperial paradigm of film-making, together with the Eurocentric tendencies of the media apparatus, is quite ingeniously embedded in many of the Bond movies where metaphors, tropes, and allegorical motifs are recognized as functioning in a constitutive role in figuring European superiority. Such tropological operations form a figurative substratum with the discourse of empire by animalization (natives as “Other” and dark forces) and infantilization (the non-Europeans as embodying an earlier stage of individual human or broad cultural development as in tropes such as “childlike qualities”). Fundamentally, tropes are “undergirding binarisms: order/chaos, activity/passivity/, stasis/movement” (Shohat & Stam 1994, p. 140), positing European culture on top of the dichotomous hierarchy.

“The dominant European/American form of cinema”, in the words of Shohat and Stam (2000, p. 386), “not only inherited and disseminated a hegemonic colonial discourse but also created a powerful hegemony of its own through monopolistic control of film distribution and exhibition in much of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Eurocolonial cinema thus mapped history not only for domestic audiences but for the world, with complex ramifications for spectatorship”. Even when Hollywood learns to adopt certain anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist attitudes towards an evil empire like Hugo Drax’s Outer Space Empire in *Moonraker* or Elliot Carver’s Media Empire in *Tomorrow Never Dies*, the construction of the narrative remains still very much within the master framework of a colonial discourse.

Tomorrow Never Dies is a tale of imperialist media power used as a lethal weapon when global communications in the wrong hands can literally manufacture the news and even challenge the course of history. Capturing all the excitement and adventure of a classic Bond movie, the film features a heart-stopping motorcycle chase in the multi-story car park, a high-altitude parachute plunge from 29,000 feet and a final international confrontation of epic proportions. Despite mutual suspicion, Bond and the Chinese Bond girl Wai Lin agree to work together and discover the stealth ship on which media mogul Elliot Carver and his men Stamper and Gupta begin the countdown to a war between Britain and China. Carver regards the whole Gulf War as notable only for his networks ratings surge, hence masterminding World War III seems only too logical. But when Wai Lin is once again captured by the villains, 007 dares an almost impossible rescue attempt. Running against the clock, they try to outwit the powerful Carver and bring his evil empire to its knees.

In narrating Carver’s empire, the film presents a mixture of imperialist and postcolonial discourses. Elliot Carver says, “It is exactly events like these [such as the *Devonshire* incident] that caused me to create the Carver Media Network Group – with its printing presses that run twenty-four hours a day and its satellite facilities, linking every last corner of the earth”. Indeed, everything that motivated Carver was based on his media empire and world-wide domination. The powerful speech that he delivers to Bond about the power of television and the media

was something we have heard many times before but not really in a Bond movie. The speech on how to control people's minds makes one immediately think of the domination of Western media and popular/consumer culture. The world of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation communications empire, and Hollywood's capitalist dream factories, for instance, are perfect illustrations of what Elliot Carver says, "We now have the ability to reach every human being on earth".

With a license to kill, James Bond is the ideal embodiment of a Western superhero – a dedicated guardian of democracy, liberty and "universal truth", a connoisseur of encyclopedic proportions: missiles, nuclear weaponry, diamonds, arts, literature, psychology, female physiology, outer space aviation, archeology, politics, and whatever. And Bond always manages to fulfill his mission and simultaneously finds time for love/sex even when his life is in great danger.

We live in a world of transformations which affect every aspect of what we do. For better or worse, we are being propelled into a global order that no one fully understands, but which is making its effects felt upon all of us (Giddens, 1999). But how to relate oneself to "globalisation" is always a problem more complicated than how to define it. Perhaps we need to reflect for a moment on some of the debates on globalisation in cultural geography and social theory. Whether it is seen as "mission impossible", globalisation has been defined as a mantra for the huge expansion of international trade and investment and the integration of markets, capitalist or socialist; a world economy in which traditional boundaries are being made irrelevant; a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation states; a process through which events, decisions and activities in one space have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe; an expression of 'our' changing experience of 'time-space compression' (Harvey, 1989). Since capitalism has become a world system, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, crimes, cultures, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs all flow across geographical, national and psychological boundaries.

Arjun Appadurai (1990, pp. 1-15) posits five dimensions of these global cultural flows: 1) Ethnoscape: Flows of immigrants, refugees, exiles, tourists, foreign workers and students across national boundaries; 2) Technoscape: Flows of machinery & plants generated by multinational corporations & government agencies; 3) Financescape: Flows of capital in stock exchanges and currency markets; 4) Mediascape: Flows of images and information instigated by films, TV, radio, newspapers, journals, and electronic routes; 5) Ideoscape: Flows of ideas, beliefs, values that are closely associated with media. Today these five dimensions of global culture seem to have produced a macro-politics of new hegemonic and imperialist desires through which Western-based discourses are increasingly inflicting the cultural formations as well as the spaces of non-Western societies. The net effect of this phenomenon is to set up a new semiotic empire. This new empire would promote a voracious scopic consumption of images and insert Western visualizations into circuits of multiple discourses so as to generate a transnationalized memory for the global village. Ford, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Kodak, Nike, Mickey Mouse and James Bond are among the most familiar global images and icons of this new semiotic empire.

As global culture has been tremendously influenced by the fast developments in Western systems of communication, it can also be seen as the macro socio-cultural condition under

which Hollywood operates. Here we need to note some of the outstanding characteristics of New Hollywood as observed by Warren Buckland (1998, p. 167):

In comparison with Old Hollywood, New Hollywood films are not structured in terms of a psychologically motivated cause-effect narrative logic, but in terms of loosely-linked, self-sustaining action sequences often built around spectacular stunts, stars and special effects. Complex character traits and character development... have been replaced by one-dimensional stereotypes, and plot-lines are now devised almost solely to link one action sequence to the next. Narrative complexity is sacrificed on the altar of spectacle. Narration is geared solely to the effective presentation of expensive effects.

In this respect, like many other James Bond movies such as *The Man with the Golden Gun*, *Casino Royale* (2006, directed by Martin Campbell) and *Skyfall, Tomorrow Never Dies* was produced, distributed and consumed within the mechanism of a hegemonic global venture. Apart from studio shooting, the making of *Tomorrow Never Dies* involved thirty locations on land, in the air and under water, stretching around the world from England, to France, Germany, Thailand, the States of Florida and Arizona in the USA, and Mexico. It was like a Bond Empire on which the sun never set: the most ambitious, complex and expensive of all 007 movies. Producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson and executives of the Los Angeles-based film giant MGM/UA wanted spectacular settings and stunts. Full-time crew numbered 720 and there were extras, occasional stuntmen and women, catering staff, drivers and security men used around the world.

If we as audience see Bond repeatedly risking his life “in search of the truth” in the heat of the afternoon on the streets of Vietnam, in the international terrorist arms bazaar on the Russian border, or on Carver’s stealth ship in the South China Sea, we are expected to understand all that as part of the “White Man’s burden” – “civilizing mission”, a global venture to save humanity and protect the world from total catastrophe. This “civilizing mission” has now become an essential part of James Bond legacy. In *Dr. No* (1962), the first Bond film, James Bond is sent to Jamaica to investigate a U.S. enquiry about interference in American rocket launches at Cape Canaveral by radar beams emanating from his arch enemy SPECTRE’s delegate Dr. No’s “evil” complex on an eerie island. After a series of murders and deaths, Bond blows up Dr. No’s nuclear reactor, spectacularly destroying the complex to save America. In the 6th Bond film, *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969), the most terrible guy Ernst Blofeld has developed a deadly virus which induces permanent sterility in breeds of animals and strains of plants and he plans to spread this virus to humans. He intends to hold the West for ransom, not for money, but for a pardon for all his previous crimes against humanity. The future of civilization lies again in 007’s hands. In *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971), James Bond’s mission is to discover who has been stealing and stockpiling large quantities of South African diamonds. He finds that Ernst Blofeld has constructed a giant laser generator, suspended in orbit around earth, that uses diamonds to intensify its energy, and causing nuclear warheads, rockets and submarines to spontaneously self-detonate. The life of our entire planet depends on James Bond. In *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker*, Bond is working against a villain who wishes to destroy current life and move it to a new location (the sea for Stromberg, space for Moonraker) where it will be perfect and

controlled by the villain. In *License to Kill*, James Bond deals with one of Latin America's most powerful drug dealers, Franz Sanchez, who aims to extend his "business" into the "Orient" while strengthening his holdings in the Americas. As always, James Bond stops these wicked people and saves humanity with bulletproof determination, justifiable violence, unshakable loyalty, superhuman intelligence, and English humour.

5. Going "Glocal"

Talking about the power of the image, Annette Kuhn observes, "[T]he acts of analysis, of deconstruction and of reading 'against the grain' offer an additional pleasure – the pleasure of resistance, of saying 'no': not to 'unsophisticated' enjoyment, by ourselves and others, of culturally dominant images, but to the structures of power which ask us to consume them uncritically and in highly circumscribed ways" (Kuhn 1985, p. 8).

In an age of postmodern, postcolonial and global multimedia in which Hollywood still rules, visual media of all sorts proliferate and are absolutely essential to our discussion of multiculturalism and globalization. To talk about "globalisation" is no longer a Western privilege. Robert Stam and Ella Habiba Shohat (2000, p. 381) point out that "In a transnational world typified by global circulation of images and sounds, goods and populations, media spectatorship impacts complexly on national identity, political affiliation, and communal belonging." Although in the postcolonial age the 'old' imperial hegemonies are more dispersed and scattered, the historical inertia of Western domination remains a powerful presence and the global distribution of power still tends to make the 'West' cultural 'transmitters' and to reduce the 'Third World' to the status of 'receivers'. However, while acknowledging the often one-way imperialism of Hollywood, we must also alert ourselves to the many ways in which the global media are now more interactive, and to the way postcolonial theory and cinema present new kinds of cultural contradictions in a mass-mediated world.

The American popular culture critic bell hooks formulated a very insightful framework – "critical thinking plus literacy means transformation", in doing cultural criticism. She invented the term "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" to analyze American popular culture in terms of motivated representation, agency, and transformation. In my understanding, the capacity to think critically about both our lives and the cultural texts/products around us is crucial for transforming ourselves into enlightened witnesses to our changing world. To achieve this, we need to pay attention to the following in our critical practice.

Firstly, we should question the Eurocentric claims to universalism made on behalf of canonical Western literature, philosophy and culture and seek to expose their limitations regarding views of the world, especially their general inability to empathize across boundaries of cultural and ethnic differences.

Secondly, we should examine the Eurocentric representations of other (esp. Chinese) cultures in cultural texts/products as ways of achieving this end. We need to show how such texts/products are often evasively and crucially evasive or even silent on matters concerned with colonization and imperialism.

Thirdly, we should foreground questions of cultural difference and diversity and analyse their treatment in relevant cultural products, while celebrating hybridity and "Cultural

polyvalency” (i.e. the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture).

Fourthly, we should learn to develop a postcolonial perspective whereby states of marginality, plurality and “Otherness” are seen as sources of energy and potential change, focusing on specific issues such as class, gender and ethnicity.

Today, old forms of colonialism and racial discrimination have been replaced by new, subtler forms. Here I am talking about a colonial mentality within the domain of cultural assimilation rather than any colonial reality in terms of military or economic domination. Indeed, we are all witnesses to the daily racial eruptions that expose, one way or another, the raw bones of racial bigotry and prejudices in almost every corner of the so-called “global village”. As Clarence Page (1996, pp. 14-15) points out, “It is fashionable in today’s America to behave as if we have, at last, transcended race, as if we could all just forget about it and get on with our ‘color-blind’ ways if only a few loudmouthed ingrates would just shut up about it”.

Questioning the uniformity and comprehensiveness of globalisation, Manuel Castells (1997, p. 155) insists that “There is no such a thing as a global single society”. Indeed “we” somehow have irrevocably moved to a very different historical stage. It is a stage where many, if not all, marginal cultures have been reduced more or less to little more than an ever-shrinking reservation space, a remote archeological site, a semi-authentic museum exhibit, a tourist artifact, a half-an-hour TV documentary or simply another Walt Disney cartoon with a touch of political correctness as can be seen in the use of eco-feminist discourses in “Colors of the Wind” in *Pocahontas*, a re-imagined historical tale of the famous Native American girl Pocahontas.

In a culturally and ethically diverse country, be it America or China, the inevitable political, economic, and social changes throughout history have not only shaped the physical landscapes, but also remapped our “ideoscapes”. Those changes have resulted in the powerful emergence of certain groups and cultures that eventually become hegemonic. Another result is the gradual loss of certain tribes and communities that become marginal and even lose their voices. If we still hold that we share certain human commonalities since we “share”, more or less, the same planet, we need not only to combat political and cultural nihilism, but also to re-examine critically what “we human beings” have done to ourselves in terms of both our environment and the galaxy of ethnic and cultural differences.

Indeed, what we must explore is the relation between “the Local” and “the Global”, which can be styled as “Glocalisation” (Robertson, 1995). In my understanding, “glocalisation” may involve a re-assertion of Western hegemony and domination on the one hand. Due to the five kinds of “flows” as observed by Arjun Appadurai, this may lead to new cross-cultural encounters and an accommodation of socio-political and cultural diversity, on the other hand. In this unprecedented process of *glocalisation*, cultural boundaries between different nations, communities and ethnic groups deserve more respect according to the degree to which these boundaries reflect the will of the people bound by them. Re-articulating local/native experience is one of the most essential undertakings in maintaining those necessary cultural boundaries, thus preserving ethnic diversity in the true sense of the word. In terms of representing Macao as a modern, international city in the age of glocalisation, we should adopt a more open and tolerant attitude towards the outside, although old stereotypical images will likely continue.

In the spirit of the Chinese philosopher Confucius, let me conclude with the following statement: Voice that has long been marginalized or silenced needs particular care to recover its strength so as to re-articulate its experience of pain and visions of hope. Only in this way can we take one more step towards the “promised land”, lifting the nation not just “from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood” (King 1993, p. 83), but also from the politics and myths of identity to the wisdom of maintaining cultural diversity, while dealing with the responsibility for deciding where to draw which boundaries against whom and around what. That, in my view, might be one of the most important tasks for “us” in this new era when we confront unprecedented political changes and cultural challenges.

As the final caption at the end of all Bond movies says: “James Bond will return...”, I would like to add: “When Bond continues to glow like a bonfire on a romantic night, the Empire will surely write back.” Hollywood will go on, one way or another, claiming new territories and invading new minds while tapping “all the major markets of the world” as never before, as Tino Balio (1998, p. 70) observes. In the New Semiotic Empire of Hollywood, if James Bond keeps that license to kill, we should continue to ask these questions: Whom does James Bond kill? Who gives him the license to kill? And for whose interests does he kill? So, just watch out: with powerful imagery to thrill and license to kill, James Bond will be back. When Hollywood glitters in full glory, Macao should not continue to be just “a fabulous speck”.

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