Universidade de São Paulo

Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas

Departamento de Letras Modernas

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Lingüísticos e Literários de Língua
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For Sergio, Elio and Iris

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a multidisciplinary endeavor that draws on theories from Visual Culture Studies, Subaltern Studies and Critical Theory. The discourses of these areas interact in various ways in order to analyze representations of subaltern groups in *National Geographic* magazine. We see these representations as multimodal cultural texts that mobilize historical, sociological, political, economic, aesthetic and philosophical elements.

We do close reading of the visual and verbal texts that the magazine produces on the subaltern in order to show that we get to know more about the Western conceptual world through these representations than on the Other since the conceptual categories *National Geographic* uses are culture specific and not universal. We show that both the discourse of the magazine and that of the researcher doing the analysis are products of their *locus* of enunciation and its historical context.

We finally emphasize the importance of admitting the power of mediation when we talk about anthropological representations. The magazine uses an apparently scientific discourse in order to validate the truthfulness of its representations. However, its science is formed by concepts expressive of the Western cultural hegemony which seeks to construct knowledge that is rooted in power.

Key words: visuality, critical, culture, representation, space, subaltern

RESUMO

Esta tese é um projeto multidisciplinar, que se baseia em teorias de Cultura Visual, Estudos Subalternos e Teoria Crítica. Os discursos dessas áreas interagem de várias maneiras com o objetivo de analisar as representações de grupos subalternos na revista *National Geographic*. Vemos essas representações como textos culturais multimodais que mobilizam elementos históricos, sociológicos, políticos, econômicos, estéticos e filosóficos.

Fazemos uma leitura dos textos visuais e verbais que a revista produz sobre o subalterno, a fim de mostrar que acabamos sabendo mais sobre o mundo conceitual ocidental através dessas representações do que sobre o Outro, uma vez que as categorias que a *National Geographic* usa são específicas da cultura ocidental e não universais. Mostramos que tanto o discurso da revista quanto o do pesquisador que faz a analise das representações são produtos de seu *locus* de enunciação e seu contexto histórico.

Finalmente, enfatizamos a importância de admitir o poder de mediação quando falamos sobre representações antropológicas. A revista usa um discurso aparentemente científico, a fim de validar a veracidade de suas representações. No entanto, sua ciência é formada por conceitos da hegemonia cultural ocidental, que procura construir conhecimento que está enraizado no poder.

Palavras-chave: visualidade, crítica, cultura, representação, espaço, subalternidade

'See, boys - you see what we have here?
Regard, please, the heedeous face of thees
primitive creature. It reminds you of?'
And the eager responses: 'Sir the devil sir.'
...'Silence! Sons of baboons! Thees object
here' - a tug on my nose - '*thees* is
human geography!'

Salman Rushdie
Midnight's children

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INTRODUCTION

It can not be denied that *National Geographic Magazine* (NGM) during its 120 years of existence has become for its millions of readers a window to the world of "exotic" people and places through the representations it makes of the "Other". NGM's mission has been to diffuse geographic knowledge by studying societies and to inspire people to care about the planet[1]. *National Geographic Magazine*, which became *National Geographic* in 1960, is nowadays one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational institutions. During the years of the magazine's existence, scientific knowledge has exploded and ecological awareness has increased and the magazine has come to illustrate the American nation's belief in "science's ability to provide the cure for society's ills" (Bryan, 1987: 27). We believe that its construction of knowledge is infused with the prevailing western concepts the institution adopts.

A brief historiography of the magazine will also exemplify the concepts that form the construction of representations *National Geographic* makes. The foundation of the National Geographic Society in 1888 in the United States followed the 1830 formation of the Royal Geographical Society in England. The formation of the National Geographic Society in the United States shows a change of focus, as much political as well as economical. Up until then, the newly found lands were controlled militarily and politically. Towards the end of the 19th century, they started being controlled scientifically and economically, too.

This is how the formation of the National Geographic Society is described in the celebratory book "The National Geographic Society: 100 Years of Adventure and Discovery": "On January 13th, 1888, thirty-three men traveled on foot, horseback and in horsedrawn carriages and got together at the Assembly Hall of the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C to consider the "advisability of organizing a society for the increase and diffusion of geographical knowledge" (Bryan, 1987: 24). Those gentlemen were geographers, explorers, military officers, lawyers, meteorologists, cartographers, naturalists, bankers, educators, biologists, engineers, geodesists, topographers and inventors. They agreed that

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[1] http://www.nationalgeographic.com/about/

the geographic society should be based in Washington, D.C which was not only the nation's political center but also its scientific one. The collaboration of the political and the scientific can be seen in the establishment of these centers in the same place.

Nine months after the society was founded, the first *National Geographic Magazine* was published and since then the Society has supported more than 8.000 explorations and research projects, adding to knowledge of earth, sea and sky, as it is revealed in the editorial pages of each issue of the magazine. The National Geographic Society's logo is a yellow portrait frame - rectangular in shape - which appears on the margins surrounding the front covers of its magazines.

After preparing a constitution and a plan of organization, the founders elected Gardiner Greene Hubbard to be the President of the National Geographic Society. He wasn't a scientific man but he wanted to promote knowledge so that "we may all know more of the world upon which we live" (Bryan, ibid.: 27). His son-in-law, Alexander Graham Bell, eventually succeeded him in 1897 following his death. In 1899 Bell's son-in-law Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor was named the first full-time editor of *National Geographic Magazine* and served the organization for fifty-five years until 1954. Members of the Grosvenor family have played important roles in the magazine's organization since its foundation.

The first volumes of *National Geographic Magazine* were accused of being dreadfully scientific for lay people to understand. The public regarded geography up until then as something dull you learn at school and avoid later on. The magazine's editor had to change the public's attitude towards geography and create a much more popular approach to the subject. He studied various books in which geography played an important part and figured out that geographic books that survived over the years did so because "each was an accurate, eyewitness, firsthand account. Each contained simple, straightforward writing - writing that sought to make pictures in the reader's mind" (Bryan, ibid.: 42). Therefore, the editorial board of the magazine started using fewer technical terms so that the magazine could be understood by the laymen. However, its circulation was still very disappointing and for this the Society offered copies for 25 cents and began to accept advertisements.

In the second issue, in April 1889, *National Geographic Magazine* started showing signs of what would turn to be the most fascinating trend of the magazine: the representation of exotic and different-from-the-European-standard people. The lead piece in the second issue was "Africa, its Past and Future" and was written by the President of the Society, Hubbard. Africa was described as a ruthless land that swallowed its explorers. On the other hand, its inhabitants were made of the right stuff to become slaves: the Negro's "temper and disposition...make him a most useful slave. He can endure continuous hard labor, live of little, has a cheerful disposition, and rarely rises against his master" (Bryan, ibid.: 29). It can be seen from this excerpt how the "scientific" study of other places and people was influenced by modes of thinking that were local and not universal. When reporting on the Zulu tribe in 1896 (accompanied by the first bare-breasted natives to appear in NGM), the magazine reported: "They possess some excellent traits, but are horribly cruel once they have smelled blood". The natives were portrayed as having characteristics that are closer to those of a wild beast.

This tendency to represent the exotic, which became a trademark of the magazine, is also observed in the January 1899 article on "Lloyd's Journey Across the Great Pygmy Forest". In this report the nineteenth-century explorer gives an account of his adventures in Africa. In the article the members of the African tribe are described not only as pygmies but as dwarfs. They behave as children in front of the white man since they look frightened and they are reported not to be able to stand still. It is also said: "Their arms and chests were splendidly developed, as much so as in a good specimen of an Englishman". The white man had always been the measure of comparison.

Grosvenor, the magazine's editor, was confident that photographic illustrations would be beneficial to the magazine. In 1915, John Oliver La Gorce wrote in the promotional pamphlet "The Story of the Geographic" that "...the National Geographic Magazine has found a new universal language which requires no deep study...the Language of the Photograph!" (Bryan, ibid.: 118). In April 1916, the first natural color series appeared in the magazine. However, because of the war they would be the last color photographs printed for several years. After the war, Grosvenor confident in the importance of color photography for the increase of sales installed the first color laboratory in

American publishing and enlarged the darkrooms of the magazine. Few were the photographers of that time that spent time and money learning the new technique and those were the ones hired by *National Geographic Magazine*.

The first color photographs to appear in the magazine after the war were the March 1921 Autochromes of India and Ceylon made by Helen Messinger Murdoch. There were 8 photographs in the series that appeared with Sir Ross Smith's article: "From London to Australia by Aëroplane". During the almost 100 years of its use of photography to describe the people around the world, the magazine has developed what is known as the "Red Shirt School of Photography" - a reference to the constant use of red shorts, red caps, and red sweaters as props by photographers to brighten up their pictures" (Bryan, ibid.: 294). The *National Geographic* photographers are known to travel with a bag full of red props that turn their pictures more lively.

In 1942, the American flag appeared for the first time on the Magazine's cover, conferring further meanings to the *National* part of the magazine's name which implies that its Geography has a perspective, it is located in a certain space and this is what gives direction to its representations. It took 17 more years for a color photograph to appear again on the cover. It was in July 1959, that a photograph of the new forty-nine star American flag appeared on the cover. "There was no photograph on the cover in the August issue. In September, a small Navy jet fighter appeared, and color pictures have been on the cover of the *Geographic* ever since" (Bryan, ibid.: 341).

During the 1950s, the new director of the magazine, Melville Grosvenor, pruned the oak-leaf border of the cover of the magazine, narrowed its yellow border and even changed its name: "Five months after the flag cover, *The National Geographic Magazine* became *The National Geographic*; and three months later, in March 1960, simply *National Geographic*" (Bryan, ibid.: 307).

Photography as well as writing started struggling during the 1950s. M. Grosvenor tripled the photographic budget, "increased the size of photographs printed in the Magazine and initiated the practice of having every article begin with a double-page picture. And each issue contained as much color as possible" (Bryan, ibid.: 339). During Melville's tenure, new printing techniques started being used, support for research and exploration expanded and the magazine advanced into television and book publishing. *National Geographic*

became one of the most colorful magazines ever published and M. Grosvenor was considered by the Society as someone who took over "a fussy, stagnant empire and directed it through a decade of exciting, explosive expansion" (Bryan, ibid.: 349).

During its existence the magazine has been accused of publishing articles that are of a pleasing and amenable nature. One of the most important of Grosvenor's editorial guiding principles was to avoid anything that was controversial, critical or partisan in nature. For example, the magazine did not show the suffering that Depression inflicted in the world. When Chandler's February 1937 article "Changing Berlin" appeared in the magazine, it completely omitted the anti-Semitic nature of Hitler's regime. Moreover, few casualties were reported or shown during the war. And "only rarely, in their coverage of World War Two, had battle scenes appeared" (Bryan, ibid.: 295). The fifth and sixth editorial guiding principles of *National Geographic* were:

- Nothing of a partisan or controversial character is printed
- Only what is of a kindly nature is printed about any country or people, everything unpleasant or unduly critical being avoided.

Yet, this position of the magazine started receiving criticisms from many different directions. *National Geographic* was accused of viewing the world "through rose-colored glasses" (Bryan, ibid.: 265). Its effort not to side with anyone in conflict regions was censured as not responsible journalism and therefore its succeeding editors felt that they had to replace "the editorial standards of a Victorian gentleman's drawing room with those of the news room" (ibid.: 173).

Since the very beginning, the National Geographic Society established a tradition of close cooperation with agencies of the United States Government (Bryan, ibid.: 31). During the Second World War the U.S. Army used *National Geographic*'s maps in order to plan its military operations and the U.S. government started considering The Society an integral part of its military mapping. After the war, the magazine was awarded a Citation of Honor for its public service since "the maps and charts of The Society guided men of the Air Force over the waters of the Atlantic and the ice caps of the Far North, over the islands of the Caribbean and the jungles of South America; helped build the air routes of Africa; went with the men of the Air Force over the Himalayas from

India to China; took airmen up the long, hard island route of the Pacific from near defeat in Australia to victory in Japan" (ibid.: 252).

The United States government always supported and praised the work of *National Geographic*. President Harry S. Truman sent the following letter of congratulations to Grosvenor: "Under your direction The Society's magazine has become a household institution in the homes of America and throughout the nations of the world-in short, wherever there is a postal system and wherever geographic knowledge is esteemed" (Bryan, ibid.: 261).

During the 54 years that G. Grosvenor was Managing Editor of *National Geographic*, the magazine increased its circulation from 2,200 in 1900 when he took over the leadership of the magazine to 2,100,009 in 1954 when he retired. Grosvenor was the editor responsible for the increase of publication of semi-nude pictures which became the trademark of the magazine. Although the magazine was accused of corrupting the morals of decent people by publishing so many pictures of nude women (Bryan, ibid.: 298), Grosvenor felt confident that he was representing people as they were.

Although Grosvenor was an editor that revealed himself fundamental for the magazine, during his tenure his daring and creative ideas dissipated and the only aspect that endured was the traditional, conservative one. When Grosvenor's successor John Oliver La Gorce took over, his main aim was to preserve the traditions of the magazine and this is what led the magazine to stagnation, "a stagnation evident in its sluggish circulation which increased by but 53,201 during La Gorce's three year tenure, an average gain of only 17,794 per year" (Bryan, ibid.: 305).

There are several examples we can bring to demonstrate the conservative angle of The Society. In the headquarters of *National Geographic* the sexes were segregated, "a partition separating the men from the women" (Bryan, ibid.: 259). Moreover, La Gorce, the three-year editor of the magazine was known for his dislike of "women, blacks, or Jews-though not necessarily in that order" (ibid.: 299). In the 1950s, *National Geographic* could be compared to "a private men's club" or "a Southern plantation" (ibid: 304). A woman that was hired by the Society at that time noticed "that all the chauffeurs and the elevator operators were black. They called everybody 'Mr. So-and so,' and everybody called them by their first names" (ibid.: 304). Moreover, there were very few

women working for the magazine and most of them occupied secretarial positions.

After La Gorce, Melville Grosvenor became President of the National Geographic Society and Editor of its Magazine. He stayed in the head of the magazine for a decade and these years are remembered by "old-timers on the staff as golden age" (Bryan, ibid.: 337). M. Grosvenor put emphasis on the concept of liveliness in language and in photographs. In language "the verb 'to be' was not allowed. In those days the style was never to use the word 'said.' No one ever *said* anything. You'd use a quote, and the person chuckled, or he grimaced, he murmured, or grunted, and so on. You had to maintain a high level of excitement in the writing. Every verb had to be an active verb; every sentence active" (ibid.: 307).

During M. Grosvenor's administration, a documentary film department was organized that produced four TV documentaries a year and sought commercial sponsorship for the films. In 1968, the Geographic succeeded to attract thirty-five million people to their TV sets with the broadcasting of a special on *Amazon*. The documentary topped "all other shows in a two-week rating period" (Bryan, ibid.: 349). Later on, in 1972, the Society launched its children's book program "with publication of the first set of Books for Young Explorers, a series designed for children four through eight years old" (ibid.: 348).

In spite of all the changes that were occurring in the magazine, it was still seen as a magazine that refrained from exposing the conflicts of this world. This "see-no-evil" attitude was criticized by magazines such as *Newsweek* that wrote in its November 11th, 1963 issue, remarking on the Society's seventy-fifth anniversary in that year: "The world of *National Geographic* is usually a sunlit Kodachrome world of altruistic human achievement in settings of natural beauty, a world without commercial blemish or political disturbance, even, it sometimes seems, a world without germs or sin" (Bryan, ibid.: 350).

The editor of that time, M. Grosvenor responded by saying that this was a conscious decision made by the members of the Society. They believed that the world was made up of wonderful stuff and there was no need for the magazine to focus on the despicable facts of life. Nonetheless, this approach of the magazine was also reflected on other issues that had started becoming very

pressing at that time such as the damage that was caused on the environment by human action. Pollution was perceived by the magazine as being of a controversial nature since many industries that polluted advertised in *National Geographic.*

National Geographic first reported on the human footprint on nature in the article "Our Ecological Crisis" for its December 1970 issue: "The publication of this article was for both the conservative Magazine and its conservative Editor, a major turning point. Publication of that piece marked the Magazine's return to journalistic advocacy, a practice it had all but abandoned after 1916" (Bryan, ibid.: 381-382).

Ted Vosburgh, the three-year-tenure editor of *National Geographic*, who succeeded M. Grosvenor, was the first professional editor of the magazine. During his term the magazine started portraying, pictorially at least, conflicts of this world. However, Vosburgh's could not break completely with the traditional guidelines of the magazine. Under these circumstances, he tried to express his philosophy in his phrase: "The *Geographic*'s way is to hold up the torch, not to apply it" (Bryan, ibid.: 382). The magazine should only present the facts about a problem without adopting a point of view (if this is ever possible) and let its readers decide if they choose to take any steps about it.

Before Vosburgh retired in 1970, the magazine had published articles and pictures on the protests at home and abroad against America's unpopular war in Vietnam, the assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther king Jr., the Six Day War between Israel and the Arab nations, the starvation in Biafra and the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia.

La Gorce's and Vosburgh's tenures were seen in the magazine as interludes between Grosvenors. Their dynasty had almost always headed the editorial board of the magazine and continued to do so. G. M. Grosvenor took over in 1970 and although he acknowledged the magazine's maxim "Evolution, not revolution", articles such as "East Germany: the Struggle to Succeed" that portrayed a political system very different from the American one and "Can the World Feed its People?" which showed photographs of starving people in Bangladesh, started appearing. G. Grosvenor felt compelled to demonstrate that the magazine possessed social conscience and social awareness.

As a result of his attitude, the new editor entered in direct confrontation with the "conservative members of the Board of Trustees led by Melvin M. Payne, the Society's former President and, as of 1976, the new Chairman of its Board of Trustees" (Bryan, ibid.: 389). Nevertheless, the magazine published in 1977 articles on Cuba, Harlem, Quebec, and South Africa - which were zones of political and social conflict. Reporting the issues of the day became one of the changes G. Grosvenor introduced in the magazine as a socially conscious editor. However, he still thought he could publish texts and photographs that would be unencumbered by ideology.

There have been controversies surrounding the representations of the world made by *National Geographic* but the readers of the magazine have mainly seen slow-pace-changes in its approach. Moreover, the Society after questioning itself on its "rose-colored political attitudes and reporting" (Bryan, ibid.: 19), it published an article on Harlem which was a breakthrough for the magazine and its approach of publishing only what was pleasing and agreeable. Up until then, American black people had been ignored by the magazine. No article in *National Geographic* had, in the last 70 years, published anything or even mentioned black poverty and unemployment, segregations, lynchings or the Ku Klux Klan. For example, "in the Magazine's 1949 regional survey, "Dixie Spins the Wheels of Industry," blacks were not mentioned, nor did they appear in any photographs" (Bryan, ibid.: 389).

After this concise historiography based on categories we deem important for the understanding of the magazine's representations we set out to investigate in the present project how writers, editors, photographers and designers of *National Geographic* select photographs and construct written text in order to produce representations of "subaltern" (Spivak 1994) cultures. We try to gain a better understanding of the world and its dominant conceptual systems of thought and make a criticism of science and its apparent positivism. We acknowledge the complexity of much of what we try to understand and we seek to emphasize the interpretative nature of knowledge (Cilliers, 2005: 255). Representations of the Other always involve choice of frameworks and the creation of categories that reveal more about the conceptual world of the one making the representation than that of the Other.

It is essential to study the visual alongside verbal mode of meaning-making since photographs cover an important part of the magazine. Images are a significant and powerful part of multimodal texts, because they transmit a sense of realism, which has a key aesthetic value for the readers. Moreover, the visual mode of meaning making is not, in our view, just a complement and enhancement of the verbal text, but a vital contributor to the way "Other" cultures are "imagined" by *National Geographic's* community of readers. We investigate how photographers use existing resources in order to represent reality in a particular way.

We also analyze the situated relation that is created between the images the magazine produces and the readers. Readers make use of certain processes in order to address images and somehow find themselves in the image. What we narrate about the picture shows who we are since by narrating the picture we are narrating ourselves and, at the same time, our society: our beliefs, our prejudices, our political and social views. By creating a narrative about the picture, we are reflecting upon ourselves and, at the same time exploring the relation between the "social construction of the visual field" and "the visual construction of the social field" (Mitchell, 2005: 351). Although the visual field is considered unmediated, neutral and realistic, it is in fact formed by concepts that are social. Moreover, the social field is also constructed by visual images that mediate our encounters with the Other.

We try to break the western ontology of visuality of subject/object and see images as a subject and the relation between the viewer and the image as a subject/subject relation (de Souza, 2008: 201). In the case of representation of subaltern groups, the photographs that appear in *National Geographic* talk back to the viewers and show them not only realities unknown to them but also ways of living that are different from the ones the magazine's middle and upper class reading audience are acquainted with.

Who are the "we" referred to before? That "we" would include the magazine's readers that speak from a locus of enunciation similar to my own, which is presently Brazil. Brazil, having gone through the experience of colonization, is considered by its former colonizers a postcolonial space. On the other hand, its indigenous precolonial populations that still inhabit it, perceive it as neocolonial (de Souza, 2006: 107). This inter- and cross-culturality imbues

spaces such as Brazil with a deeper awareness of the absence of cultural homogeneity in their culture. Moreover, Brazil is a country that while participating in global processes of modernization sees itself as a more peripheral to the dominant culture.

Taking these reflections into account, our main hypothesis in the present research project is that producers of images and text in *National Geographic* construct visual and verbal narratives of subaltern cultures that are products of socio-historical and cultural processes that are not universal and objective but local and subjective. These constructions do not gain their truth value by their correspondence to some external reality but by the internal coherence found in the text and images. The magazine's perspective is infused with western values, such as modernism, development, rationalism and capitalism. Moreover, when readers of the magazine narrate the Other cultures represented in the magazine, they create a discourse that also has a perspective that is permeated by the culture of the place where they are located, by their locus of enunciation. We believe that by researching the way discourse and images are constructed in *National Geographic*, a better understanding of the concepts employed by the West to the understanding of the "Other" will be acquired. The effect this discourse and images have on the community of readers and on the wider political, social and economical background is explored.

We develop a critical (Hoy, 1994: 105) reading of *National Geographic*. By critical reading we mean an approach to the different topics that help us understand better the verbal and visual construction the magazine makes of subaltern people. *National Geographic* is the *locus* or contact zone (Pratt, 1992: 4) where cultures meet. The representations the magazine makes of subaltern cultures measures them by using instruments that mediate between the culture of the represented and of the one making the representation. We analyze the product, the verbal and visual representations, but we do not lose sight of the processes used to make the representation.

The thread that connects all the categories of analysis we make use of in order to understand *National Geographic* is the notion that in the past it was Imperialism that created the lenses through which the explorer and scientist saw the "Other" (Pratt, 1992: 33-34). Nowadays, it is hegemony that structures

the lenses (Holland and Huggan, 2000: viii). Based on this hypothesis, my theoretical approach to the topic of cultural representation addresses the categories of travel writing, space, visuality, hybridity, the concept of culture, truth, and subaltern groups. The genre of travel writing hid its imperialistic intentions behind its apparent exploratory inclination. In the past as well as in the present, the majority of explorers come from the "supposed" centers of knowledge and are, thus, embedded in cultures that adopt a "purified", scientific and rational way to approach their object of research (Latour, 1993: 29). Their science is supposed to be objective, rational, neutral and not influenced by subjective and local trends of knowledge. However, the place where we are located influences our perspective. And since these scientists are located in a hegemonic space they see things from a hegemonic perspective that can not be purified from the ideology of the culture where they come from. We address the concept of visuality as the tool used by the magazine to prove the alleged objectivity of the stories it tells. Photography can be said to be the prototype of objective representation since reality is "depicted exactly as it is". However, we show that anthropological photography is hybrid since it happens in the "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992: 4). The discussion of each of these categories shows that the truths the magazine constructs about Other cultures are permeated by the hegemonic perspective *National Geographic* is imbued with. The science the magazine creates "is indeed politics pursued by other means, means that are powerful only because they remain radically other" (Latour, 1993: 111). Finally, we see *National Geographic*'s scientific point of view as being the reflection of the social order at the time of the publication.

This thesis is divided in two parts. The first part gives the theoretical background used to interpret the representations of subaltern groups analyzed in the second part. In the first chapter on travel writing we seek to show the interdisciplinarity of this genre and also how scientific exploration has been connected in human history to political, economic and trade interests. Geography is not an innocent science since its representations create the desire in dominant nations to explore and gain control of the natural resources, people and potential of the Other's land. The dominant Western culture uses rationality as an excuse to disguise its will to improve the social order of the societies it deems inferior to its own. We also discuss the concept of space and

show how identity and knowledge are connected to place since human experiences are spatial, tied to specific places. People connect to space in such ways as emotionally, physically, genealogically, economically or nationally. Whatever the relation people have to space, this engagement shapes and forms their cultural identity.

In the second chapter, we work with the categories of visuality and photography and show that in spite of them being considered realistic and objective means of seeing and representing reality they are, in fact, subjective and hybrid categories. We define the field of Visual Culture to which our work belongs and deconstruct the notion of neutrality photographs are invested in.

In the third chapter to defend that cultures are tied to spaces and should be seen as texts or narratives whose social semantics we are trying to interpret. Analysts should stop looking for the essence of a culture or a common nature of the human species when approaching a culture and make an effort to figure out how the participants in a culture conceive reality and act in it. However, each researcher will interpret the different symbolic forms depending on the way they speak to him/her.

And we wrap up the theoretical part of our work with a critical discussion of subalternity and we demonstrate the relation truth has to systems of knowledge and not to some exterior reality or nature.

In the second part of our thesis we analyze the discursive and visual representations *National Geographic* makes of different subaltern groups: the Cholitas in Bolivia and the bare-breasted Lisu women represent different ways of describing the subaltern gender, slum dwellers in Mumbai exhibit the modes of representation the magazine uses to describe the economic subaltern and its space, the construction of Iranian identity in *National Geographic* demonstrates how the political subaltern is "imagined" by the magazine, rickshaw pullers are the representatives of professional subalternity and finally Indigenous groups represent the native subaltern. We make an interpretation in two levels: how the magazine represents these groups and how this representation speaks to us. In the conclusion, we show how the social mediates any representation.

CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY, TRAVEL WRITING AND SPACE

Geography and travel writing as Imperialistic tools

Travel writing and geography are nowadays perceived as ways to get acquainted with people and places in far away sites in our globalized world. However, it is crucial for our understanding of Imperialism and its apparatus to recognize that geography and travel writing have been used, during the course of history, as tools to articulate the authority of the *status quo*. Therefore, we show how these genres brought upon the people back home the desire to control the newly found territories and their destinies. Pratt (1992) affirms that imperialism projected on these lands imaginative, historical, political and economic desires. Seeing these experiences not as isolated but as complementary and interdependent is paramount in our effort to understand imperialism as a wide range experience in which culture is usually exempted from its participation.

One of the most popular institutions for the advance of knowledge on spaces and cultures has been *National Geographic*. Although we define the magazine's genre as travel writing, we admit that this term is used as an umbrella label for a genre that is hybrid in its nature. Holland and Huggan (2000) admit that:

> "Travel writing...is hard to define, not least because it is a hybrid genre that straddles categories and disciplines. Travel narratives run from picaresque adventure to philosophical treatise, political commentary, ecological parable, and spiritual quest. They borrow freely from history, geography, anthropology, and social science, often demonstrating great erudition, but without seeing fit to respect the rules that govern conventional scholarship" (8-9).

Travel writing is a genre that has become very popular and has been accepted as another form of literature as it spreads cultural information around the world, disseminates folk wisdom, forms our views about the Other and positions us culturally by making us acquire a cultural perception of ourselves.

The fact that travel writing starts being conceived as a literary artifact makes it stand between fact and fiction and become an example of what White calls "fictions of factual representation":

"Travel narratives...are examples of what Hayden White calls "fictions of factual representation": they claim validity-or make as if to claim it-by referring to actual events and places, but then assimilate those events and places to a highly personal vision. Travel writing thus charts the tension between the writer's compulsion to report the world they see and their often repressed desire to make the world conform to their preconception of it" (apud. Holland and Huggan, 2000: 10).

For that reason, we turn to the very beginnings of travel writing as a genre. However, we are aware that our analysis of the Imperial aspects of travel writing and geographical knowledge shapes our views and understanding of the present which means that the way we understand these genres in the past will influence our ways of seeing them in the present. Stafford (1999) traces the roots of travel writing in scientific exploration that reached its peak in the nineteenth century Britain (294). He claims that Britain launched and "sustained a programme of scientific exploration linked directly with her Imperial and trading interests" (ibid. 294). The British scholar describes the explorer as a scientist or inventor who intervened with his research in the "newly found" space that he saw as a laboratory and also, simultaneously, he influenced with his research the metropolis he was addressing.

In 1830, the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) was founded in England and its managers included "cartographers, military officers, colonial administrators, scientists, politicians, diplomats, and travelers" (Stafford, ibid.: 296) as its members. The need for the establishment of the Royal Geographical Society was strongly felt among the British society of that time because of its expansionist character and its desire for knowledge and control of its newly conquered spaces; that is of the subjugated environment and its societies. Although the Society was first founded for the advancement of geographical science, its managers conceived of geography as a scientific cultural tool that entangled in it the wish for Imperial rule. It was believed that geographical

information would not only help in the advancement of science but it would also improve commerce and make military endeavors possible.

It was understood that one of the ways of symbolically ruling the explored land was by the creation of the map because it made possible the elaboration "of a space-time grid that enabled the marshalling of the information, troops, and resources necessary to subdue and govern the vast territory" (Stafford, 1999: 305). And he (ibid.) continues:

> The highly processed data gathered by the explorers were introduced into Imperial culture through scientific societies, newspapers, and museums, influencing attitudes towards distant territories and peoples. The RGS remained the key institution in this process, shaping the make-up and agendas of outbound expeditions and mediating inbound results. Exploration and its narration, which represented new lands by word, map, and illustration, taught Britons to think about, act in, and finally absorb these areas into their consciousness. Exploration thus became an important part of the process of imperialism, for even when it did not lead directly to annexation, it enclosed vast tracts of the periphery, including their inhabitants and resources, within Europe's purview (310).

This objectification of the explored land simplified the appropriation and use of the space. As it has been mentioned before, Imperialism used various cultural artifacts to fortify itself, such as geography and travel writing. There was a two-way relation between Imperialism and the cultural artifacts mentioned above. Imperialism supported the exploration and exploration strengthened the Empire. The stories explorers said about these lands and the narratives they created were cultural artifacts which engaged political and ideological causes. Said (1994) does not believe that writers are mechanically influenced by ideology or economic history but that they are so deeply entrenched in the history, beliefs and culture of their own society that every experience is shaped by them (xxii).

Said (1994) refers to imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (9). However, imperialism also acquired a cultural, ideological, political, economic

and social character. The aforementioned cultural critic admits that the efforts to create an inventory of the interpellation of culture by empire have been, up to now, only elementary (61). He desires to reveal the interdependence between things since imperialism has cultural dimensions that reflect "overlapping territories and intertwined histories" lived by people that find themselves inhabiting spaces where there is military, commercial and cultural contact (ibid.: 61).

Said (1994) claims that "the tendency in anthropology, history, and cultural studies in Europe and the United States is to treat the whole of world history as viewable by a kind of Western super-subject, whose historicizing and disciplinary rigor either takes away or, in the post-colonial period, restores history to people and cultures "without" history" (35). What forms does the alliance between intellectual work and institutions of power take and to which level are the institutions of nationalism and scholarship interrelated? We find stimulating the effort to discover alternative norms for intellectual work and we expect that these alternative norms will emerge from the resistance of the non-western world to western domination and from the creation and formation of native nationalism. Said (ibid.) credits as imperative the question of the relationships we create to others. He supports a scientific and humane desire "to understand the Other hermeneutically and sympathetically in modes not influenced by force" (56).

Many cultures make representations of other cultures in order to understand and finally control them. However, few cultures succeed in actually controlling other cultures. The question of power that the representation acquires through the legitimacy of the culture performing the representation is something characteristic of Western knowledge. Europe represented non-European land and people in such a way as to confirm its power and sustain control. Cultures that had the experience of colonization "lacked a discursive authority or a legitimate position of speech from which to represent Europe" (Pratt, 1992: 190). The interdependent histories lived by whites and natives were told by institutions of authority installed by the dominant white man (109). There was a back and forth movement among the whites, the natives and the institutions of authority. All of them were formed, transformed and infiltrated by the experience of contact.

In the nineteenth century there was the belief that natural resources were there for the human species to make use of by means of their technologies. The conviction that European rationalism would lead to a betterment of the world encouraged also the development of the civilizing mission that claimed to help natives improve their societies.

First, there needed to occur a registering of the resources and the people that inhabited the newly found space. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) very thoroughly described in her stimulating book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, the relations that were created when travel writers, botanists or anthropologists reached a space that would be the subject of their observation and description. The author begins her analysis in 1735 with the publication of Linnaeus's Systema Naturae and she tries to make a critical exploration of the impact of natural history on travel writing and its relation to systems of European domination, in short the relation of systems of knowledge to power.

Pratt (1992) coined the term "contact zones" to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, usually in unequal relations of power in situations such as colonialism or slavery (4). She uses the term contact because she desires to emphasize the relational aspect of interaction. In spite of the asymmetrical relations of power, people end up interacting and seeking to reach an understanding of the Other's cultural practices. Nevertheless, this contact most times does not happen peacefully but involves struggles.

Exploration was an activity that happened in the "contact zone" and resulted in a change of "perspectives, probabilities and processes in its parent culture and those that become its objects" (Stafford, 1999: 294). The explorer, from 1790s to the First World War, was an agent of the European "drive for wealth, control, and knowledge of the natural world" (ibid. 294). In many cases exploration was also a journey into the hidden aspects of the self together with geographical exploration.

The periphery represented for the European ascending middle class a space where they could imagine themselves occupying different from their already established positions. Using science and technology as tools, the middle class could develop and recreate society in the *terra incognita* on grounds different from the old and traditional ones.

These characteristics of exploration and travel writing that were embedded in the scientific aspect during the British Empire influenced also its sister institution in the United States. The discourse of the American travel writer does not fall far from that of his European counterpart. Although travel writers seemed keen on acquiring knowledge of a different world, this knowledge was never naive. Their understandings were usually based on dominant knowledges of how our world works and sometimes led to economic exploration of the places being scrutinized. When we raise the subject of travel writing, it is thought-provoking to examine how dominant cultures that set out to explore our world made "a clear distinction between the (interested) pursuit of wealth and the (disinterested) pursuit of knowledge" (Pratt, 1992: 18). Pratt (ibid.) claims "in the second half of the eighteenth century, scientific exploration was to become a magnet for the energies and resources of intricate alliances of intellectual and commercial elites all over Europe" (23).

During colonization the demand for the systematization of nature and its species sprung with the purpose of making an inventory of our world. Scientists started describing and cataloguing the natural species that inhabit our world while extracting them not only from their physical habitat but also from the societies whose economies and histories they used to be part of. This acquisition of "planetary consciousness" (Pratt, ibid.: 29) was the product of a travel writing and exploration that naturalized the global presence and authority of the European subject.

The travelers or scientists of the Royal Geographic Society or National Geographic Society appeared as harmless observers, but their "systematizing of nature represents not only a European discourse about non-European worlds...but an urban discourse about non-urban worlds, and a lettered, bourgeois discourse about non-lettered, peasant worlds" (Pratt, ibid.: 35). These scientists' innocence and apparent scientific objectivity blurred the hegemonic view that their discourse produced.

Like every person, these travel writers and explorers could not go beyond their own conceptual frameworks. They ended up appropriating not only the natural world but also the societies under study by using their own "benign" categories. When researching societies, it seemed crucial to study their "forms of government, religion, ceremonies, domestic economy, cattle management,

medicine, and so on" (Pratt, ibid.: 43) because these were the categories western perception deemed worthy of study when researching the level of "development" of a society. There were cases though that these more peripheral-to-the-western-model systems of societies were valued because of their very lack of western institutions.

When the bourgeois travel writers described the "discovered" space they were inclined to depict it as "uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied" and its people, in spite of the position they occupied in their society, were mostly portrayed as peasants or hunters, even though they would never think of themselves as such (Pratt, ibid.: 51). The socioecological relations that dominated the place before the coming of the travel writer were ignored and all concepts and institutions were evaluated and ranked discursively according to the system of the modern state.

Capitalist improvement has been used as a universal aspiration, as the dominant system that guarantees a general "improvement" in the state of things. In contrast, humanitarianism and science reinforce a form of anti-conquest which makes "the claim to the innocent pursuit of knowledge" (Pratt, ibid.: 68, 84). However, these newly invented forms of "Euroimperial interventions, and new legitimating ideologies: the civilizing mission, scientific racism, and technology-based paradigms of progress and development" (ibid.: 74) end up perpetuating the older forms of colonization.

Pratt (ibid.) describes this conflictual relationship travelers had to the space they were visiting, exploring and describing. On the one hand, they thought of themselves as innocent reporters of their findings. On the other hand, their writing demonstrated a strong desire to possess the "found object", the "new" land and its people (57). Nonetheless, this desire for possession was not to be expressed in a violent but in a symbolic way, through discourse.

Pratt (ibid.) does not wish to argue that the representations of landscape that occurred during this period she describes are intentionally false but that they were formed and "conditioned by a particular historical and ideological juncture, and by particular relations of power and privilege" (127). Moreover, the depictions of the people that inhabited these places had the tendency to homogenize them and represent them as a collective where the individual lost his/her own specificities. Travelers wanted to see and know everything about

their subject of exploration but they succeeded to see and know what their conceptual frameworks allowed them. These representations transpired the wish to insert these societies to the European economic, social and knowledge systems:

"Subsistence lifeways, non-monetary exchange systems, and self-sustaining regional economies are anathema to expansive capitalism. It seeks to destroy them wherever it finds them. The bottom line in the discourse of the capitalist vanguard was clear: América must be transformed into a scene of industry and efficiency; its colonial population must be transformed from an indolent, undifferentiated, uncleanly mass lacking appetite, hierarchy, taste, and cash, into wage labor and a market for metropolitan consumer goods" (Pratt, 1992: 154-155).

The American scholar continues that being unexplored, the newly "found" non-capitalist land was regarded as backward and neglected and its inhabitants were considered as beings incapable of reaching the levels of progress that Europeans were enjoying. Based on their lack of rationalization and their need of guidance, North Europe introduced its "civilizing mission" which sought to turn the natives into Europeans or to position them in the western ranking system (152).

Undeniably, the substitution of local knowledges by "European national and continental knowledges associated with European forms and relations of power" was seen as heroic back home (Pratt, ibid.: 204). The "empty, discovered and a-historical" places were about to begin their history and organize themselves in societies and economies based on European moulds. Their wild nature was going to be tamed and cultivated together with their wild cultures. Meaning was going to be attributed to spaces that were characterized by scarcity of meaning. European intervention was needed in order to succeed where the natives failed.

Pratt (ibid.) argues that Europe appreciated mostly controlled spaces and "domesticated landscapes" (150). Whenever there was grandeur attributed to the wilderness, it was with the perspective of that space being transformed into a cultivated area under European supervision. These landscapes after World

War II, having gone through decolonization and living a postcolonial era which brought underdevelopment, were described as impoverished by writers such as Moravia and Theroux, though (ibid.: 218). However, these writers never associated the poor conditions of the previously pristine areas with the imposition of European modes of production and economies on societies whose histories were shaped by different principles from the European ones. Nowadays, there are very few pristine areas to be discovered and because of the destruction of the environment there is a revived interest in travel writing in virgin lands seen as shelters from industrialization and commodity capitalism. Still, some of these natural spaces become commodities for vacation spots of upper class consumers.

How different is travel writing in our times from the imperialistic, heroic type Pratt (ibid.) analyzes? The travel writer would study the "empty and uninhabited" landscape, would create a narrative of discovery, observation and collection and would dream of how to transform the landscape into a productive space. Nowadays, however, travel writing acquires a different tone. As there are not many more places to be "discovered", the narratives travel writers, like the ones of *National Geographic*, create are usually of personal experience and adventure. Contemporary realities are very different from the ones travel writers encountered in the "newly found" world. The discourses of postcolonialism and postmodernism influence other discourses such as travel writing. In which ways does *National Geographic* adopt the new approaches and in which ways it maintains the imperial codes of meaning making, verbal and visual? As Holland and Huggan (2000) inquire: "Is travel writing best seen as an agent of (Western) cultural domination, or might it rather be seen as transgressive, an instrument of self-critique?" (x).

Holland and Huggan (2000) claim that travel writing today is becoming more multicultural because the metropolis has become multiethnic and difference has turned out to be a integral part of its reality. Nations, in general, are not seen anymore as homogeneous entities but as *loci* where different cultures mingle (22). Global forces have made our world more accessible and more hybrid.

Traditionally the travel writer has been a predominantly Anglophone, a "white, male, heterosexual, middle class" type that offers the exotic for

consumption and sometimes tends to perpetuate "ethnocentrically superior attitudes to Other cultures, peoples, and places" (Holland and Huggan, ibid.: x, viii). The figure of the travel writer can not be seen neither as an imperialistic nor as an innocuous observer. He occupies a place in-between, always curious and fascinated by the difference of the Other and at the same time always stubbornly occupying the subject position of the seer looking at the seen.

According to Holland and Huggan (ibid.) the travel writer is an eyewitness whose reports carry the mark of authenticity (16). His narratives tend to seduce the readers because of the cultural voyeurism they provoke. The different and the strange become captivating and the seer ends up having an erotic attraction to the seen. On the other hand, the seer maintains his authority over the seen by being able to judge the object of his admiration. And by comparing the local systems of the Other's culture to his own, he always finds his own superior. The aforementioned authors believe that travel writing has acquired "a highly patriarchal model that indulges male fantasies surrounding the objectified-"othered"-female body" (20).

When we consider the ethical value of travel writing, we realize that it is a discourse that can strongly influence the views of its lay readership about the "Other". The truths or the myths this discourse creates are conceptions that spring from the ideology of the travel writers who are products of their own history and culture that are located in specific places.

SPACE

Reading spaces according to time

National Geographic and its readers have considered the magazine's verbal and visual texts as scientific and therefore rational, neutral and unmediated. We show that geography and travel writing, the pursue of knowledge on Other people and spaces, have never been disinterested sciences but have always been invested by unequal relations of power.

National Geographic is a magazine produced in the West but has as its subject the western and non western world. The magazine's narratives use the western concept of time as linear and progressive in order to situate cultures,

identities and the creation of spaces in different parts of the world. We show in this chapter a change of focus in the way we read Other cultures. We propose that cultures should be read in relation to the space they occupy since place in an important determiner in the formation of cultures. Moreover, we show that every space is immersed in the culture that has participated in its formation.

Spaces are usually conceived and represented in the West as being situated in a linear timeline that goes from natural to cultural, from places that have suffered little human impact to places that have been molded and structured to serve human needs. Value is granted to the different space textures according to their capacity to fulfill diverse human needs such as biological, social, cultural, economic and psychological ones. The representation of western and non western spaces and places in the magazine creates what Mignolo (2000) calls "narratives of transition" (apud. de Souza, 2006: 230). On the one side of the linear conception of time, the west and its modernity can be found to whose state of things non western or primitive cultures, identities and space should aspire to. This process of transition to modernity uses as a yardstick the concept of time and not the concept of space.

We try to understand the concept of space by taking into account not only the concept of time but also such factors as the human, social, cultural, economic and nationalistic ones. Space is conceived and defined in many different ways according to the perspective each theoretician adopts. For some economic factors structure space, for others the social, cultural, aesthetic or experiential component deserves emphasis when we study space. We explore the different definitions of space by starting out from a perspective that although might not be dominant nowadays, describes a relation to space and place that might have been prevailing among the earliest versions of human species.

Space and Identity

Lawlor (1991) describes the relation Australian Aborigines had to earth as an identitarian one. In his words: "The question of identity, of *who* I am, is resolved in the Aboriginal consciousness by knowing the full implications of *where* I am" (236). Their reading of the world carried physical, metaphysical and symbolic aspects. They read the natural world as a footprint of the creating

forces that carried the potency of the memory of its origin. Lawlor (1991) reveals that "the Aborigines called this potency the "Dreaming" of a place, and this Dreaming constitutes the sacredness of the earth" (1).

According to Lawlor (1991), aborigines possess the ability to sense magnetic and vital force flows emanating from the earth which they call songlines:

"Perhaps the oldest geomancy tradition, songlines are fundamental to Aboriginal initiatic knowledge and religion. Songlines are so named because they are maps written in songs, depicting mythic events at successive sites along a walking trail that winds through a region. Each Aboriginal tribe inherited a network of songlines, and all travel in the lands of neighboring tribes was done along these lines. In previous epochs, according to John Mitchell, this appears to have been a sacred tradition throughout the world" (ibid.: 104-105).

These songlines, which are a reading of the forces that spring from the earth, find their physical expression in the geophysical formations created by these forces. At the same time they carry metaphysical connotations because they symbolize the potency of the creating forces. Moreover, songlines create a history, a tradition and a culture for the people who sing them since mythical events are recounted in them. When there were tribal journeys, songlines helped the tribes to relate to the world as a whole and understand the Dreamtime, the potency of the memory of the new places' origins. Tribes exchanged songs, dances and mythic visions and spiritually understood each other's origins and culture (Lawlor, 1991: 126):

"The songlines comprise chapters of a Dreamtime "book" of songs, dances, and stories. Each story tells about the formation of a place, and each place tells a story through its topography and subtle energy. This nexus of land and Dreamtime culture is a memory that humanity shares with the earth. With the earth as memory, Aboriginal consciousness is free to focus solely on the power of immediate perception" (ibid.: 236).

The Aborigines perceived reality using space as a parameter and therefore their stories were based on the description of places. On the other hand, the modern world perceives reality using time as a parameter and thus it employs the time axis to tell its stories (Lawlor, 1991: 239). Moreover, place defined the personal identity of the aborigines in physical and metaphysical terms. Physically, place provided food and covered the basic needs of the tribes. On the other hand, place guaranteed the metaphysical "*act* of "dreaming" the country into existence" (235). The "Dreaming" allowed them to trace back the history of their people and their origins by using the forces emanating from their natural place:

> "To the Aborigines, place is inseparable from the original activities that gave it form. Reliving those activities in performance makes *place* inseparable from *meaning*. All experience of place and country is culturalized" (Lawlor, 1991: 236).

Their identity derived its meaning from their place and not from such categories as sex, race, social class or religion that we have learned to use in order to form and define identity in the world today. So much so, that they painted topographical images of their place on their bodies during initiation ceremonies probably, in order to demonstrate that who they were turning to be was directly related to where they were. These maps together with the songlines defined their origins, their history and finally their identity. Aboriginal religion strived to reconnect the humanity, nature and gods. Nature instills life to the human and the human imbues nature with meaning. Moreover, Dreamtime powers flow "from the origin through all things, forming an invisible web on which the species and societies of the earth row, nourish, and reflect each other" (Lawlor, 1991: 279).

When Aborigines relived the original activities by performing dances and singing their songlines, they were, in fact, saturating the place with meaning. Each formation or object in their environment was given importance and meaning because of the familiarity that was created during the singing and performing of the *genealogy* of the place. The Aborigines' songlines, which talk about the formation of a place and the mythic events that took place there and

the Foucaultian concept of *genealogy* bear some similarities as well as some differences.

So, let us try to understand the two ways of looking at the relation between place and genealogy: Place, for the Aborigines, reveals a familiarity not only with a certain kind of nature, forces of origin, people, objects and spatial arrangements but also with ways of thinking, modes of perception and methods of construction of knowledge. Places are shaped according to human modes of perception of the physical and the metaphysical. These modes of perception further disclose systems of knowledge that prevailed in certain places through time. De Souza and Andreotti (2008) affirm that in Amazonian perspectivism "what one knows (ie. existent, already formulated knowledge) accrues from and originates in the *place* in which one is located when one perceives or constructs knowledge" (6). Place acquires a central role in the modeling of human perception and knowledge since the experiences lived socially are tied to the specific place.

Foucault, however, attributes greater importance to the parameter of time in the connection between place and knowledge by using the concept of *genealogy* to refer to the history of social meaning (apud. de Souza and Andreotti, 2008: 6). Meanings and knowledges are constructed and are products of a certain society established in a certain place. Through the years, human beings living in a certain context socially produce their own interpretations of the physical and metaphysical forces and structures of their place and based on these interpretations they construct their knowledges.

Although Foucault uses time in order to research knowledges diachronically, he does not attribute to time the characteristic of linearity. Time is also a kind of knowledge which is perceived differently in different places. Western societies, because of their place and the knowledges that have sprung from their physical position, tend to conceive time as something linear. This Western conception has become dominant because of economic, historical and political reasons and has spread even to societies that physically are not considered western. Nevertheless, there are many societies whose physical and social context has led them to conceive time in a different manner, such as circular time or time as a pendulum.

When performing genealogical research of systems of knowledge and truths of other societies, the researcher gains a better understanding of the present ideology of the specific groups. Their ideology starts being conceived as the product of a social group established in a certain place and living in a specific context. On the other hand, when researchers perform the same genealogical research of their own systems of knowledge and truths, they might have a chance to learn that also their own interpretations are the product of a certain context. The value given to each system of knowledge is also a product of specific power relations established in certain periods of time.

Space as an intimate human experience

Let us explore now a little bit more the triadic relation between the physical space, the human and the metaphysical by turning to Tuan (2007) who has tried to define space not as something objective but as something subjective which is perceived through the experience a person has when occupying and living in a certain space. The humanist geographer makes a separation between space and place based on the experiences people have when circulating in any one of these locations. In his words: "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (3). Space represents territorial human and nonhuman needs and is usually defended against trespassers. Space demands experiencing the unknown, the unfamiliar and the uncertain and reaching maturity through the learning acquired from these experiences. On the other hand, place has a more felt value since it is the locus where our biological needs are satisfied. Place is safe and cozy. Human beings move from space back to place and back and part of their existence is characterized by this "dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom" (ibid.: 54).

Tuan (2007) studies the relations between space and place. Space is more abstract than place and in many cases space is transformed into place as we get to be acquainted with it and experience it in a more intimate way (6). Though a person might try to describe conceptually his/her experiences in a certain place, s/he will have a difficulty expressing experiences that are felt through our senses. The subjectivity of the experience is difficult to put into

words since it is compounded of feeling and thought, this means of subjective and objective components that are forms of attachment and knowing that are interwoven in the act of experiencing. Experiencing objects or places through our senses and with our mind turns them into a concrete reality (18).

Human beings by having an intimate experience with their bodies organize the objects and space that surround them so that they can serve their needs, may these be biological or social (Tuan, 2007: 34). However, we attach meaning and organize our space according to our cultural background. Decisions such as the places which objects occupy, how they are linked or separated and how places create a network for us have a strong cultural aspect and contribute to our spatial experience. This experience of location is so important that makes people regard their place or homeland as "the center of the world" (17) since center means "also "origin" and carries a sense of starting point and beginning" (ibid.: 126). To put it in other words, the place where our first spatial experiences are lived has a central position to our further understanding of space and reality.

People experience space through movement and place through pause. Space carries a sense of "outside", of exposure and experience, of public life. On the other hand, place functions as the "inside", as the intimacy and safety that private life is supposed to offer (Tuan, 2007: 107). Human time and space are related, in this perspective, because stages in life are marked by pauses in space. Moreover, movement in space requires time but also attachment to place demands time.

Tuan (2007) points out that space is a dimension that has the human being as its measure. We perceive space by using our body as a measure for direction, location, and distance (44). However, the subjective experience of space is always formed by the culture in which the human bodies live and create their experiences. When human beings fulfill their biological needs, their desire to explore space beyond enforced limits is culturally conditioned. Having satisfied their survival requirements, human aspirations for further space exploration is shaped up by social, psychological and even spiritual needs (58). Culturally, socially and even ideologically, some cultures express fear of open space. This fear may spring up from dread of the unknown, from panic of loss of the support of the group and apprehension of the effects of expansion on the

culture of the group. On the other hand, some cultures encourage conquests, migrations and movement of population since the open space symbolizes opportunities for economic betterment and social ascent. Having said this, we can now realize that the white man and the Indigenous native create and are parts of cultures that are also results of the relation each one of them has to space.

Space and time coexist and time contributes to the transformation of space into place since it takes time to get acquainted with a space, have control over it and saturate it with meaning. Time makes space intimate and turns it into a place where our needs are nurtured. Permanence of objects and places provide the human being with safety and stability. Moreover, the intimate relationships that are created in a certain place imbue it with value. Human cultures turn to be place-bound because of these intimate relationships and experiences that are lived in the specific place. Going into exile has always been thought as one of the worst disgraces that can happen to human beings since the exiled find themselves deprived of all emotional attachments to places, objects and people.

Nowadays, in spite of our times being characterized by a great spatial mobility among the human race, there is still a strong emotional attachment to homeland. Many people travel around the world or move to other countries but always dream of going back to their homeland. Homeland appears to be central in a person's life since it is indicative of the origins of the person. Any other attachment to place will always be perceived as more superficial probably because the first experience of bonding to a place is the most intense one. The desire to go back in space, by the return to the homeland, is also a movement of going back in time. A person traveling around the world on business or for pleasure moves in the present or future time. However, somebody going back home moves back in time, towards the familiar.

Space as the mold of national identity

During Enlightenment in Europe, this connection of people to their homeland acquired a political tone and national states started springing up. Anderson (1991) calls nations imagined communities because they are

communities whose members do not know most of their fellows but they imagine they have something in common with them. The physical aspect of territory and the cultural aspect of language are the elements that gave imagined unity to the national feeling.

In order for the political aspect to acquire force, the religious element that was dominant up until then, had to lose part of its power. And language came to act as a mediator of this transfer of power since Latin, the sacred language suffered gradual demotion while the local vernaculars came to be accepted as official languages (Anderson, 1991: 18-19). With the advent of print capitalism, a new fixity was given to language "which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (ibid.: 44). Language became an essential component of the identity of a certain group of people that inhabited a particular territory.

Nation-ness in Anderson's (ibid.) terms is a cultural artifact (4) that manifests itself differently according to the ways it is imagined by diverse groups (6). Nation-ness is "inseparable from political consciousness" (135) and is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (3). Although the political factor is given prominence in the imagining of a nation and this imagining seems to reflect more the present and future identity and territorial aspirations of a group of people, there is a common element between Anderson's imagining and the Aboriginal "Dreaming".

Through a common language, the nation constructs an image of its antiquity, of its origins and the stories that gave glory to its people. It reconstructs a common history of the land its people inhabit and of the interaction of its people with the specific territory and based on this history, people construct their national identity. Therefore, in spite of the idea of the nation having been the product of modernity, it has had and still does have its diverse manifestations in the different places it emerges. Moreover, political consciousness and territorial attachment has always existed and still exists in different forms even for non print cultures.

Nonetheless, there was a change in the conception of time in the eighteenth century Europe that helped create the sense of nation that was established there. This turn in the way time was conceived occurred due to the turn from a religious to a rational explanation of events. Up until then, time was

conceived as "something close to what Benjamin (1973) calls *Messianic time*, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (apud. Anderson, 1991: 24). Events which were not linked either temporally or causally made sense as the result of Divine will. With the emergence of science as the tool of explanation of events, simultaneity started being conceived as temporal coincidence. Different events are linked just because they happened on the same date and this finds full expression in the thriving of the newspaper in eighteenth century Europe.

Anderson (1991) affirms that institutions of power such as the census, the map and the museum changed the way in which national states were imagined (163-164). These three institutions are connected to the human, the natural and the historical element. The census studies the human beings of a certain place and their habits, the map represents their physical environment and the museums reconstruct the history of the place.

Space and capitalistic expansion

Let us focus now on Lefebvre (1991) who bears similarities as well as differences with the conceptions of space that we have already touched upon. His idea that space produces society and culture and is produced by them is implied in the writings of Lawlor (1991), Tuan (2007) and Anderson (1991). However, Lefebvre (ibid.) is interested in analyzing the impact capitalism had on social space. In a way, he gives another turn of the screw to the political aspect Anderson (ibid.) added to space. He considers the economic parameter and the social relations that it creates as the dominant factor in the production of space.

With the advent of capitalism and industrialism the natural space of forests, rivers and lakes started "vying with the bureaucratic and political space to which the nation states have been giving form since the seventeenth century" (Lefebvre, 1991: 231). Since social space contains the social actions of the collective and the individuals who inhabit it, Lefebvre (ibid.) considers that space nowadays is produced by the forces of capitalism which are the prevailing ones all over the world.

He laments the loss of natural space and the establishment on its ruins of "the space of accumulation (the accumulation of all wealth and resources:

knowledge, technology, money, precious objects, works of art and symbols)" (ibid.: 49). The world market often dictates how technical and scientific knowledge is used to transform natural space for economic reasons (65). As natural space is disappearing, it is being transformed into the background of the picture but it is simultaneously acquiring symbolic value. It is symbolic of the human cultures that left it intact on the one hand and on the other hand of human cultures that see it only as the raw material out of which the productive forces of a particular society shape their space. The more the human beings lose touch with their natural environment, the more nature becomes a mental product, a fiction (31), a veil for ideology. Lefebvre (ibid.) emphasizes the movement of the humanity away from natural space.

However spaces have a diachronic and synchronic component since they change over time but they always carry in them traces of past spaces. Space reveals dominant activities that exist in a certain space in a certain time. Forms and social relations that characterize a specific space point to social realities that are dominant in specific chronological times.

Lefebvre (1991) aims at constructing a "unitary theory" that would reconnect the fields of the physical, the mental and the social (11) and seeks to link culture to the matter. Moreover, he reckons that social space can be used as a tool for the analysis of society (34). He affirms that a group's ideology and the discourses it consists of intervene and shape the production of its social space (44). Nature, labor and the organization of labor, technology and knowledge which are the forces of production together with the relations of production play a part in the production of space (46).

With the onset of capitalism, industrialization and urbanization people stopped relating to their space in the traditional, religious manner, in other words as the place where good and evil forces are at war. Natural space turned into productive and residential space and urban centers and large cities were invested with value as "at once great centers of production and great centers of political power" (Lefebvre, ibid.: 55). This political power created new spatial forms as a form of imposition:

"The arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state
buildings, introduces a phallic or more precisely a phallocratic element

into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress,
is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator" (98).

We can see from the different theories discussed in this chapter how space acquires different meanings according to the importance given to one or other relation (physical, emotional, economical) human beings create to the place they occupy and consider as theirs. However, in all these theories the forming of the human identity is significantly influenced by the way we deal with and connect with our place.

The representation of space as a cultural product

Human beings through the centuries have tried to represent their direct experience with space. Lefebvre (1991) believed that representations of space have an impact on the production of space because they have the power to intervene and modify "spatial *textures* which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology" (42). Representation as sign has the power to construct a new world different from the natural one by using the power of abstraction (135).

The codes used to represent space can reveal the ideology behind the interaction of the human beings with their space. Representation, nowadays is not seen as something secondary or contingent and as Casey (2002) affirms representation has become "integral to the perception of landscape itself-indeed, part of its being and essential to its manifestation" (xv). Representations of space affect us experientially, we abstract from the image the way it must feel to be in the place represented.

For Casey (2002) representation is always a transmutation since representation means finding another place of exhibition, which can be a painting or a photograph or a map. He calls this process "re-implacing" since the other place where representation occurs is a place of a different order (24). Representations of places make their spectators move from the physical to the mental and back. The physical image makes us think and abstract from it the physicality of the place represented based on our knowledge on places. This transmutation causes a free exchange between mind and matter and each one

of them influences the other in ways that are unexpected. When we talk about representation of places, the world is seen "not only with one's physical eyes but with the eye of the soul" (71).

Moreover, every image turns its spectators into active participants since its creator, its painter or photographer, always offers his/her own position and point of view to the spectator. Later on, the spectator replaces the artist by occupying his/her place (29). The process of re-implacement of the original scene and replacement of the artist by the spectator are procedures embedded in any kind of representation.

Representations of places "supplement", using Derrida's term, the original scene by "being both additional to it (insofar as the work of art is itself a thing or thinglike) and necessary to its aesthetic well-being (as its transmuted presentation)" (Casey, 2002: 24). Representation signals the rebirth of a place in the frame of a painting or a photograph by means of its transformation.

Finally, we have discussed in this first chapter the importance of place, of the position scientists occupy when they construct their allegedly objective, rational and neutral knowledge. However, we show that the relation we create to place influences our perspective and knowledge. And since western travel writers and photographers are located in a hegemonic space they see things from a hegemonic perspective that can not be purified from the ideology of the culture where they come from.

CHAPTER 2: VISUALITY AND HYBRIDITY

The field of Visual Studies

National Geographic uses two mediums or languages to construct meaning, the verbal and the visual. And photography is the visual mode of meaning-making adopted by the magazine. Photography, as a topic for research in the academic world, calls for a distinction between the traditional fine arts and the media. This division "between older art (assigned, by default and preference, to Art History) and new images and media (appropriated by Film Studies and other new departments) is one of the main political reasons why there is ongoing friction between art history and visual studies" (Elkins, 2003: 9).

According to Elkins (2003) visual studies have three different genealogies as they developed from different sources in the different contexts they were established: "In the United States, visual studies departments have grown out of art history departments; in England and southeast Asia, visual studies is more closely allied to cultural studies; and on the Continent, visual studies is allied to semiotics and communication theory" (Elkins, 2003: 10).

Sontag (1977) has attempted to express the nature of each one of these areas: "The traditional fine arts rely on the distinction between authentic and fake, between original and copy, between good taste and bad taste; the media blur, if they do not abolish outright, these distinctions" (149). This blurring of distinctions has driven many theorists to accuse visual studies on different grounds: "In Arjun Appadurai's wonderful formula, critics of cultural studies mistrust "its 'theory' (too French), its topics (too popular), its style (too glitzy), its jargon (too hybrid), its politics (too postcolonial), its constituency (too multicultural)" (Elkins, 2003: 23).

Mitchell proposes to see visual studies as being about "everyday seeing" (Elkins, 2003: 28-29), a field usually left out by the disciplines that address visuality. The classical discipline of Art History and the more modern ones like Media Studies are unable to cover the interests of Visual Studies that tend to focus on the immediacy of visual experiences. Visual Studies should be conceived as an interdisciplinary field because the seeing of every day life is

interdisciplinary since it brings into play theories and approaches from the most different and diverse fields such as literature, social sciences, history of art, anthropology, film and media studies.

Visual culture should be seen as stemming from a contemporary culture that mixes the élite and the popular, the fine and the kitsch. The boundaries between these different forms of art expression have traditionally been very well patrolled. However, we are aware that nowadays both high and low art are "impure, mutually dependent, or susceptible to commodification" (Elkins, 2003: 50). The distinction has become blurry because commercial culture has come to characterize both high and low art. Our societies have become consumerism societies and art has turned into a commodity to be possessed in the most routine, casual and everyday environments the human beings find themselves.

Visual culture is a discipline that is constituted by the economic, social and cultural changes in our society and is considered by some as a continuation of the History of Art. Other theorists, such as Elkins (2003), believe that Art History and Visual Culture are independent discourses that approach visuality in different ways (57). Still others, such as Mitchell (2005), propose a revival of the interdisciplinary study of images across the media, called iconology and call for the end of the value system that bestows high value to art and a lower one to images (96).

Although visual culture draws on approaches from different fields, it desires to create its own field of study, where it can break away from notions of high and low culture and from the principle of 'mimesis' so common in the History of Art. Moreover, visual culture does not just want to be seen as a supplement to the traditional disciplines of aesthetics or the newer media studies but craves to establish and articulate its own field of research.

It is worth pointing out that the links visual studies have to poststructuralism and postcolonial studies make it acquire a multicultural profile. And it is multicultural in the following ways: in the materials it chooses to study (including non-Western), in the theories it applies (including non-Western) and in its interpretative methods which accept hybridity and complexity.

Each one of the disciplines that deal with visuality describes different forms of visual experience and uses different forms of visual literacy. Visual literacy, in the context of visual culture, should enable us to analyze the way

images refer to the world. Mitchell (2005) cites Heidegger in order to emphasize the importance of studying images. Heidegger proposed that in the modern age the world has become a picture which means a representable object. The wide variety of interpretation, production and dissemination of images has turned our world into a picture made up of material and symbolic elements. In this way, every picture is both concrete and abstract, both a fragment and a symbol of the totality.

Visual culture is interested in the processes we use when looking at something. The seer tends to rationalize the visual stimulus and is inclined to construct a discourse about it, to turn the visual representation into a verbal representation. This verbal representation reveals in words the social aspects of the visual field. Mitchell (2005) deems that visual culture should "make the *relationality* of image and beholder the field of investigation" (50) since images are part of our mental world.

Some aspects of photography and image making

It is a characteristic of modern society to produce and consume images that have become representations of fragments of reality. One of the most "realistic" instruments of representing reality is thought to be the Art of Photography since it uses a machine to produce the image. Thus, photographs are usually conceived as less bound to interpretation than handmade visual objects, like paintings or drawings. Viewers usually attach to photographs the characteristic of transparency which means that photographs are understood as realistic, apparently neutral, truth-telling and objective.

In many ways, photography has become a supplement for reality and in some fashion more important and powerful than the original. Instead of photography reporting reality, it has become reality itself. Photographs, the "imitations of life" seem to acquire "lives of their own" (Mitchell, 2005: 2). But at the same time, in spite of offering a view of the real, photographs make us sense the inaccessibility of the real since photographs make reality and time come to a halt and represent the passing moment as something concrete. A photograph both mortifies and resurrects its referent (Mitchell, ibid.: 53) or as Sontag (1977) puts it:

"Photography does not simply reproduce the real, it recycles it-a key procedure of a modern society. In the form of photographic images, things and events are put to new uses, assigned new meanings, which go beyond the distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false, the useful and the useless, good taste and bad" (174).

Mitchell (2005) claims that people have a "double consciousness" towards images and representations in general (7). Viewers believe that representations are at the same time real and false so they tend to trust them while rejecting them as false. This double consciousness "is a deep and abiding feature of human responses to representation" (ibid.: 8).

Mitchell (ibid.) perceives images as "condensed world pictures, synecdoches of social totalities" (196) that make and unmake "the various worlds in which they circulate" (196). Photographs are pieces of reality that package the world and, at the same time, are packaged inside the book or magazine that frames them. The photographs in *National Geographic* become a collection of the world and turn the world into a spectacle.

The context where photographs appear is of paramount importance since different contexts attach different meanings to photographs. Images have a life of their own and they live in the media where they are presented. *National Geographic* is the "habitat or ecosystem" where its images become alive. The fact that photographs in *National Geographic* are inserted in a glossy magazine makes them acquire certain intellectual and moral nuances that would be different in case these same pictures were shown in a gallery or any other site of demonstration. This medium might be physically between the sender and the receiver, but it is constituted by them and simultaneously it constitutes them. The relationality can be pinned down in the "play" that is created between the intentions of the photographer and the critical interpretations of the viewer.

National Geographic, as an instrument of popular science, makes an inventory of the world. Although in many cases, photography is used to alter the object of depiction, sometimes by embellishing it or estranging it, apparently the objective of *National Geographic*'s photography mission is close-to-reality representation. Showing things as they "really" are is very important because a

faithful recording is what the magazine and its readers aspire to in order to reach an understanding of how this world and the people in it function. Photography of subaltern groups as social documentation is usually perceived as part of the humanist project to reveal what needs to be confronted and fixed in our social reality and as an aid to understanding and tolerance. Although *National Geographic's* photography might seem to have as its objective social documentation, its approach is neither pure nor disinterested.

Images, as it has been said before, work both semiotically and symbolically, are both signs and symbols and influence people intellectually, socially, emotionally and behaviorally. However, analysis only of the signs of images does not reveal what they desire. The crossing from the intellectual to the emotional, is a transfer from the question of power to the one of desire. The process of awakening desire works on the principle of lack that images create. The presence of the image provokes a craving because of the lack of the referent. However, as Bazin relates "the photographic image is the object itself...It shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is a reproduction; it *is* the model" (in Mitchell, 2005: 54).

Nowadays, this desire that pictures arouse and the emotional effects they have on people can plainly be seen in advertisements that create desire and emotional dependence to the products they want the viewers to consume. This turn leads to the "feminization of the picture, which is treated as something that must awaken desire in the beholder while not disclosing any signs of desire or even awareness that it is being beheld, as if the beholder were a voyeur at a keyhole" (Mitchell, 2005:44). Revealing the desire that the silence of images emanates has the effect also of revealing human thoughts transformed into speech.

Images also possess the characteristic of being political. While they can raise heated up debates, at the end of the day, when arguments simmer down and discussions end, nothing really changes, there are no adjustments to our visual and political culture. On the other hand, the verbal involvement with the pictures may have brought about a more conscious involvement with our social realities. Mitchell (2005) proposes perceiving "the visual image as instrument and agency: the image as a tool for manipulation on the one hand, and as an

apparently autonomous source of its own purposes and meanings on the other" (351).

The claim of truth attached to photography energizes the relation between power and knowledge. Knowledge that is accepted as true by the society turns to be powerful. It has been thought that "power is everywhere, since discourse is everywhere" (Rose, 2007:139). However, if we take this assumption further, we can claim that power is everywhere because discourse and images are everywhere. Images are another form of disseminating the ideology of the powerful.

Images form a social collective that has a parallel existence to the human, spatial and object world they have as referents. Their function is not parasitical to the world they represent but a kind of second nature to them: "They are, in philosopher Nelson Goodman's words, "ways of worldmaking" that produce new arrangements and perceptions of the world" (Mitchell, 2005: 93). Although images are made things, they acquire a life of their own that recreates the social formations that they set out to represent.

It is important to state that we are attentive to the social life of images and not in the ways they privately affect people. Images have a social life because they are born in a certain period in a certain place, travel from one culture to the other and depending on their kind they have a short or long life span. Their mobility (Rose, 2007:223) makes photographs travel through time and space and acquire different meanings according to the context where they find themselves. Because of globalization, we get the impression that there is a free flow of information, capital and other objects in the world.

The pictures in *National Geographic* are not something extra that is there in order to illustrate the article but they tell a story of their own, they construct a narrative by offering an aesthetic experience. Many of the readers of the magazine look at the pictures and read their captions, instead of reading the articles, so that The caption plays, as Roland Barthes has described, an "anchorage" function for photographs: "A caption serves to "rationalize" a multidimensional image; it "loads" the image, "burdening it with culture, a moral, an imagination" (1977:25-26). The text of the caption directs the reader towards some meanings and away from others, and thus has an inherently repressive

value" (Lutz and Collins 1993, 77). Moreover, the free play of the image is limited by the meanings each culture gives to the representation.

Visual discourse is made up of symbols whose meaning is found outside the picture. However, images can not be framed in just a specific way and therefore they escape meaning. Or more precisely, they subvert the closure of meaning. Visual discourse is a field of struggle because images can be framed in various ways. In addition, linguistic discourse frames visual discourse and this leads to a reduction of the visual to the linguistic.

Moreover, the value and agency the objects represented obtain also depend on the cultural context of the audience. One of the theoreticians who focus mostly on the aspect of agency that art objects and therefore images have is Alfred Gell (1988). He is not interested in interpreting objects in a symbolic way but in figuring out how visual objects mediate social reality and have the power to change the world (Rose, 2007: 217). Images have a social life and the objects they represent, too. Nicholas Thomas "argued that it is what is done with an image, rather than its inherent meaning, that gives its significance" (Rose, 2007:220).

The second nature photogarphs have to the world they represent turns them into agents of changing values since images are capable of emitting collective unconscious wishes and desires. They occupy a third space position between subjective and objective reality and as representations have the capacity to intervene in the realities they create and the social conflicts collective desire craves to resolve. Pinney (2004: 8) even coined the term 'corpothetics' to refer to the process of the visual efficacy of an image which "works only in relation to an embodied observer" (apud. Rose, 2007: 220).

In the case of photographs of subaltern people on *National Geographic*, they raise in viewers the desire to consume the Other, their way of living, dressing and facing life from "below". Viewers, though, are not emotionally affected by these images since they are taken in an aesthetically attractive way. They seem that their sole desire is to represent these other forms of human existence.

The interpretation of images

Our social lives are saturated by images. Therefore, learning how to interpret them should become an important means of understanding social life. Rose (2007) summarizes strategies for the interpretation of images:

"Looking at your sources with fresh eyes; immersing yourself in your sources; identifying key themes in your sources; examining their effects of truth; paying attention to their complexity and contradictions; looking for the invisible as well as the visible; paying attention to details" (166).

Material aspects of the image lead its viewers to describe it and interpret it in certain ways and not others. Its "*compositionality*" (Rose, 2007: 20), the way the elements of the picture are arranged, is thought to play a great role in the effects the image has. Other material elements of images that influence the way they are seen are the size, color and texture of the image. Rose (ibid.) suggests also studying the "*internal layout*" (181) and the "*spatial organization*" (185) of any object in display. The place where any object is shown and the relations it creates with the other objects also displayed can help us decipher the strategies any institution uses to produce an educational spectacle. Van Leeuwen (2005) calls any kind of display "framing" (7). Elements that are put together, grouped together for the purpose of display are connected and seen as belonging together as complementary, continuous or contrasting. It is interesting to explore the effects of the visual materials the magazine uses and of the representations it makes.

Rose (2007) proposes an approach which she calls "a critical visual methodology":

"By 'critical' I mean an approach that thinks about the visual in terms of the cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which it is embedded; and that means thinking about the power relations that produce, are articulated through and can be challenged by, ways of seeing and imaging" (xv).

The institution together with its audience creates an interpretation of the world through images and, at the same time, they are together producing our

world while describing it. This way, dominant cultures manage the social sphere. Exhibiting the way of life of different social groups and how they manage their space means also categorizing these peoples and spaces and seeing some as less civilized and cultured or more natural and exotic.

Images construct specific views of the social reality as natural or true through specific regimes of truth. If images are not individually but socially produced, we are interested in the strategies visuality uses to persuade its public that the social differences constructed in images are truthful and the method of categorization natural. Identifying *key themes* (Rose, 2007:151) and recurring visual categories can facilitate our examination of the codes used to classify identities and places and the truth value these images acquire or its *effects of truth* (Rose, 2007:161). *National Geographic* has the power to construct knowledge and present it as true and scientific and also exhibits authority to naturalize social distinctions.

Accepting or resisting the codes articulated in images has an impact on social change. Supporting the codes shows a support for the existing social order. Gramsci termed "this sort of power, maintained by culturally constituted norms... hegemony" and "argued that there would be resistance to hegemony, resistance that he called counter-hegemony" (Rose, 2007:200).

If researchers of Visual Studies are interested in the relation between ideology, knowledge and power, they should be aware that the "real meaning" they attach to photographs is also a construction of their own cultural, historical and social background. Justifying our interpretations appears to be of paramount importance since our justification will reveal the social codes that make us read the image the way we do. The codes used to talk about our social reality are impregnated with our culture. Seeing has been equated with knowing as can be proved by the plethora of images that appear everywhere there is knowledge construction, even in the scientific world.

We are interested in the forms of visuality that *National Geographic* employs and how this visuality sees the world and orders it. As it is an institution that is part of a country whose "history of science [is] tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy" (Haraway 1991: 188 in Rose, 2007: 5), the social power relations that are reflected in its forms of visuality will display the ideology behind. This kind of visuality that presents itself as

universal, in fact, as Haraway (ibid.) explains, produces visual hierarchies of gender, race and class and is the product of the dominating ideology of capitalism and colonialism and reflects their interests and their will to maintain the *status quo.*

We believe that while there are certain aspects of images that are universal, there will always be particular groups of seers that will look at images in particular ways. These ways of seeing speak of the relation that is created between the spectator and the image. The social context, where the act of seeing takes place, mediates the relation by recreating in the spectator's imaginary all the relations this image has to other images, written texts or modes of thinking. In short, the relation one sign has to other signs and the meanings it acquires because of its relations. Every image makes its seer occupy a position in relation to it. Rose (2007) makes a stimulating proposal concerning the understanding of how images work:

"An image may have its *own visual effects* (so it is important to look very carefully at images); these effects, through the *ways of seeing* mobilized by the image, are crucial in the production and reproduction of visions of *social difference*; but these effects always intersect with the *social context of viewing* and with *the visualities spectators* bring to their viewing" (12).

If we study the relation that is created between the viewer and the visual object, we might be able to detect the concepts that emerge in the viewers' eyes when s/he contemplates the image. Deciphering the way we look at images is of utmost importance since it will give us a glimpse at the ideology that saturates our own *locus* of enunciation.

Reflecting on our own discourse when describing and interpreting images exemplifies our perception of any knowledge as situated and partial. Presenting our position and interpretation not as universal but as local will also show how our research is the result of who we are, our social position and our cultural formation. Any knowledge produced is the result of the relation the researcher builds with his/her subject. Moreover, if we, human beings, are always in process of constructing our identity, it is important to figure out how our

engagement with images (among other meaning-making structures) constantly transforms us.

Viewers understand and narrate pictures according to their knowledge and ideology. Image critics or laypersons have to narrate the image and thus, they abstract the world they observe by using words and turning the image into a mental object. Still, they are confronted with the problem of the thinning of language against the density of the visual experience. Mitchell (2005) defines every living image as a "metapicture" because it is reflexive not only of visual but also of verbal tropes and mixes vision with speech and thought. So, every image ends up being "a secondary, reflexive image of images" (10).

Barthes (1973; 1977) talked about denotation and connotation in relation to images:

"Barthes...established that the term connotation can also be applied to semiotic modes other than language. Images, too, have two layers of meaning - the layer of denotation, that is the layer of 'what, or who, is represented here?' and the layer of connotation, that is the layer of 'what ideas and values are expressed *through* what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented?'... He sees these concepts not as individual, subjective associations with the referent but as culturally shared meanings, 'culturally accepted inducers if ideas'" (1977: 23) (apud. Van Leeuwen, 2005: 37)

One of the greatest contributions of Mitchell (2005) is his transformation of the relation between observer-image from a subject-object one to a subject-subject. Although images are grasped in the paradox of being both dead and alive, Mitchell (ibid.) tends to exhort their vitality since "the question to ask of pictures from the standpoint of a poetics is not just what they mean or do but what they *want*-what claim they make upon us, and how we are to respond" (xv).

Images are living and vital things that stare back at the seers and want things from them. They ask from people to believe in the truth of the statements they make and acquire the ideology that is implied through the construction of the image. It is not just people that consume images but they are also

consumed by them. Mitchell (2005) draws on Marx and Freud to affirm that "a modern science of the social and the psychological had to deal with the issue of fetishism and animism, the subjectivity of objects, the personhood of things" (30).

When we attribute to pictures the power to act, we establish a relationship of exchange between the seer and the seen that generates the question of value. When *National Geographic* started publishing images of unknown or "primitive" cultures, these photographs acquired great value because the West was supposed to bring civilization and development to these peoples. It is thus undeniable that certain images in certain historical periods acquire value due to favorable to them evaluative criteria which vary over time.

Subaltern groups as the "found object"

Let us turn now to one of the subjects *National Geographic* is always interested in exhibiting: the "found object". As Mitchell (2005) puts it:

> "Everyone knows that there are two criteria for a found object: (1) it must be ordinary, unimportant, neglected, and (until its finding) overlooked; it cannot be beautiful, sublime, wonderful, astonishing, or remarkable in any obvious way, or it would have already been singled out, and therefore would not be a good candidate for "finding"; and (2) its finding must be accidental, not deliberate or planned. (114)

In *National Geographic* the found object when referring to human identities can be a subaltern group never represented before. The magazine is always in pains to represent objects of desire to fulfill its readers' demands for knowledge and aesthetic appreciation of difference. The humble "found object", in the case of subaltern groups, rarely leaves its original place but it is elevated through its representation and becomes picturesque. Readers are, in principle, more interested in seeing the representation of subaltern groups than having real and direct contact and interaction with these groups.

The choice of groups to be represented in the magazine depends on social realities that are dominant in the time of publication of the photographs.

The magazine reinforces and contributes to the construction of realities and ideologies by representing different forms of human existence in specific ways. Readers desire to consume certain realities represented in specific ways and not others they would abhor. This makes the magazine a mediator between the objects to be consumed and the consumers themselves. The magazine decides which objects adopt a more global social life and have meanings of other cultures attached to them. The processes through which these local objects circulate in the global world turn these representations into agents able to transform their consumers' perception of our world.

When the found object is a "primitive" society, a term already loaded with judgmental prejudice, the magazine needs to evaluate how these "objects" are going to be appreciated, as art or as just primitive. Mitchell (2005) distinguishes things from objects and helps us realize the strategies *National Geographic* uses in order to transform things into objects:

"Objects are the way things appear to a subject-that is, with a name, an identity, a gestalt or stereotypical template, a description, a use or function, a history, a science. Things, on the other hand, are simultaneously nebulous and obdurate, sensuously concrete and vague...So things play the role of raw material, an amorphous, shapeless, brute materiality awaiting organization by a system of objects" (156).

This organization of a system of objects is called "objectivism" and it involves the existence of a "sovereign subject" capable of studying the world and organizing its objects (Mitchell, ibid.: 157). *National Geographic* organizes people and objects of our world. However, whenever this objectivism tries to pass itself as objectivity, the "sovereign subject" masks his/her own cultural categories as universal and fails to discern the different forms of subjective expression and objects in the world.

Vision as a cultural physical ability and hybridity

Vision is not just a natural and universal ability of people, but it is formed by cultural codes as it is practiced in different societies. People learn how to

read images and thus vision has a different history in different cultures. For Mitchell (2005) vision "is deeply involved with human societies, with the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen" (338). The moment we start perceiving images not as something transparent and objective but as symbolic constructions that, like language, mediate ideologically between us and reality, we become aware of an ethical and political responsibility of studying the ideology and codes that form our vision.

Mitchell (2005) considers that visual culture is caught in the dialectical relation between the "social construction of the visual field," and "the visual construction of the social field" (345). What he means is that our natural ability of vision is constructed by the social realities and codes of the culture where vision takes place but at the same time our social field is constructed by the images with which we are inclined to represent it. According to Sontag (1977) images produced in a society reflect "the ruling ideology" (179). Therefore, when there is social change, it is anticipated and then characterized by a change in images.

In *National Geographic* the visual has its own grammar that in collaboration with the verbal constructs the reality represented. It is fascinating to observe how the West produces and consumes images of "Other" people and the relationship they have to their environment. The most important part of the articles that appear in *National Geographic* is the images, which construct a narrative that, necessarily, focuses on certain issues and leaves aside others. This selection can be seen as a cultural artifact since the eye that shoots the picture, the eye that selects the images that are going to be published and the eye of the readers is not a universal eye but one that has been taught to look at things in a certain way. An interesting question that can be raised is whether these visual representations promote shifts in the readers' conception of the world or whether they help maintain the *status quo*.

It would be quite difficult to think of our world nowadays without taking into consideration the meanings that are created and the information that is conveyed in it visually since "the visual has been dominant in modern Western culture in a wide variety of ways" (Jay, 1998: 66). Undoubtedly, one cannot but agree with Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) that one of the reasons the visual is an important code of meaning making is because "we regard our sense of sight

as more reliable than our sense of hearing" (159). Photographs are supposed to show the event without producing in the viewer the benefit of the doubt. They are thought to be exact representations of what the photographer saw through the camera's lens without any distortion from the "intention" of the photographer. If we see a photograph of an event, we assume that we are looking at the mirror image of the reality that took place and that there is no process of interpretation going on because photography has the reputation of being the most realistic of the mimetic arts and of possessing the characteristic of transparency.

We set out to show the hybrid character this kind of representation assumes. The pictorial representations of places and cultures that have appeared in *National Geographic* through the years remind us of what Bhabha (1990) has pointed out:

> "In fact the sign of the 'cultured' or the 'civilised' attitude is the ability to appreciate cultures in a kind of musée imaginaire; as though one should be able to collect and appreciate them. Western connoisseurship is the capacity to understand and locate cultures in a universal time-frame that acknowledges their various historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and render them transparent" (208).

One of the reasons that the visual narratives that are created by the magazine *National Geographic* are always hybrid is that this representation is the result of complex negotiations between cultural systems that carry with them uncertainties, conflicts and contradictions. When photographers reach "contact zones" (Pratt, 1992: 4), or places where different cultural systems enter in touch, they focus on images that tell a story which is pre-constructed in their minds through the cultural system, beliefs and political currents of their time. However, this hybridization works the opposite way, too. The pre-constructed narrative gets contaminated by the realities encountered in the "contact zone". The result of this negotiation is "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another

by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor" (Bakhtin, 1981: 358).

The photographic narratives that are created in *National Geographic* are hybrid in other manners, too. Bhabha (1990) points out the fact that every culture passes from a process of "cultural translation" since it has to create symbols and rituals that homogenize the cultural practices of the members of this culture. Every culture, through its symbols and rituals, mimics the image that has invented for itself and excludes rituals and practices that make evident the heterogeneity that is characteristic of every culture. What is more, this kind of representation tends to erase differences and heterogeneities and homogenize the represented culture and its people. The complex, plural and shifting identities that are product of the cultural, social, economic, political and racial processes which take place simultaneously in every place, tend to be grouped together in a small number of categories.

Furthermore, Bhabha (1990) empties the concept of "original", because he defends that there is no "original" culture, because every culture is hybrid since each and every one of them is plural. "Pure" and "hybrid" are categories that completely depend on a point of view of the person or the institution evaluating the categories. As Brian Stross (1999) claims: "There are after all no 'pure' individuals, no 'pure' cultures, no 'pure' genres. All things are of necessity 'hybrid'" (266). Moreover, he adds, "the cultural hybrid...can be a person who represents the blending of traits from diverse cultures or traditions, or even more broadly it can be a culture, or element of culture, derived from unlike sources; that is, something heterogeneous in origin or composition" (254).

Another aspect of the hybridity that constitutes this kind of representation is the fact that when the Other is represented, s/he is always absorbed by the cultural values of the institution that is representing. For this reason, it is important to recognize the particularities and specificities of the *locus of enunciation*, the values and world-view, in general, that permeate the narratives that, in this case, *National Geographic* creates. We research if these representations perpetuate well-known stereotypes or if they try to corrode stereotypes by showing the Other in a different light.

In addition to what has been said, the visual narratives of *National Geographic* are hybrid because the global contaminates the local and vice

versa. The local acquires a dialectic with global political and social issues, because, nowadays, in every local you can find the global. The whole world is influenced, in some way, by the same kind of global designs. For instance, such things as industrialization and mass production have reached the tropical rainforest. On the other hand, the local influences the global narratives of preservation of the environment that are prevalent nowadays.

Moreover, the photographers of *National Geographic* have to go through processes of cultural translation. Bhabha (2000) explains the term:

> "Cultural translation is not simply appropriation or adaptation; it is a process through which cultures are required to revise their own systems of reference, norms and values, by departing from the habitual or 'inbred' rules of transformation. Ambivalence and antagonism accompanies any act of cultural translation, because negotiating with the 'difference of the other' reveals the radical insufficiency of sedimented, settled systems of meaning and signification" (139).

While creating a photographic narrative of people that belong to Other cultures, photographers pass from the experience of cultural translation. This means that they start questioning their values and seeing the insufficiency of their cultural systems. As participants in cultural systems, photographers identify with certain ideas, values and groups of people. However, in the "contact zone" or "third space" where cultures interact, a negotiation of ideologies and values takes place that contaminates the visual narratives created by the photographer and at the same time, the subjects represented get contaminated by the cultural system of the photographer because they start seeing themselves through the eyes of the ideologies that permeate the narrative of the photographer. This way, every culture signifies and resignifies itself through the circulation of experiences.

In this process the photographers and the institutions they represent together with the culture and people represented, through the questioning of their values and culture systems can be transformed into agency. This agency emerges from the understanding that cultures and identities are highly heterogeneous and complex and that power is not absolute, but relational.

However, it can not be denied that the magazine creates knowledges that are permeated by the dominant ideologies of our times.

Finally, hybrid is also the reception of these visual narratives. Readers receive these representations as a reflection of the reality of the Other. However, they tend to attach to these narratives, interpretations that are constituted by their own cultural systems and values. Readers of the magazine interpret the images according to their own cultural codes that might be very different from the cultural codes that inform the identities and places represented.

We show in this chapter that visuality and anthropological photography are hybrid categories and that our understandings and interpretations of images depend on our socio-historical and cultural context. We do not know if the hybridity of this genre brings any social, political or ideological practical changes or if changes can only be seen in the theoretical level. However, we want to agree with Bhabha who affirms that hybridity always destabilizes hegemonic structures.

CHAPTER 3 - THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Western *webs of significance* as lenses for the interpretation of cultures

Even from the very beginning, we observe a tendency Western explorers and scientists had, not only of studying and acquiring knowledge of the newly found spaces and their people but also of their will to control and master their cultures and modes of life by considering them inferior to their own. However, by observing the newly found cultures only through the lenses of the Enlightenment, they were incapable of reaching them, absorbing their wisdom and learning from them.

Clifford Geertz (1973), an American anthropologist and ethnographer, would say that Western travel writers and scientists were caught in *webs of significance* that their culture had spun for them as it does for each one of us (5). They could only study the Other's culture by using conceptual frameworks that were western and fraught with the capitalist, modernist, industrial and "democratic" ideas. When they observed and tried to understand Other cultures they would use conceptual frameworks that were part of a culture that was located somewhere else. Researching these *webs of significance* does not take us to some kind of law of the way things work but only lead us to an endless and always obscure search of meaning. Moreover, these *webs of significance* are always in a process of modification and adaptation to the actual needs of each society.

Usually it is the West that studies and analyzes the Other: ethnographers and anthropologists from the West discover, study and try to interpret the cultures of people whose ways of living are very different from the Western ones. The Other never claims to study the West. Anthropology constructs a dialogical relation and produces subject and object positions that are implied in the problematic of cultural difference that constitutes this discourse. Scott (1989) explains:

> "The subject that establishes within its gaze a field of objects to be
> observed, questioned, translated, and finally represented in another place
> at another time is neither anonymous nor placeless. It always occupies

intersections of privilege at once epistemological, political, and geographical. To be sure, in recent years anthropology has been called (and has called itself) into question on grounds that seek to make visible these intersections. But at least one skeptical commentator has recently maintained that the "problematic of the observer" has been "remarkably underanalyzed" in the "revisionist anthropological current." The question Who speaks? For what and to whom? remains muted. For what interests me here is the question of the postcolonial anthropologist in the making of a postcolonial anthropology" (2).

In anthropology there is a movement, a displacement in the effort to understand what the anthropologist considers uncommon knowledge. The work of mediation involves constituting the unknown knowledge through the knowledge of the mediator, the anthropologist. Scott (1989) describes it:

"The anthropological journey- -like all true journeys--entails a continuously recursive movement or drift: at once a departure and a return in which knowledge is always at least double--simultaneously knowledge of something other and self-knowledge, and each but a term in the invention of the other" (3).

The Western researchers should recognize the cultural difference between the West and the Other civilization and they should also acknowledge that this relationship is overridden by ethnocentrism which "is the failing by which the West judges other cultures in comparison with its own" (Hénaff, 1998: 23). The cultural difference between the West and Other civilizations affects the methods the West uses in order to study the Other's cultural manifestations and this demands from the Western researchers to position themselves ethically towards the Other cultures.

Three approaches to culture

We have already discussed how our social and cultural context influences our visual understandings of Other cultures. We show in this chapter how culture forms human mind and behavior. There have been various efforts

to define what culture is. Roger Keesing refers to idealistic theories of culture and divides them in three different approaches (apud. Laraia, 1997: 62). The first one is what, according to W. Goodenough, is considered *culture as a cognitive system*. In this approach, culture is a system of knowledge that consists of everything someone has to know or believe in order to function in an acceptable way in his society. Culture when conceived in this way, is epistemologically situated 'in the same domain as language, as an overt event" (our translation) (ibid.: 62).

The second approach to culture was the one developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss and "defines *culture as a symbolic system* that is the cumulative creation of the human mind. This approach focuses on discovering the organization of cultural domains - myth, art, kinship and language - and the principles of mind that generate these cultural elaborations" (our translation) (Laraia, ibid.: 62).

The third approach considers "*culture as a symbolic system*... as a collection of control mechanisms, plans, recipes, rules, instructions (that computer technicians call program) that steer behavior" (our translation) (Laraia, ibid.: 63). According to Geertz (1973), humans "are incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish [themselves] through culture" (49). Culture "programs" the human beings and makes them act and behave in certain ways. Moreover, "man is precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such cultural programs, for ordering his behavior" (ibid.: 44).

The American anthropologist adheres to a culture concept that seems relevant to our form of analysis: culture "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (ibid. 89). The symbols each culture uses are ways of accessing the social reality that surrounds us and reaching some psychological understanding of the human condition. In many ways culture shapes the human essence and its expression and also is constantly being shaped to fit the human needs and desires. Parsons (apud. Geertz, 1973) has elaborated a concept of culture:

"as a system of symbols by which man confers significance upon his own experience. Symbol systems, man-created, shared, conventional, ordered, and indeed learned, provide human beings with a meaningful framework for orienting themselves to one another, to the world around them, and to themselves" (250).

Symbols are a source of information that gives form, structure and distinctiveness to human activity and life. For Geertz (ibid.) there is a dialectic between symbols, or patterns of meaning and "the concrete course of social life" (250). The theoretician claims that "the dominant concept of culture in American social science identified culture with learned behavior" (249). Culture is what people start learning the moment they are born and during their whole lives. Culture is the way we are talked to when we are babies, the form we are touched during our lives, the mode we carry our bodies, forms and style of speech we use, our way of life, our beliefs etc. Of all the spheres of culture, ideology is the one where we can find a more manifest relationship between symbolic forms and behavior but it is also the one which is the least clear.

Geertz (1973) believes that culture patterns can be discerned in forms of social activity, the institutions each culture adopts to help it manage its needs and in some deeper level the systems of ideas that inform the manifestations of culture (362). The relation ideas have to social, economic and political manifestations and institutions is difficult to determine since it is always vague, undefined and unfathomable. These different categories that are expressions of culture are related and the nature of these relations is not easily understood.

The relations among the ideas that form the system that informs the social activities and institutions of a culture may be tight or loose. This means that the ideas of system can be connected densely or weakly among them. Ideas can be independent one of the other and still form a system. There can be breaches as well as connections among the different ideas of a system. Moreover, the relation between the ideas and their manifestations may not be a straightforward one. Geertz (1973) conjures up the image of an octopus in order to explain how ideas connect to form what is called a cultural organization. Cultural organization is more like:

"the octopus, whose tentacles are in large part separately integrated, neurally quite poorly connected with one another and with what in the octopus passes for brain, and yet who nonetheless manages both to get around and to preserve himself, for a while anyway, as a viable if somewhat ungainly entity" (Geertz, ibid.: 408).

Cultural structures are "independent, yet interdependent, variables" (Geertz, ibid.: 169). The study of different cultural structures does not lead to some generic outline of the human conceptual world when freed from particularities but only enlightens local cultural expressions and the symbols constructed to be able to grasp the local truths.

Cultures' transition from traditional to modern

Laraia (1997) asserts that any cultural system is in continuous process of modification" (100). And there are two kinds of cultural change: one that is internal and comes as a result of the dynamics of the cultural system itself in order to attend to the changing needs of a certain society and the second that is the result of contact of one cultural system with another one (ibid.: 100) which is foreign to the local one. Nevertheless, there is in any culture simultaneously "the desire for coherence and continuity on the one hand and for dynamism and contemporaneity on the other" (Geertz, 1973: 244).

What are the processes involved in the transition of a culture from traditional to modern? For Geertz (ibid.) this "progression" is not a linear but a sinuous one (319). Every culture reclaims ideas and emotions of its past as much as it tries to reject them. Modernity is an umbrella term that acquires different manifestations in the different groups where it applies. When traditional cultures enter in touch with modernity there is a strong tendency to embrace it and adopt its principles because of the value given to it by dominant cultures. However, on the other hand, each culture struggles to keep in touch with "the essentials of its heritage" (321) as a way to preserve its special identity. According to the aforementioned anthropologist peasant societies are an example of a culture that hovers in the middle between primitivism and modernism (329).

Colonized societies were caught in that process of modernization in a very artificial way. The European colonizers, caught in the webs of signification that the idea of their cultural superiority had spun for them, spoiled the nature that they conquered and also transformed the societies into artificially modern ones. The former savages passed from a process of civilization that was forced on them since their difference was seen as a danger to their civilized conquerors. However, after their artificial civilization process they were not seen anymore as a jeopardy to civilization and were left to their own devices.

Claude Lévi-Stauss in his celebrated book *Tristes Tropiques* described the process of entropy, of the inevitable and steady deterioration and disintegration of different social structures into "global homogeneity under the shock of contact with a potent monoculture" (apud. Clifford, 1988: 112). Different cultures fall apart the moment they enter in touch with the all pervasive western culture (which we don't wish to essentialize) which is also usually the culture of the anthropologist.

The only place the disappearing culture seems to preserve itself is in the writings and interpretations of the ethnographer. The rhetoric of the ethnographer and his/her representational practices make some version of the vanishing culture survive its referent. Vanishing cultures, in any case, are not in need of some outsider to represent and conserve their 'authentic' cultural performance. There is no some kind of essence to be preserved since any kind of 'essence' is always in the process of being reinvented.

The unceasing search for meaning

Studying a culture involves diving into its symbolic forms. However, this study is not objective but depends on the locus of the observer: where they are, who they are, their age, social status, their cultural and ideological formation. The positionality of the voice passes "through the confession known as biography, the body, social markers like race, sex, and gender, and, then, wrap these things up in that grand narrative known as experience" (Britzman, 1997: 31). And this is a blind spot for the researchers since they have to know themselves in order to understand how they get to the meanings they create of

someone's culture. However, as Britzman (ibid.) acknowledges "the struggle is with knowing the self when consciousness itself is founded in resistance" (31).

The anthropologists find themselves in the condition of trying to present the unpresentable, of trying to know what is not accessible to knowledge. Although researchers have to create categories in order to describe the cultural expressions of the people they study, it is imperative to be aware that these categories are part of the conceptual and ideological universe of the researchers' culture and not of their subject of study. And by using their own categories, researchers eliminate the difference they are interested in studying.

There are, for example, cultural norms about the way people bear their bodies. When we analyze photographs of people of other cultures, like the ones in *National Geographic*, our understanding of the performativity of these bodies passes through misunderstandings. These misunderstandings are inherent in our methodology which looks for similarities and identity with the researcher's own cultural categories. Even difference is understood through correspondence with the known.

Moreover, these fictitious similarities create a narrative of the human nature that seeks to find out what is universal, common, natural and constant in the human nature and ends up doing away with the local, idiosyncratic, unnatural and variable. Drawing a line between the universal and the local or the constant and the variable is extraordinarily difficult (Geertz, 1973: 36).

Geertz (ibid.) is interested in figuring out what is constant and what is idiosyncratic in the conceptual structures people use to construct meaning. Or as he expresses that in his own words:

"...how to frame an analysis of meaning-the conceptual structures individuals use to construe experience-which will be at once circumstantial enough to carry conviction and abstract enough to forward theory. These are equal necessities; choosing one at the expense of the other yields blank descriptivism or vacant generality. But they also, superficially at least, pull in opposite directions, for the more one invokes details the more he is bound to peculiarities of the immediate case, the more one omits them the more he loses touch with the ground on which his arguments rest. Discovering how to escape this paradox-or more exactly, for one never

really escapes it, how to keep it at bay-is what, methodologically, thematic analysis is all about" (313).

What the anthropologist is talking about in the above quotation is the constant search for some basic and universal structure of thought and meaning in the human species; something that is not related to culture or the psychological world of the individual. However, there is no existing methodology that can guarantee the separation of these elements which intertwine in order to form a complex whole.

Besides the difficulty of defining what is universal and what is local there is a further setback: defining what is innate to the human being and what is culturally regulated. Geertz (ibid.) believes that "becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives" (52). Moreover, culture works as a "program, a template or blueprint" (ibid.: 216) that organizes social and psychological mechanisms. However, Geertz (ibid.) also believes that, at the end of the road, the internal world of sentiment and desire guides people's actions. The interior subjective world of thought and emotion is a kind of universe that reflects exterior reality and behavior as the result of the inner psychological reality of the person performing culture.

Culture uses symbolic forms of meaning-making that give expression to the performative acts of this culture. Humans have the ability to create and use symbols that give meaning to their lives. People interpret their experiences, give meaning to the events in their lives and conduct their lives by using symbolic structures of meaning that are intrinsic in their cultures.

Culture patterns can be identified in different aspects of human life: ideological, religious, social, aesthetic, scientific and others. These patterns or systems guide people's actions and condition them to behave in a certain fashion and not other. This means that culture patterns together with psychological and sociological forces regulate human actions. Culture, in this way, seems to form our conceptual and ideological world along with our psychological and social structures.

Geertz (1973) assumes that it is through culture patterns which are ordered clusters of significant symbols that people make sense of the experiences they go through in life (363). These symbols are material expressions of thought and are filled with meaning. This meaning is always subtle, obscure and fleeting but also given to interpretation. When researchers study the culture of the Other, they tend to study these culture patterns which give meaning to the reality of their practitioners and help them conduct their lives in certain ways acceptable in their culture.

One of the aspects of cultural life that uses symbols to express itself is religion which employs rituals, which are sacred actions, in order to prove its veracity. Geertz (ibid.) supports that in a ritual the imagined and the lived world fuse under the agency of symbolic forms and these two worlds become one and produce a transformation of the practitioner's sense of reality (112). Rituals construct meaning and teach people a form of social interaction. In order to reach some understanding of the mechanisms religion employs so that it can condition the behavior of its practitioners, we should first analyze "the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and, second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes" (ibid.: 125).

Religious systems are concerned with metaphysics, which is the nature of being and the world. The apparatus religion uses to perform its rituals is saturated with moral and ethical solemnity. Sacred symbols have a fabric and all of them together "relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality: their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give to what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import" (Geertz, ibid.: 127). Each religion's ethics establishes guidelines for the followers' behavior, quality of their lives, the way they relate to themselves and to the world. This morality shapes and gives a character to people's lives.

Moreover, social structures are symbolic actions and their study can lead to some incomplete understanding of a certain people's culture. Culture is responsible for the quality of social relations people form and the social networks they establish. Geertz (ibid.) defines as primordial attachment, the affinity that stems from the "givens" of social existence, such as kin connection,

belonging to a particular religious community, speaking a certain language or dialect of it, and following specific social practices (259).

These primordial attachments or ties tend to become politicized since they are seen as battle grounds for the adjustment of cultural manifestations to the needs of a fast changing world. The individuals acting in a culture are constantly constructing their identity, as a way of being acknowledged and having some kind of worth in the society they live. People usually seek social acceptance together with social ascendance and at the same time seek to construct a more just society, pursue an effective political order and they aspire to a greater involvement of their nation in international politics.

Culture relates symbolically to a country's politics. In this case, culture is not seen as rituals, doctrine or customs but as the conceptual world that gives meaning to the human experience. When this conceptual world and structures of meaning are applied to politics, they form the public world in which we live and function.

Ethnologists usually describe the surface patterns of a culture. These patterns might be people's customs, traditions and cultural manifestations which are combined in different ways to form a system. However, each culture and each human being does not create this system out of the totality of the cultural manifestations but carefully selects which ones to adopt and how to combine them. This cultural inheritance is formed by ideas and beliefs that are handed down to the participants of each culture from generation to generation.

When ethnologists describe these surface patterns of a culture, the culture's customs, beliefs and institutions, they, in fact, are trying to figure out the deeper structures of thought that regulate all cultural manifestations and "build conceptual schemes out of particular images" (Geertz, ibid.: 353). We acknowledge and go along with Geertz (ibid.) when he affirms:

> "Human thought is consummately social: social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its forms, social in its applications. At base, thinking is a public activity-its natural habitat is the houseyard, the marketplace, and the town square. The implications of this fact for the anthropological analysis of culture, my concern here, are enormous, subtle, and insufficiently appreciated" (360).

According to Geertz (ibid.) "the relationship between a symbolic structure and its referent, the basis of its *meaning*, is fundamentally "logical" (354). Nonetheless, logic acquires different forms and characteristics in specific periods of time and in different parts of the world. We do not agree with Geertz (1973) when he says that in order to understand the savage mind, the ethnographer needs to develop a neolithic intelligence (356). It is quite impossible, in our view, to think with another person's mind, especially the mind of someone that has not been molded by the concepts of enlightenment, capitalism and neoliberalism.

If ethnographic description and photography of people's cultures is a science, we should look at what its practitioners do. And what they really do is a kind of anthropological work. Although Geertz (1973) suggests that "anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot (By definition, only a "native" makes first order ones: it's *his* culture.) They are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are "something made," "something fashioned"- the original meaning of *fictio*- not that they are false, unfactual, or merely "as if" thought experiments" (15).

Although the aforementioned American anthropologist believes that anthropologists' interpretations are ones of second or third order, we believe that even the natives' interpretations are not first order ones. Even in your own culture, you do not have a straightforward access to the *webs of significance* the cultural expressions construct.

In order to gain access to the Other's culture and its symbol systems, anthropologists inspect events performed in that culture. However, the passing event which anthropologists and anthropological photographers freeze in their discourse and pictures becomes a social discourse, an account that can be consulted again. Moreover, the anthropologist's description of the event makes the event acquire a coherence and logic that in fact it does not have. Coherence, order or "universal properties of the human mind" (Geertz, 1973: 20) are not characteristic of any cultural system and to pretend in our discourse that they are, is to reduce the complexity of reality.

Events are intertwined, dense and a commingling of the logical and the absurd. Many times, it is the subaltern cultures that have to submit themselves

to the descriptions and interpretations made by Western anthropologists and in many ways this description of the Other's culture through photographs and verbal text is an invention of the photographer and the anthropologist. The anthropological photojournalists by choosing the events they assume are representative of a specific culture end up moving from local truths to generalizations. This comes as the result of the human will to discover some universal structures of human thought that are not cultural but are part of the human structure as such.

Geertz (ibid.) considers that ethnographic analysis of cultural manifestations should not seek to make generalizations across cases but try to make thick description possible within each case (26). Codifying abstract regularities of diverse cultural manifestations and turning them into some kind of theory should not be anthropology's main endeavor since "cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is" (ibid.: 29).

An anthropological analysis consists in understanding the complexity of the symbolic dimensions of social action which are influenced by the existential dilemmas of human life and the mortals' emotional world. Cultural expressions in segments of human life such as: religion, art, law, science, ideology, common sense and morality should be seen in relation to how the human psyche appropriates them. De-emotionalized (Geertz, ibid.: 30) descriptions of cultural phenomena miss the most important factor for the expression of culture.

The author reckons that there is a need for what he calls "a scientific phenomenology of culture": a systematic rather than merely literary or impressionistic, way to discover what *is* given, what the conceptual structure embodied in the symbolic forms through which persons are perceived actually is (364). Science still has not developed a method of describing and analyzing cultural events, manifestations and experience that can lead to some understanding of the way that these experiences are perceived by the participants in the culture or its observers.

We believe that a scientific phenomenology of culture, the descriptions and analyses it makes, is always influenced by the observers' positioning since they are always positioned in space and time and their perspective is constantly defined by this positioning. There can never be a systematic way of describing

and analyzing cultural manifestations since the categories the observers create are closer to the ones existing in their own culture than the ones found in the culture of the observed:

> "...meaning is not intrinsic in the objects, acts, processes, and so on, which bear it, but-as Durkheim, Weber, and so many others have emphasized-imposed upon them; and the explanation of its properties must therefore be sought in that which does the imposing-men living in society" (Geertz, ibid.: 405).

The fundamental reality of people can be observed in the way they conduct their daily life, the way they live their routine experiences and how they act and react to the stimuli offered by their everyday world. While people are performing culture they use significant symbols, or more specifically clusters of symbols which are "the material vehicles of perception, emotion, and understanding" (408). Analyzing any culture should focus on these significant symbols and on the regularities of human experience that are essentially connected to the formation of these symbols. Geertz (ibid.) believes that:

> "a workable theory of culture is to be achieved, if it is to be achieved, by building up from directly observable modes of thought, first to determine families of them and then to more variable, less tightly coherent, but nonetheless ordered "octopoid" systems of them, confluences of partial integrations, partial incongruencies, and partial independencies" (408).

Analyzing a culture is similar to sinking into a literary text. Having the written word as a stimulus readers interpret the text according to their own conceptual and emotional world that has been constructed in accordance with their culture and immediate context. When we try to access the system of ideas that informs any culture, our approach should not be similar to deciphering a code but to penetrating a literary text. We should try to figure the social semantics (Geertz, ibid.: 448) of the culture we are observing. Metaphorically speaking, cultures should be seen as texts, as fictional stories that are constructed using social resources.

Researchers who try to see cultures as texts, or more specifically as narratives, they tend to stop looking for the essence of a culture or a common nature of the human species. Cultures as narratives are trying to say something about the way their participants conceive reality and act in it. The performance of this cultural expression says something to the researcher, too. And probably each researcher who enters in touch with different participants performing culture perceives and understands different aspects of this culture depending on the way the different symbolic forms speak to him/her.

Hénaff (ibid.) reckons that researchers of Other cultures should go through a process of interior transformation and pass "the test of *dépaysement*" (25). By *dépaysement* he refers to the crossing to otherness and this process demands from the researcher the questioning of the discipline of anthropology and the methodologies it uses. It obliges the anthropologists to accept that their task is never an innocent one and that their ultimate undertaking is the responsibility they bear towards these Others and the recognition that they must defend the societies which they study.

The researcher who claims to study the different culture poses as an aggression by only being present while the Others are acting in their culture. The incommensurability of this relationship is expressed whenever the dominant culture gives itself the right to label the Other by using concepts and systems of thought that belong to their particular culture. Ethnologists need to reevaluate their methodology and consider that it can never be objective or free from the criteria and standards that are part of the culture of the observer and not the observed.

Being an ethnologist, an anthropologist or a researcher of representations of Other cultures makes you occupy a position in between, in the interstices of not just two but many cultures since cultures are not monolithic but made up of many different texts or narratives that are absorbed by each of its participants in various and complex ways. As Todd (2009) affirms "we do not choose our conceptual heritage, but we can work within and against it simultaneously" (29).

James Clifford (1988), an American critical anthropologist, questions the nature of any representation and the authority the one doing the representation exercises over the subjects of his/her study:

"In ethnography the current turn to rhetoric coincides with a period of political and epistemological reevaluation in which the constructed, imposed nature of representational authority has become unusually visible and contested. Allegory prompts us to say of any cultural description not "this represents, or symbolizes, that" but rather, "this is a (morally charged) *story* about that" (100).

When Clifford (ibid.) uses the term allegory he is interested in showing the impossibility of ever reaching some kind of literal meaning by studying the symbolic language of a culture. When we analyze an ethnographic account, might it be verbal or visual, "what one *sees*, the imaged construct of the other, is connected in a continuous double structure with what one *understands*" (ibid.: 101). The participants of the culture perform it the way they understand it. Ethnologists write and take pictures of these cultural expressions the way they understand them. Readers of the ethnographic accounts read and study the verbal and visual narratives and apprehend them according to their own conceptual world.

In spite of all the knowledge we have gained on the problems of the methodology of representation, we have to accept that still the process of representation has not changed. Any representation still seeks to dive deeply into the culture of Other and reach some kind of transcendental truth. For Clifford (ibid.) this irrepresentability of representation acquires an allegorical tone. And it is allegorical, in my understanding, because it uses symbols in order to reach a realistic content of the Other's culture. However, the coherence that the researcher discovers in the association between the symbols and the deeper structures of the culture studied are associations s/he makes that are entrenched in the ethnographer's own culture. Therefore the critical anthropologist admits that "ethnographic writing is allegorical at the level both of its content (what it says about cultures and their histories) and of its form (what is implied by its mode of textualization)" (98).

When convincing theories and interpretations of a culture are recognized as metaphors or allegories, then what follows is the recognition that there is not a privileged form of interpretation. There are various and multiple symbols that

can be used as a basis for the interpretation of the Other's culture. The associations of these symbols, registers or voices that the culture uses are made coherent into conceptual patterns that are not part of the culture under study but of the culture of the researcher.

Clifford (1988) uses two metaphors in order to describe anthropological work: "Anthropological fieldwork has been represented as both a scientific "laboratory" and a personal "rite of passage." The two metaphors capture nicely the discipline's impossible attempt to fuse objective and subjective practices" (109). There is no way to liberate ourselves from our own structures of thought and see the world with Other eyes. The Other's reality is always sieved through our own cultural and ideological sieve.

The stories that anthropologists write are allegories that finally turn to be one story among many. The moment that ethnographic writing is not seen anymore as an interpretive account of generalized cultural facts or the discovery of human essence and the process of writing "is accorded its full complexity of historicized dialogical relations" (Clifford, ibid.: 109), the allegorical aspect of such writing surfaces. Interpretation is relational and dialogical between two or more cultures. The search for essence or origins becomes an empty space that can be filled with theories or interpretations that are never objective because they are culturally based.

"Other" cultures become texts, narratives that try to salvage and rescue some cultural expression that is different from the homogeneous expression of the all encompassing global culture. Nevertheless, through its description this culture is taken from its natural context and background and in this way its expressions become more foreign, alien or even exotic to the people that consume it as text. Consumers of Other people's cultures and experiences appropriate the moral and ideological constituents of this culture in order to learn something different about humanity.

There is no easy passage from the oral and performative cultural expression to its written version. The written text the anthropologist constructs is only partly dependent on the life and culture of the represented. It is more a text that constructs dialogically the culture of the Other having as its backbone the culture of the ethnographer. Clifford (ibid.) describes "the notion that writing is a

corruption, that something irretrievably pure is lost when a cultural world is textualized (119).

Cultures are unstable structures, always in the process of making and the practice of turning them into written texts in order to preserve them is something artificial. For Walter Benjamin (apud. Clifford, ibid.: 119) the transience of things makes us want to find a way to preserve them for the future. A kind of knowledge you value and want to keep passing on to the next generations. This desire should not be resisted but it should come with the knowledge that my story is one of many possible and 'truthful' ones. There ought to be an opening up and an acceptability of the different interpretations and theories that the dialogical relationship between the culture of the fieldworker and the culture of the subject of study raise.

The ethnographer should be responsible for the descriptions s/he makes of the Other's culture. The concept of allegory helps us "confront and take responsibility for our systematic constructions of others and of ourselves through others" (Clifford, ibid.: 121). There are different voices speaking in any ethnographic account. The voice of the informant and practitioner of culture and the voice of the ethnographer that occupies a between space since it registers the encounter his/her own culture with the Other's culture. There is no way of writing outside allegory. Ethnographic writing points to an impossibility of talking objectively about a different social reality. Ethnographic writing is always partial and incomplete since what we get is usually the fragmented experiences of the ethnographer in the specific social and cultural reality. What describes ethnographic writing is not objectivism and literalism but a mixture of subjectivism, objectivism and allegory.

It is important to show the slippage and sliding of signifiers when writing an ethnographic description. Geertz (1973) borrows Gilbert Ryle's notion of "thick description" as a way to get a better understanding of the Other's culture. Analysis, as he insists, is sorting out the structures of signification (9). The data that ethnographers and photographers choose to expose are really their own constructions and this is inevitable. 'Thick description' which is a form of narrativity that gives priority to the informer's portrayal of his/her everyday experiences and life, also pays attention to the construction of identity the informer is involved in while relating his/her everyday affairs. Morawska-Vianna

(2007) also believes in the advantages of thick description and she explains: the importance of every day narratives of the past and identity, and the realities they construct should be considered in anthropological analyses (153).

'Thick descriptions' are interested in "the study of narrative as mediator between a canonical cultural world and the idiosyncratic world." (ibid: 156) The narrative realities 'thick descriptions' construct are not only seen as a mediating element between the subjectivity and culture but also "as locus of social agency" (Morawska-Vianna, 2007: 156).

Bruner and cultural psychology

National Geographic constructs verbal and visual narratives that represent subaltern cultures. These narratives try to make sense of the Other culture by attributing meaning to its symbolic structures. The narratives the magazine produces are interpretations of what Jerome Bruner (1990), an American psychologist, coined 'cultural or folk psychology'. He defines cultures as symbolic systems. Human beings perform symbolic activities which they employ in order to construct and make sense of the world and of themselves (2). When people encounter the world, there are meaning-making processes taking place.

Bruner (ibid.) defined these symbolic systems not as personal but as cultural. Construction of meaning that depends on the interpretation of symbolic systems is social, cultural and historical since symbolic systems exist the moment a person is born and are there during his/her formation and appropriation of the local culture and language. Symbolic systems constitute "a very special kind of communal tool kit whose tools, once used, ma[k]e the user a reflection of the community" (ibid: 11). And he adds: "*Symbolic* meaning, then, depends in some critical fashion upon the human capacity to internalize such a language and to use its *system* of signs as an interpretant in this "standing for" relationship" (ibid.: 69).

Each culture not only uses its own symbolic system but also teaches its participants how to attach meaning to each symbolic expression. These symbolic systems teach us forms of constructing the social world by shaping our mind in the forms of thinking of that particular culture. Folk psychology is

interested in the ways different cultures create different social worlds. Cultures also seek to achieve social stability and use narratives as a form of acknowledging human differences and trying to match their interpretations to the prevailing moral codes and social institutions of each culture. Narratives are employed by cultures in order to communicate to the different participants the values and moral code of the specific culture.

There can never be theories of human psychology that are based only on the individual since it is people's participation in culture that moulds them emotionally and mentally. Therefore, meaning-making processes are not individual but *public* and *shared* (Bruner, ibid.: 13). When an individual inserts himself in a culture, s/he learns the meaning-making processes of this culture together with the shared concepts that are its constituent part. Moreover, people that participate in the same culture also share a language and discursive techniques that help them solve differences in meaning and interpretation.

The American psychologist uses the term folk psychology to point to the shared meanings, interpretation processes and procedures of negotiation of meaning that people that share a culture make use of. In order for a group of people to be able to function as a group they need to acquire the means for accessing the rules and mechanisms of interpretation of the local culture. These meanings and interpretations are public and shared and are also imperative in order for the people that share a culture to live harmoniously.

Folk psychology is enacted in a society's institutions, such as schools, family and religious institutions but it should not be perceived in a conservative way as something stable and fixed. On the contrary, folk psychology is always in the process of change according to the "culture's changing responses to the world and to the people in it" (Bruner, ibid.: 14).

Folk psychology focuses on what people say, the narratives they construct about their lives, the reasons they say that motivate them to act the way they do and the narratives they construct about other people's lives. Folk psychology is not interested in understanding what people do but is keen on figuring out what people say they do (Bruner, ibid.: 16). It focuses on narratives and not on doings. It is aware that in order to approach the structures of meaning of another culture, the anthropologist should not try to interpret alone the cultural expressions of others but should let the native of that culture say

what they are doing and how they interpret the world they live in. Culturally oriented psychology perceives saying and doing as a unit that gives some access to the symbolic actions this culture has adopted.

Folk psychology revolves around narratives and explores the narrative structures of a culture: the stories it tells, the myths that make up its tradition and the genres it creates. These narratives, cultural psychologists hold, reflect the human conceptual world, the human mind that, in its turn reflects the culture and history. Folk psychology uses interpretation as its tool in order to access the systems culture employs to create meanings. Bruner (ibid.) affirms: "In the end, even the strongest causal explanations of the human condition cannot make plausible sense without being interpreted in the light of the symbolic world that constitutes human culture" (138).

Folk psychology is concerned with ways of life and the way people judge and give worth to their lives. People's values are reflected in their ways of life and the various manners in which these values interact form a culture. People acting and talking about their actions is what cultural psychology is interested in describing and interpreting. There is not anymore a legitimate and authoritative interpretation and meaning given to people's actions. Cultural psychology's open-mindedness consists of showing a willingness to construct knowledge from multiple perspectives. This cognitive revolution revolves around the concept of meaning and the processes of its construction.

Meaning is not something private but it is public and common to the participants of the same culture since culture shapes meaning and forms the mind. The interpretive system that people use to talk about their intentions and the meaning their lives have is shaped by culture. Symbolic systems of culture shape human intentions that regulate experiences and give them meaning. Bruner (ibid.) articulates it well:

"All cultures have as one of their most powerful constitutive instruments a folk psychology, a set of more or less connected, more or less normative descriptions about how human beings "tick," what our own and other minds are like, what one can expect situated action to be like, what are possible modes of life, how one commits oneself to them, and so on" (35).

National Geographic's representations attempt to understand subaltern folk psychology and its cognitive system which uses narratives in order to understand human actions and the intentions that motivate them. The magazine's narrative structures create links between the exceptional and the ordinary (Bruner, ibid.: 47) and show how people manage mentally such deviations from the expected and the established. People's desires influence their actions and the relation they have to the canonical structures of the world. The established states of the world also influence people's desires, their beliefs and their goals. The relation is reciprocal and this "creates a subtle dramatism about human action which also informs the narrative structure of folk psychology" (Bruner, ibid.: 40).

The truth or falsity of the stories the magazine tells is not determinedby its reference to an extralinguistic reality. The truth or falsity of the story can be found in the sense the sequence of the events recounted in the story creates. The story constructed does not reflect some external reality but creates a reality of its own that is internal to discourse and its veracity depends on the unique sequentiality of sentences "that is indispensable to a story's significance and to the mode of mental organization in terms of which it is grasped" (Bruner, ibid.: 44).

Each culture has its own specific way of constructing narratives. According to Paul Ricoeur, it is tradition that provides the logic each culture uses in order to construct narratives (Bruner, ibid.: 45). The narratives National Geographic produces reflect Western logic and frame of thought. Experiences are turned into narratives that have a plot that reveals the logic and mental organization of thought of the particular culture. The narrative's relation to reality is the readings it makes of it.

National Geographic's narratives on the subaltern usually raise interest because they deal with exceptions to middle class norms. Therefore, they demand from the one constructing the narrative to give the reasons why the departure from the norm has occurred and simultaneously to use "a set of interpretive procedures for rendering departures from those norms meaningful in terms of established patterns of belief" (Bruner, ibid.: 47).

Departures from the canonical usually deal with moral issues that spring up from the encounter between "the canonical world of culture and the more

idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes" (Bruner, ibid.: 52). And this is what gives the narrative its dramatic aspect. Deviations from the norm will end up discussing such issues as values and morality in a certain society and thus the narrator is obliged to reveal in his/her narration his/her moral stance which is different from the canonical one.

The breach from the norm is what makes a narrative intriguing. Settled and canonical realities are not what anthropological narratives are looking for. There needs to be some complication, some trouble that will make reasons for acting in certain ways rise. As Bruner (ibid.) explains: "To make a *story* good, it would seem, you must make it somewhat uncertain, somehow open to variant reading, rather subject to the vagaries of intentional states, undetermined" (54).

Settled realities tend to conventionalize meaning and produce fairly uniform interpretations. Culture promotes established ways of acting and turns them into commonplace, ordinary and finally canonical. The meaning attached to these canonical actions also becomes the culturally accepted one since "meaning itself is a culturally mediated phenomenon that depends upon the prior existence of a shared symbol system" (Bruner, ibid.: 69).

The stories told in *National Geographic* on subaltern cultures describe realities that are not canonical for its readers although some of these realities exist side by side with the realities of the magazine's readers. The visual and verbal narratives the magazine produces do not close up meanings but open them up to a variety of interpretations that depend on the locus of enunciation of the readers and their cultures.

When a person constructs a narrative s/he is not just reporting. People try to find meaning in their actions in order to find meaning in their lives and they create and shape these meaning through narratives. In the narrative people try to show the connection between what they do, their beliefs and their feelings.

National Geographic's narratives can not afford to keep the listener's attention if they do not describe the unusual and unconventional. Cultural psychology seeks to interpret the departures from the norm and aspires to figuring out the rules according to which human beings create meanings in cultural contexts. As stated in Bruner (1990) cultural contexts "are always *contexts of practice*: it is always necessary to ask what people are *doing* or *trying* to do in that context" (118).

In another article, Bruner (1986) seeks to make the distinction between two modes of thought: the argumentative and the narrative. Each one constructs reality in different ways: arguments aim at convincing people of their truth while narratives are interested in telling a story that is similar to lifelike experiences. It is verisimilitude and not truth that narratives endow (11). The argumentative mode of thought pursues universal truths while narratives investigate connections between two events.

Cultures, in our understanding, are like literary texts that use symbolic language to express meanings. Bruner (1986) again explains:

> "It is this "relative indeterminacy of a text" that "allows a spectrum of actualizations." And so, "literary texts initiate 'performances' of meaning rather than actually formulating meanings themselves. And that is what is at the core of literary narrative as a speech act: an utterance or a text whose intention is to initiate and guide a search for meanings among a spectrum of possible meanings." (25)

National Geographic's research on Other cultures is always confronted with the culture's texts that open up various possibilities of meaning. There can never be one "true" meaning in these cultural texts. But it is the variety of the possible meanings that any culture's observer will construct and their acceptance as possible interpretation of the text that make folk psychology an open minded approach to culture.

Literary texts succeed in turning the reader into a writer by opening up various possibilities of meaning and interpretation and by making the reader become the writer of a virtual text that is the product of the interaction between the written text and the cultural texts that have formed the human mind. The same happens when people observe cultural manifestations. People participating in a culture or simply acting have a fictional text in their minds about what is the accepted way of acting and which intentions lead people to act in certain ways. Any divergence from the ordinary is the complication which confronts the subjective text with the cultural "ordinary" text and usually is what the text is all about.

Previous knowledge and mindset help us through the journeys we take every day of our lives through culture. Every action in a cultural context is something new that demands previous knowledge on similar actions that helps drive the practitioner through the complicated paths of culturally acceptable and ordinary modes of action. And this is how each person creates a personal, subjective story that is entwined with his own culture.

People possess a natural capacity for telling stories. They are born with this ability and through their lives culture provides them with narrating tools that are part of the narrative tradition and interpretation of the specific culture. Subjective stories always present differences and divergences from the dominant stories that make up the narrative tradition of a culture. Subjective stories take it upon themselves to explain the differences in meaning they create and tend to justify any deviations from the canonical versions by pointing to the particularities of the situation.

Narration affects the way that what we do is perceived and understood by others and by ourselves. Meaning is determined "by the order and form of its sequence" of action (Labov apud. Bruner, 1990: 90). The sequence of actions and the intentional states that inform it use cultural devices to be able to make sense of any story. Cultural communities make use of these devices and interpretive procedures in order to be capable of settling and understanding the different versions of reality that coexist in any society. Cultures employ symbolic systems in order to negotiate meanings in the variety of intentions that we encompass in our everyday life.

National Geographic creates a folk psychology that is curious about the ways in which the encounter between the inner self and the outer reality happens (Bruner, 1986: 21). Its visual and verbal narratives are successful because they create gaps that invite the reader to fill them up and create meanings that are not directly found in the text. The obvious is rendered strange, the interaction between the inner and the outer world is rendered conflictual, a predicament. The reader needs to employ his cultural interpretative tools in order to create a new story of his/her own that will make sense in his/her own culture. Every reader seeks to understand in a story "how plight, character, and consciousness are integrated" (ibid.: 21).

Bruner (ibid.) establishes three features of discourse that seem crucial to him:

"The first is the triggering of *presupposition*, the creation of implicit rather than explicit meanings...The second is what I shall call *subjectification*: the depiction of reality not through the omniscient eye that views a timeless reality, but through the filter of the consciousness of protagonists in the story...The third is *multiple perspective*: beholding the world not univocally but simultaneously through a set of prisms each of which catches some part of it" (25-26).

Open meanings, unsettled realities and the subjunctive mode of representing realities are characteristics of a successful narrative. A certain linguistic form is used to conjure a subjunctive reality and multiple perspectives. One of the strategies readers use in order to interpret the realities represented in a narrative is by matching and accommodating them with their own stock of stories and realities. And this is how people make their interpretation an appropriate one for their culture.

Great narratives do not close up meaning but open up possibilities of interpretation that depend on the cultural background of each reader. What we've been trying to say is that meanings are not fixed in the narrative but there is always a play between the meanings that are supposed to be there in the text and the way they are understood by each reader who is finally a cultural product. Each reading is a rewriting of a narrative as interpreted by its reader.

Another aspect of any narrative except its plot is the identities it creates. In *National Geographic* identities are created in interaction with the plot and the setting. We do not tend to see identities in an essentialist manner since we believe that the self is not an essence that antecedes people's efforts to describe it. We learn about that the multiple facets of the self by interpreting the way it acts in the social setting. This way, self becomes a concept in an interpreter's mind, "a concept created by reflection, a concept constructed much as we construct other concepts" (Bruner, 1990: 100).

People understand and interpret the story and identities in a narrative in a situated manner; this means they create an interpretation that is appropriate

in their own cultural world. People also acquire knowledge in a distributive manner: they learn from each and every situation they find themselves in. They also create different versions of Self by participating in different social contexts. Bruner (ibid.) explains:

"Coming to know anything, in this sense, is both *situated* and (to use the Pea-Perkins term) *distributed*. To overlook this situated-distributed nature of knowledge and knowing is to lose sight not only of the cultural nature of knowledge but of the correspondingly cultural nature of knowledge acquisition" (106).

From the moment we are born, we start participating "in a kind of cultural geography" (Bruner, ibid.: 106) that helps us guide ourselves through the multiple paths of action to the one that is the most appropriate for our culture. This cultural geography teaches us how to interpret a context and how to act in it. Self is not understood anymore as a substance that emerges solely from the consciousness of this self but as also a cultural-historical product. Self is a product of the interaction of a mind with a culture and a culture with a mind. Self is the product of its interaction with other selves. Undertakings to understand the nature of actions, intentions and character acquire an interpretive character. The nature of actions, intentions and character are products of a narrative and become relevant and suitable not to some external reality but to their capacity to achieve "external and internal *coherence, livability,* and *adequacy*" (ibid.: 112).

Cultures that produce dominant narratives about actions, intentions and identities and manage to turn their versions of reality into the official ones become conceptually hegemonic and gain political control over other groups and cultures. Therefore when one culture translates the other, this translation brings about sometimes assimilative and other times agonistic attitudes towards the expressions of the other culture. Bhabha (1998) asserts that "the translation of cultures, whether assimilative or agonistic, is a complex act that generates borderline affects and identifications, 'peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture clash'" (30).

Laraia (1997) puts this in simple but direct wording:

"The fact that human beings see the world through their culture has as a consequence the tendency to consider their way of life as the most correct and the most natural one. This tendency, called ethnocentrism, is responsible, in extreme cases, for the occurrence of a number of social conflicts" (our translation) (75).

Lieberman (in Harris, 2009: 455) believes that nothing has inherent meaning. Actions and character of a person or a group are always susceptible to multiple interpretations. Each social setting has its own structure and in order to reach some understanding of it demands "a rigorous and reflexive engagement with its members" (Lieberman in Harris, 2009: 455).

When people start entering the culture of the "Other", "they can be described as culturally blind" (our translation) (Laraia, 1997: 95). They do not seem to comprehend the symbolic language the culture uses to represent its conceptual categories. Penetrating into someone else's culture means start grasping and understanding the categories that constitute their specific cultural system. And this insight can only happen if we approach it with respect and if we perceive truth as socially constructed. Sociopolitical thought "does not grow out of disembodied reflection but "is always bound up with the existing life situation of the thinker"" (Manheim in Geertz, 1973: 194).

We consider Latour's (1993) work very intriguing because he exposes modernity's invention of a separation between the scientific power and the political power (29). When anthropologists are representing facts about other cultures, who is speaking are the cultures but the anthropologists, too. Modernity's resistance to accept the impossibility of separation of true science from ideology has led it to ignore the identity of the speaking and thinking subject since it believes in the rationality of the scientist. However, science "is intimately bound up with the fabric of society" (Latour, 1993: 43) which is responsible for establishing the processes by which the product of research is attained.

Latour (1993) perceives modernity's pursuit of knowledge as being at one and the same time "a way of saluting the birth of 'man' or as a way of announcing his death" (13) since modern humanism puts the human being in

the center of its study but at the same time seeks to purify scientists from the social contract that intermediates any representation (ibid.: 27).

In this chapter we attempt to understand what culture is and how it programs people's actions and their interpretations of cultural events. Our conception of culture helps us realize that *National Geographic*'s visual and verbal representations of Other cultures are always filtered through the conceptual world of the people doing the representation. The categories anthropologists, photographers and researchers create are the reflection of the conceptual framework of their own culture.

CHAPTER 4 - SUBALTERN GROUPS AND THE LOCATION OF TRUTH

Who is the subaltern?

We discuss the representation of subaltern groups in *National Geographic* during the period of four years, from 2006-2009. The first question that comes to mind is what makes up a subaltern group. We consider subaltern, groups of people whose members have limited capacity to consume, whose status in the bigger society where they belong is inferior, whose tendency is to become extinct (Indigenous groups) or grow in numbers (slum dwellers), and whose suffering is humiliating.

Representing the exotic and the non common place has been the focus of interest throughout the history of *National Geographic*. The non common place was and still is the unknown, the marginalized, the exotic, the silenced, the inexistent and the invisible. What constitutes the difference then, between the non common place and the subaltern? We guess the subaltern is made up of groups of people that not only do not represent the *status quo* but are also characterized by a deep suffering that they inherit together with their social position, scarcity of economic means, gender choices or professional humiliation. Even when the subaltern does exist next to us, we turn our face to it and try to make it transparent and invisible since we do not want to feel responsible for the conditions in which it lives and furthermore waste our time taking actions (political, economical and ethical) to help it improve its predicament.

The subaltern we relate to is the one that belongs to the lower classes or strata of the society. They are the oppressed of the society because of mainly economic factors. However, we do not accept the economic as the only and final determinant of what constitutes the subaltern. The word "subaltern", as Said (1988) affirms in the foreword of "Selected Subaltern Studies" book, has both political and intellectual connotations. The most straightforward way to define which groups contrive the subaltern is by their opposite. The subaltern groups are those that are ruled by the "dominant" or "elite" groups or, in other words, groups on which power is exercised. Although capitalism sees this domination as mainly economical, according to Gramsci this "much greater

mass of people [are] ruled by coercive or sometimes mainly ideological domination from above" (apud. Guha, 1988: vi).

For Spivak (1994) the subaltern is made up of "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribal, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (78) and "the communities of zero workers on the street or in the countryside" (84). Yet, the subaltern subject, anyhow, is undeniably heterogeneous and efforts to essentialize it and define it as homogeneous would be fallacious. The construction of their identity should be based on their difference and the researcher should not try to create a common essence. Social, economic and historical conditions are regional and differ from place to place. A group that is dominant in one region at some point in history can become dominated in the same region because the social, economic and historical conditions change. Strategic essentialism might come in handy when we generalize but we should be able to focus on characteristics that differentiate groups among them and make them unique.

Verbal and visual representation of the subaltern

Nonetheless, even when politicians or intellectuals have the intention of relieving the pain of these groups, they enhance the fact that these groups can not represent themselves and need to be represented. The fact that their experience is not documented the way it is lived (if this is ever possible) but needs to be reported through the vocabulary and conceptual images of some dominant group silences them even more. The discourse of the society's Other is not known through their mouth but requires mediation. The task of "counterhegemonic ideological production" (Spivak, 1994: 69) is a rare and difficult enterprise. The subaltern struggles and longs to be given a voice. Nevertheless, as John Beverly writes, "if the subaltern could speak in a way that really *mattered* to us, that we would feel compelled to listen to, it would not be the subaltern" (apud. Kapoor, 2004: 639). Lack of the power of speech is the main reason why these groups continue to live in obscurity (although their physical presence is everywhere).

We can also not ignore the fact that any action a person or group takes is invested with interests, desire and power (Spivak, 1994: 66). The representation

of the "Other" creates a scene of power which still leaves the subaltern as the unprivileged and reproduces the relations of power. Power is not transferred to the unprivileged when they are represented but it stays with the ruling class who usually speaks for them and continues (willingly or unwillingly) to define the interests of the dominant group. Power, which is always in the hands of the group making the representation, is exercised in a way that tends towards the maintenance of the *status quo* which is capitalist exploitation. The relation of speech and power is evidently one of the mechanisms capitalism uses to perpetuate the asymmetries in power.

When *National Geographic* represents subaltern groups, apparently the two senses of representation which Deleuze talks about can be seen running together: representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation', as in art or philosophy" (apud. Spivak, 1994: 70). The representation as 'speaking for' can be observed in the verbal narrative of the magazine and representation as re-presentation is marked by the visual narratives.

The subaltern's conceptual world and ways of life are not seen as completely separate from those of the elite classes. In a world where everything is hybrid and elements mix in unthought-of ways, we do not undertake to separate the history of the ruled from the history of the ruler. This would just make our writing as limited as the master discourse in history has been. Histories are "overlapping" and "interdependent territories" (Said apud. Guha, 1988: viii).

We attempt to identify what makes up the conceptual world and culture of the subaltern, as it is represented in the magazine *National Geographic*, and try to narrate these not as the complete opposite of those of the elite and dominant groups but figure out how they mix and combine elements and create a "hybrid" culture. The complexity of this mingling should be able to show how unconventional and distinct elements weave in them dominant features.

Although *National Geographic* claims to make representations of subaltern cultures, gaining entrance to the civilization of the Other through your own conceptual world is always an arduous undertaking. Cultural difference is a characteristic inherent of human societies. An understanding of the culture of the Other is not easily accessible to no one, not even to anthropologists. If the

one doing the representation wants to be considered ethical, it is crucial that his representation does not turn the subaltern into an object but into the Subject of the inquiries.

The researcher's predicament is how to turn what has been invisible into a Subject. Deciphering the mechanisms that can empower the disenfranchised should be one of the tasks of researchers working within the framework of subaltern studies. Since the representation is made by dominant groups, uncovering the central themes in the verbal and visual discourse must serve as a means of catching a glimpse not only of the ways the subaltern is conceived but also of the ways they imagine themselves.

If the dominant seeks to represent the subaltern, it should figure out what the subaltern would say if it could speak. In order to speak and be heard, you need to have developed class consciousness and be able to give it voice. The voice this consciousness would use is capable of making a difference in the way it would be heard. It is not clear if the representation of subaltern consciousness in its purest form is the most fruitful form of representation for these groups and anyhow it is still a challenge to evaluate how this voicing would result in a change of level for this group, materially, economically, politically and socially speaking. This voicing would only strike a change, such as class mobility, only in case it is given value. In order for such consciousness to rise, some knowledge of the relationships between the different social classes should take place. And, in such a case, the knowledge of the power relations that the material assets in the society create, raises the consciousness and lays the foundation for ideology.

We should be critical of our work and consider what it does not say, what it silences, what it keeps in the shadow. The economic factors are of great importance and should be mentioned since material issues have perpetually influenced the interests of people. Although human history is replenished with wars about religion, culture and territories material grounds have usually been the justification behind these wars. The subaltern groups that will be studied are not just oppressed locally but internationally. Economic submission can be brought about by strategies such as international subcontracting. Spivak (1994) articulates the phenomena this strategy generates:

"Under this strategy, manufacturers based in developed countries subcontract the most labor intensive stages of production, for example, sewing or assembly, to the Third World nations where labor is cheap. Once assembled, the multinational re-imports the goods - under generous tariff exemptions - to the developed country *instead of selling them to the local market*" (83).

It is very difficult to think beyond the western pattern of development, that is the liberal-capitalist mode. Although this model has not proven itself successful since it has thrown people around the world into poverty, other models of development have not demonstrated effectiveness in large scale either. The western model of development was based on colonialism which "incorporated the colonies in the international division of labor and thus initiated a process of global inequality and socioeconomic impoverishment, particularly in the Third World" (Kapoor, 2004: 629). Now it is based on the concept of "worlding" (Said and Spivak apud. Kapoor, 2004: 629) which is similar to Marx's "commodity fetishism", where commodities are so fetishised under capitalism that the (alienated) labor process involved in their production is obscured" (Kapoor, 2004: 629).

Deleuze describes how the economic sphere determines the political and social one. As example he gives French capitalism that "needs greatly a floating signifier of unemployment" (apud. Spivak, 1994: 84). Unemployment is hence used in order to justify such forms of repression as: restrictions on immigration, repression in the factories, "the struggle against the youth and the repression of the educational system" (apud. Spivak, 1994: 84).

The dominant, prevailing and thus ethnocentric subject selectively represents the Other in order to define himself. The dominant subject, moreover, imposes certain mechanisms to constitute the Other and therefore there is an essentialization of categories in the representation s/he constructs that are important to the one making the representation. This representation suggests that the real essence of the Other has been found. An authentic representation has been done. However, this representation instead of empowering the subaltern might lead to the fabrication of continuous oppression.

Spivak (1994) confesses that "the protection of the subaltern [has] become a signifier for the establishment of a *good* society" (94) since "to ignore the subaltern is to continue the imperialist project" (94). Still, she talks about the commercialization of interest in the subaltern nowadays which has also become a product for consumption by the media. In the modern world being marginalized and subaltern has become 'attractive' to First World public since divergence from the upper and middle class mode of living is alluring to the eye. Difference is being commodified in different fields: subaltern and indigenous knowledges are being valorized as alternative ways of living, relations with space, such as connection with the earth and its beings, start being regarded as opportunities to expand our links to the world and communities that use other than the capitalistic mode of production are considered paradigms of options that the western world has.

As strange as it may sound, the native informant is not always the most appropriate and prepared representative to speak about the subaltern or in its name since "'clinging to marginality' also runs the risk of essentializing one's ethnic identity and romanticizing national origins" (Kapoor, 2004: 630). Valorizing indigenous and subaltern knowledges makes it easier for First World experts to appropriate these knowledges for themselves and end up not privileging the subaltern but themselves. Such is the case in Brazil, with local and foreign scientists getting their hands on Indigenous medicinal plants that have been part of their wisdom for generations, and patenting them without paying any money to these Indigenous groups.

This valorization of the 'native' leads and contributes to what Spivak calls 'new orientalism' (apud. Kapoor, 2004: 631). All the same, it should be questioned if this credit given to subaltern ways ends up contributing to upward social mobility for these groups or gives advantage to the western intellectual, photographer or NGO workers since these individuals or organizations are seen as benevolent 'outsiders' craving to do the good for the Other.

Because cultures are incommensurable, gaining an insight into the subaltern, might it inhabit in the West or any other place on earth, is almost an impossible mission. We tumble in what Jean-François Lyotard called "différend": the inaccessibility of, or untranslatability from, one mode of discourse in a dispute to another (apud. Spivak, 1994: 96). The concepts that

organize and regulate the speaker's discourse and consequently mind are incommensurable with the ones dominating the mind of the subaltern. Different life histories, local cultures, economic conditions and educational backgrounds form people in different ways and make them different in such a way that makes communication or understanding quite impossible. Subjects are determined by their race, class and gender and are constituted by these characteristics. This frame of mind not only constitutes the subjects but also determines the way they form their object (Spivak, 1994: 102). More specifically:

"[Spivak] underlines how our discursive constructions are intimately linked to our positioning (socioeconomic, gendered, cultural, geographic, historical, institutional), and therefore demands a heightened self-reflexivity that sometimes even those 'critical' development analysts among us can fail to live up to" (Kapoor, 2004: 628).

Whoever is the one making the representation, might they be western intellectuals, anthropologists, photographers or 'native' informers, representations are equally problematic. Any kind of construction, discursive or imagetic depends on the person who is making the representation: their gender, culture, micro-macro history, geographical space in which they are inserted, socioeconomic status and institutional association. As we are interested in representations of subaltern groups, we have to consider that dominant representations of marginalized groups have been mainly done by Western people. And these representations have formed the conceptual world of western and non-western people and have become the gear that analysts carry at the moment of representation.

The investigating subjects of subaltern cultures and ways of life should be critical of their privileged positioning (social, historical, geographical and cultural) and not contemplate their perspective as transparent and natural. For this kind of attitude perpetuates the preexisting relations of power since the effect this kind of discourse that aims to improve the conditions and status of less privileged groups has, in fact results in sustaining the *status quo*.

The knowledge on the subaltern and the help that the investigating subject alleges to provide are not immune to questions of power. The

production of knowledge on the people and cultures that are considered peripheral is not altruistic. Academics need the Third World and its subaltern as a source of information on cultural difference in order to help them ascend in their career, publish more, get funds and tenure. The point is if such knowledge production brings some advantages back to the subaltern, if it improves its living conditions, its economic situation or its social status. Appropriating the subaltern in order to promote yourself in the First World is, in our opinion, unethical. Nonetheless, should we, for this reason, ignore the suffering of Others?

Guha (1997) supports that parallel to elitist historiography, the history written by dominant groups, there have always been the stories of people, of the great masses that have been largely ignored. The narratives of these people, that are mainly laborers and belong to the intermediate and mainly the lower strata of the town and countryside areas constitute an autonomous domain that Guha (1997) calls the *politics of the people* (xiv-xv). Elitist historiography has persistently ignored and failed to recognize and interpret the histories of the "people". It has adopted a monistic view of power relations (ibid.: xv) with its tendency to see history from the dominant point of view and assign to it characteristics of a unified whole.

The histories of the rulers and the ruled do not constitute independent domains but are in constant contact. The fact that the histories of the rulers have prevailed as The History designates an ideological split that is defined by power relations. Historians and academics in general have always sided with the powerful and sought to be complicit with the ruling classes. Scholars have difficulties accessing the culture, language and ways of acting of the poorer classes. They always prefer the intellectual analyses the ruling classes make of situations. In spite of the preference for elitist interpretation of facts, the politics of the rulers and the ruled are at the same time autonomous but also interacting.

These hierarchizations of cultures into "higher" and "lower" levels or into degrees of "backwardness" (Guha, 1997: xvii) have always had the support of the academic community. One of the reasons this has happened is that the scholars are usually part of the elite (maybe not the economic but the intellectual) and are faced with their own incapacity of accessibility to the world of the Other. The politics of the people, or the great masses, have become

remote and unapproachable to the historians writing The History of any nation. The academics are blind to the tradition that connects them with the power and this has become historiography's blind spot. Thus, Guha (1997) in his search for a cure to academic blindness towards its collaborative aspects, maintains that "an important aspect of *Subaltern Studies*... has been to subject this hegemonic presumption to a thoroughgoing critique" (xviii).

Subaltern Studies, however, should be careful not to fall under the spell of essentialization, similar to the Eurocentric academics' have essentialization of the politics of the elite during modernity and the whole of human history. *Subaltern Studies* should not essentialize the evidence it encounters in the subaltern and consider it as the authentic politics of the masses. If it does so then it would be repeating the same modes of analysis and interpretation that it wants to free itself from.

If such essentialization takes place, it will seem that the culture of the masses is the one and only culture representing a certain place. The same has been done in relation to the culture of the elite groups for centuries. Although elite groups have been the minority, their culture has been the one dominating and also being exported to other places. The Others of the society have constantly been expected to follow the footsteps of the dominant but minority culture. They are supposed to become capitalistic, consumerist and modern. Being modern has been associated to being civilized and the lower strata, the "minor" cultures of the society should adapt to what has become the mainstream culture that after all leads to Westernization. And this is thought to be for the best of the nation because of its homogenizing characteristics.

The great masses that are much bigger in number than the dominant minority should adhere to what has been established as the mainstream. This mainstream has turned into the universal and it is favored over the particular which are the opinions, cultural manifestations and political attitudes of the bulk of the population. What is not mainstream is immediately labeled as marginal, unwanted and pushed aside. What is designated as peripheral needs to pass from a process of deculturization and disenfranchisement and is called to adopt mainstream culture, language and attire so that it will never become a threat.

The subaltern itself, the elite authority and the academics are interested in creating a discourse about subaltern realities whose effects are different.

People that belong to the subaltern are supposed to belong to inferior ranks of the society. When they fight, they must be fighting to get a share in the wealth, power and prestige people of higher ranks enjoy. When Subaltern critical academics try to speak for the ruled what emerges usually is the antagonistic aspect of their relation to the dominant and not their collaborationist aspect. By collaborationist aspect we mean that the language both the elite and the academics use is the language of the dominant that fails to speak for the large masses and, consequently, for the nation. So, the Subaltern's resistance to elite domination is a fight they, beyond any doubt, have to fight by themselves.

There are relations of asymmetry among the three aforementioned groups. Asymmetry in the access they have to the media in order to make their voice heard and asymmetry in their capacity to pass a message that is going to be heard. Nonetheless, none of the three groups can claim to establish the authoritative truth about the subaltern and its consciousness.

The academics that are willing to study the Subaltern and their representation in the larger community should "relate to the history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity as well as to the attitudes, ideologies and belief systems-in short, the culture informing that condition" (Guha, 1988: 35). They should try to read the subaltern culture "against the grain", through different eyes from the ones they have been taught to look at them.

Although in *National Geographic*, we have members of the elite and dominant groups making the verbal and visual representations, aspects of the culture and conceptual world of the Subaltern are represented in the articles. The critical analysts should focus on the different aspects of their different-from-the-mainstream ideology and try to figure out in which ways these aspects are represented in the article.

Every member of the society contributes and adds something to it. Although the subaltern is usually supposed to be invisible, their culture is an integrated part of the national culture as a whole. Whereas elite culture is usually the one dominating the scene, the structural dichotomy between elite culture and subaltern one perpetuates the will to ignore large numbers of people, their way of life and their consciousness.

There are other areas, except that of magazines such as *National Geographic*, where the dominant makes efforts to integrate the subaltern, such

as TV reality shows. However, even in these cases, the subaltern is molded as the exotic, the other, the different in order to amuse and entertain the dominant with its culture and language on the one hand and on the other hand in order to make the dominated identify with the people that are used as its representative. These kinds of TV shows spread and make popular the culture of the subaltern and make evident their contribution to the making of the culture which, in their case, is a domain usually considered independent of the elite culture. Nevertheless, it is clear the co-existence and interaction of the elite and subaltern domains.

When subaltern groups are photographed as poor, dirty and marginal there is no insight at all to the rules and norms that dominate their local culture. What surfaces is their poverty, their difference from the middle and upper classes. It is clear that neither the verbal nor the visual text can embrace the particularity of the various and different groups that make up the subaltern. So the readers are left with a superficial description that homogenizes each one of these clusters of "Other" peripheral and marginalized people with the impoverished and marginal of their own culture.

The disenfranchised of each society form a kind of secondary society. This society suffers from the exploitation of the higher classes and this seems to be a fact in all human societies. We have to confess the complicity of higher classes with the *status quo* in order to be able to acknowledge the mechanisms it uses so that it can perpetuate the submission and humiliation of the oppressed.

Male, caste, class, racial and economic dominance perpetuate a historical relationship of power mediated by religion, patriotism, nationalism, patriarchy and capitalism. These power relationships turn subaltern people into social rejects since human dignity is taken away from them. When the subaltern is represented, text and photographs show the most salient and visible aspects of subaltern circumstances and throw into secrecy and forgetfulness the deeper and most important causes of their predicament. Dominance always seeks to defend itself and there are techniques which tend to suppress the threat of the development of the consciousness of the oppressed.

Dominant groups adopt mechanisms that manifest their capacity to regulate the connection of the subaltern community to the world. Representing

subaltern groups verbally and visually in certain ways creates virtual forms of interaction between the elite and the peripheral culture. The elite is obliged to deal with feelings of incomprehension and ambiguity when it encounters the tradition of the Other and this makes the reception of any verbal or visual text on the Other attractive and alluring and thus appreciated.

Local subaltern cultures interact with the world, with local elite groups and also with other contiguous local and regional groups. Elite cultures seek to find ways to achieve syncretism among cultures so that subaltern consciousness will not rebel against the oppression it suffers. The dominant finds ways to disseminate among the subaltern certain standards of morality and values derived essentially from the culture of the elite in order to avoid a string opposition to its ruling. There are mechanisms that the elite uses in order to make the classical and the popular interact.

In *National Geographic* the conflicts that are characteristic of our world are rarely mentioned or represented. Although the unconventional points out to the fact that variation and difference is as common as the mainstream, *National Geographic* seems to use an ideological sieve in order to choose what will be included and what omitted in its pages. In five years of research, there have never been articles or photographs of life in prisons, madhouses or homosexual gatherings. These subaltern groups are ignored, concealed, obscured from us and turned invisible by the records of the dominant groups.

Representations tend to depict the subaltern as members of some group and as objects of empirical knowledge and not as an existence whose will and reflection constitute the actions it takes. The subaltern seems to have a "cause" but the reasoning or the logic of subaltern consciousness does not emerge. Circumstances of subaltern life seem to be external to their existence and as if not processed and acted upon by the members of the group.

Although when we are do research we are inclined to believe in the categories of analysis that we use, we want to stress the provisionality of such categories and also of the interpretation we attach to them. Theoretical conceptions should not be seen as leading to some objective and complete knowledge. As Pandey (1997) supports:

"...however, it would be well to acknowledge the provisionality of the statements we make, their own historicity and location in a specific political context, and consequently their privileging of particular forms of knowledge and particular relationships and forces to the exclusion of others. None of this is to deny the importance or efficacy of certain subject positions in a certain historical context" (29).

Subalternity and its condition

Guha (1997) believes that historiography has ignored subaltern social existence and its drama over the centuries. And this approach to history is part of the tradition of this science. He suggests that "a critical historiography can make up for this lacuna by bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life in its passage through time" (36).

The subaltern finds itself in the lowest strata of the society because of its desperate poverty. Its members feel quite impotent in their condition and therefore expect the state and government to assume responsibility for their well being. However, in this relationship, the positions occupied by the state and the subaltern are the ones of authority and submission respectively. The state always tries with different mechanisms to convince the subaltern that the authority of the state is a worthy and advantageous structure for them. Thus, it is assumed that the state has obligations towards its citizens but the citizens understand that they have duties towards the state, too.

Subordination is not a fixed state or quality but a relationship that is always in the process of making. People enter this relationship and while some of them tend to reproduce its hierarchies, others fight against its *status quo*. The subordinate develops feelings of loyalty towards the elite and the state and together with loyalty, the subordinate accepts his submission. However this submission is mixed with moments of bitterness, despair, irony and resistance.

The subordinate, when capable of raising his consciousness in relation to the hierarchies that are imposed on it because of its origins, lack of basic means, gender, color or age starts creating a will for justice. Its difference from the elite in the social, economical and political context leads it to rationalize differently from the way it has been taught. One of the ways the subaltern uses

in order to fight submission is by collaborating while also resisting. Bhadra (1997) defends that "collaboration and resistance, the two elements in the mentality of subalternity, merge and coalesce to make up a complex and contradictory consciousness. How this consciousness overcomes and transcends its contradictions is another question" (94-95).

The aim of the *Subaltern Studies* project is "to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political actions taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiative" (Hardiman, 1997: 106).

Representation and the location of truth

Using as our starting point the question of meaning we attach to photographs, we consider problematic the analysis of images that uses western codes to analyze the non-Western world. This uncritical use of the researchers' own categories to classify the Other whose categories they are not acquainted with, is characteristic of a rational, modern and scientific approach toward the studying of societies whose point of view remains stubbornly inaccessible to the researcher. Researchers act unaware of their own blind spot which is their ideology and beliefs, their cosmovision. And when people do not know to what they blind, they are unaware that they are blind.

Therefore researchers have to make what-goes-without-saying explicit and this consists in reflecting on the genealogy of our own truths and how these truths have been constituted over the years. For Veyne (1984), what we know, our way of seeing the world is like a mirror in which knowledge and reflection is blended. Ideology is blended in our views of the world and thus in the parameters we use to justify what we see. De Souza (2006) explains what Greenblatt called the "kidnapping" of language which is the process of fitting what is inexplicable to us into our own categories:

> "This colonial attempt to "fit" the strangeness of the new reality encountered
> into the codes known to the European, is described by Greenblatt (1991:88)
> as an attempt to render transparent what was seen as opaque, or to reduce
> the profusion of unknown signs into known codes, thereby imposing sense

and control over what was seen as lacking both; Greenblatt calls this process the "kidnapping" of language" (236-237).

Pratt (1992) uses the term "anti-conquest" to refer "to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (7). So, travel writers or photographers describe or take pictures of other cultures while reconfirming their own beliefs and systems of knowledge that can be completely foreign to the culture being represented.

As *National Geographic* is a means of popular education, we contextualize the visual literacy that the magazine offers. We can hardly escape from our own western constructed lenses but we can draw attention to their existence and how they affect our visual literacy practices. De Souza (2008) sees vision as a cultural and historical physical process that makes groups of people see the 'same' object in an encounter with an image (197). However, when the subject finds itself in a situation of 'trans cultural' contact, s/he may discover that "Others" see different aspects of the 'same' thing. The knowledges we acquire through our vision are socially, historically and culturally constructed and this turns the physical act of seeing into a mental process. We see with our mind and not with our eyes, as Gombrich (1977) suggests.

De Souza (2008) points out that "vision, like knowledge, is seen as a dynamic *process* constructed by the co-participants rather than as a ready-made *product*. Thus meaning, knowledge and identity are always contextualized and intersubjectively and relationally situated and never abstract" (201). And this process is something that is instilled in the human being since the day s/he is born. Parents explain images to their kids, teach what is worth looking at and what not, what is beautiful or ugly. Vision is always part of the process of socialization.

Vision, seen as a physical process can be objective, rational, concrete, transparent and universal but vision seen as a cultural artifact is always subjective, irrational, abstract, obscure and local. Signs, as Bakhtin (1981) reminds us, are arbitrary and our will for some fixity will always end up in frustration since the interpretations can be multiple, diverse and conflicting.

Naturally, the question of power is not separated from the question of meaning. Any kind of printed material creates a relationship between its community of origin and its community of arrival. This relationship is characterized by power relations which are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed as the printed material circulates among its readers. In the case of *National Geographic* its images circulate beyond transnational borders. Its photographs that are produced by a western community of origin, willingly or unwillingly, end up homogenizing western and non western conceptual categories.

The question is if the magazine, in spite of being open to representing any culture, it covertly promotes what Mignolo (1995) called *cultural relativism* which "consists of a strategy of ostensively accepting difference, but using one's own values, disguised as objective and universal, as a yardstick for assessing other cultures" (apud. de Souza, 2008: 204). Using Bhabha's (1996) terms, we research if the visual representations of *National Geographic* purport to attribute *equal respect* to the subaltern cultures by also granting *equal worth* (apud. de Souza, 2006: 259). Habermas commented in an interview that there are societies that are considered superior to others because of their economic or administrative systems or with reference to their technologies and legal institutions. However, he does not accept considering these societies superior as a whole, as a superior form of life. Habermas tries to free himself from the influence of western values that regard economic and technological advances as the measure of judging societies (apud. Hoy and McCarthy, 1994: 159).

The magazine's adept readers necessarily pass from a process of assimilation of their different points of view into *National Geographic's* mainstream ideology. The question of power is also to be found here. If the community of arrival is formed by the same principles and beliefs as the community of origin, no deconstruction or transformation of the sign will take place. However, if the community of arrival is formed by different values and beliefs the stimulus will undergo a process of transformation because it will be interpreted and constructed in tune with a different mind-set. De Souza (2008) puts forward this idea in the following way:

"If literacy involves the introduction of new meaning-making resources and related practices into a community, it is important to be aware of how these new resources, in their origin, are connected to essential values of the culture from which they originate; these values may be maintained or transformed in the movement of the resources from one community to another" (209).

Our culturally constructed eyes guide us to make certain readings of the images we see. Derrida (2001) opens his article "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences" with a citation from Montaigne: "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things". We have to question the visual interpretations of *National Geographic* in two levels: the magazine's interpretations of Other cultures and our own interpretations of the magazine's representations. We have to interrogate what has become transparent in our eyes, this means we have to question the obvious.

The production of knowledge by the West should cease to be seen as universal, scientific and objective truths and start to be seen as truths that are products of the western *regime of truth*, this means truths influenced by western values, ideology, religion and market needs. The question of power that is implicated in this production of knowledge should also be discussed. Western production of knowledge should be seen as also something local, influenced by certain historicities, cultures, ideologies and values.

Chakrabarty (2000) makes a call to "provincialize" the west (apud. de Souza, 2006: 231). This means to evaluate the knowledges the west produces not as universal and objective but as local and subjective. According to Bhabha (1994) these representations should be seen as formed by the *locus of enunciation* where they are produced. By bringing to the surface and questioning the context in which these dominant knowledges are produced we can act as agents who show the non essentiality of these representations. These representations are not fixed and objective but are one alternative among many.

It would be wrong, in our opinion, to keep feeding the dichotomy west/non west. The world, as we know it, is characterized by the coexistence and mingling of different western and non western elements. This coexistence

or hybridity, so typical of present days, might be creating a whole new way of representing other cultures, identities and spaces and it might also be affecting the interpretation of these representations. In order to counterpose or "deny the denial of coevalness" (Mignolo 200:121), one has to adopt the tactics "of *spatializing time* (Mignolo), *provincializing knowledge* (Chakrabarty) and moving from *representation to agency* (Bhabha)" (apud. de Souza, 2006: 234).

By having a critical eye towards the representations created by *National Geographic*, we are not trying to accuse the magazine of falsity or propose other more objective and truer pictures of reality. We think that this is impossible. Every representation is bound to some context and thus always has a perspective and a point of view. However, by bringing the processes by which such dominant representations are made possible, we might show the situatedness of these representations.

National Geographic exposes cultural differences and different ideologies in the creation of space and identities. The magazine is interested in approaching difference and exhibiting the local. Although the magazine's approach is apparently scientific, we are inclined to reconnect science to ideology and knowledge to power. Although the magazine seems to promote an awareness of the cultural heterogeneity and diversity that are part of our globalized and multicultural world and succeeds to create a dialogue between its readers and the different cultures, power relations override this dialogue.

We scrutinize the contextualized grammar that *National Geographic* uses to construct its images. From the various possibilities of representation, *National Geographic* chooses a standard form, which can be called its imagetic grammar that has passed from a process of normatization that turned it into a transparent, objective, logical and harmless grammar. Researching how knowledge is constructed through this imagetic grammar and how truth is validated through the visual tradition the magazine has had, helps us have a more critical eye towards the realities it constructs. These visual truths are not free floating but are related to other truths with which they form a network that Veyne (1984) calls *regime of truth*.

Understanding that the visual truths the magazine supports are the product of socio-historical and cultural processes helps us stop seeing these truths as universal and objective but as local and subjective. This thinking does

not tear from them their truth value but presents them as contextual, situated and contingent. The value of each regime of truth depends on the power attributed to it which is the result of global processes of cultural domination and submission. The transformation of the dominant regimes of truth into mainstream truths confers them value against other conflicting regimes of truth. However, there is no connection between the validity of each regime of truth and some external reality. The validity of these truths is internally conferred to them through their acceptance by the groups of people who believe in them.

Veyne's (1984) theory of truth does not fall far from Derrida's (2001) inherent problem in the deconstruction of an established discourse: "We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest" (152). In order to articulate propositions that are going to be taken as "true", you have to use the discourse of truth of your time.

According to Derrida (2001), in order to deconstruct the premises of any truth, you have to use these same premises in your discourse. In his words: "It is a question of explicitly and systematically posing the problem of the status of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself. A problem of *economy* and *strategy*" (Derrida, ibid.: 154). In this case these premises are used as tools, whose limits are clear to the researcher and whose truth value is being questioned. The moment other tools appear more useful the old premises can be abandoned. So, the old premises are used in order to deconstruct the system to which they belong. As Derrida (ibid.) points out "this is how the language of the social sciences criticizes *itself*" (156). And he continues: "In effect, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a privileged *reference*, to an origin, or to an absolute *archia*" (Derrida, ibid.: 158).

Veyne (1984) sets out to deconstruct the dualism myth/truth. He claims that Greeks believed in their myths because their credibility was attributed to them by consensus over the ages. Myths were part of their tradition that was a historical truth transmitted from generation to generation. Myths, Veyne (ibid.) continues, are truths that mix the element of marvelous and should be

understood not literally but as high philosophical teachings or allegories or a way of transmitting history.

Nowadays, our world is characterized by the "formation of professional centers of truth" (Veyne, ibid.: 31). However, following Veyne's (ibid.) thread of thought, truth is a term that should be used only in the plural because there are different programs or regimes of truth and the different modalities of belief are related to the ways in which truth is possessed (27). Furthermore, it is common for contradictory truths to coexist in the same mind because different programs of truth inform them, as in the case of religious scientists that believe in truths that are sometimes contradictory. Moreover, there is a connection between truth and interest or, in other words, truth is influenced by interests.

The ideology behind the 'truths' that *National Geographic* promotes is not a disinterested, natural and autonomous notion. Different societies or different groups in the same society hold different beliefs as true. A researcher studying these societies or groups should accept all of these beliefs as true but as belonging to different regimes of truth because "truth is plural and analogical" (Veyne, ibid.: 87).

In the west, professional centers of truth establish what each group tends to know or what it is allowed to know and usually consider as true what is scientific or not fiction. However, the notion of truth as something objective and universal does not exist. Every truth is always tied to some system of truth, some criteria for truth which seem rational and reasonable in the specific context. In the West, history is scientific and therefore true. On the other hand, myths or fiction are more linked to folklore or entertainment and thus are less true.

Furthermore, our regimes of truth or structures of truth are never stable. They are like centers or foundations whose stability or solidity is always threatened by what Derrida (2001) calls *play*. The networks of truth are constituted by internal connections that are not stable. Cultures like the European one that consider themselves as cultures of reference have to go through a process of dislocation or decentering when they try to grasp the concepts that form the regimes of truth of other cultures. However, when the culture of reference continues using its own categories to describe and at the same time disqualify "Other" cultures this dislocation does not occur.

We turn now to Hoy (1994) who calls for theories to be critical of themselves (105). However, even when a theory is critical of itself, it will always have its blind spots, its "socially-motivated distortions" (105) which it will have difficulties elevating to the conscious level. Hoy (ibid.) puts it in the following words:

"So the critical theory faces a methodological problem in that insofar as it wants to be a "theory", it is bound to make general claims about the total social configuration. But since it also wants to be "critical", it must be suspicious of such totalizing claims and of any assertions about the society implying not a partisan and partial, but an impartial and undistorted view of the whole" (112).

Critical theory connects knowledge to its origins and purposes thus examining social norms, historical conditions and power relations that are taken as natural. It also reiterates the need for knowledge that changes over time and is constituted not by a deliberate substitution of one belief for another but by "a reconfiguration of an entire set of attitudes, dispositions, and comportments" that should aspire to social change (Hegel apud. Hoy, ibid.: 122). This does not fall far from Foucault's theory that "reason is self-created," which means that human rationality is developed in a certain socio-historical context as a means for human beings to grasp a better understanding of themselves (Hoy, ibid.: 146). Horkheimer and Adorno (apud. Hoy, ibid.) contrast dialectical thinking to rational thinking which has dominated the western world since enlightenment (120):

"[Dialectical thinking's] difficult project is to show us some of our socially-induced illusions, but without claiming to have, or aspiring to, or perhaps even admitting the sense in talking of an undistorted grasp of reality" (ibid.: 126).

Hoy (ibid.) is interested in the process of unlearning that occurs when a critical theorist becomes aware, by using genealogical history, of the problems that inform his problem solving strategies and patterns of thought "that have

become second nature" to him (164). The process of unlearning causes culturally familiar patterns of thought to go through a process of estrangement by the theorist.

A critical theorist should try to understand history in order to understand the present. This comes by since constructing an interpretation of past events from the point of view of the present should offer theorists a better understanding of forms of thought that dominate their times and of the ways "present interests color our interpretations of the past" (Hoy, ibid.: 136). Nietzsche also believed in the temporal priority of the present.

New forms of thought arise, according to Hoy (ibid.), when historical periods stop repeating the same patterns and present ruptures and discontinuities (127). New forms of knowledge can also crop up when there is an understanding that current patterns of thought and practices have produced domination. Critical theory's purpose is to produce dissent to dominant traditions by showing that assumptions of what is true have a historical origin contingent to the circumstances of their creation and do not have a transcendental or universal status. This genealogical research of the origins of modern truths will help us reach an understanding of the location and time that contributed to the formation of our truths.

When we interpret images, we find ourselves interpreting interpretations since images are already interpretations. The subject that the image constructs does not reflect its referent or its essence. The subject can be photographed in different ways in line with the ways that the photographer perceives it. Moreover, our interpretations will be linked to the history of interpretations of such or similar subjects in our society. Our interpretations are, thus, self-interpretations or interpretations of our societies because the discourse that constructs our interpretations is related to patterns of thought that characterize us and the societies we are members of.

Rorty (2000) tends to attack the discourse that Western philosophy has constructed in order to deal with its philosophical and political undertakings. He believes that the vocabulary adopted has been based on dualisms or dichotomies which he rejects and for that reason he would like to be considered an antidualist (xix). Trying to free himself from the dualisms that have been part of the western way of thinking for centuries, Rorty (ibid.) declares that "the

question to ask about our beliefs is not whether they are about reality or merely about appearance, but simply whether they are the best habits of action for gratifying our desires" (xxiv).

Rorty (ibid.) uses discourse as a tool to any kind of inquiry that has as its purpose not the will to reach some kind of truth or represent reality but as an apparatus for researching beliefs or habits of action (as he likes to call them) that are useful to us (xxvi). The beliefs that pragmatists, like Rorty, are mostly involved with are the ones connected to moral struggle because they are interested in "diminishing human suffering and increasing human equality, increasing the ability of all human children to start life with an equal chance of happiness" (ibid.: xxix). Understanding that there are infinite and equally valuable ways of achieving human happiness is the doctrine suggested by the term 'philosophical pluralism' (ibid.: 268).

Pragmatists believe that there is no such thing as 'the way things are'. There are no universal and ahistorical human moral principles and obligations since any principle obtains content through the society whose institutions fill up its "empty shell" (Rorty, 2000: xxxi). Rorty (ibid.) agrees with Dewey who considered western philosophy to be conservative and serving the needs of the leisure class by favoring stability over change (29). Philosophy should not aspire to understanding the world but to changing it towards something better, thus serving the needs of the productive class and not the leisure one.

We attempt to approach images critically and challenges the *status quo*. Social and personal development can be reached when we rethink our world and consequently ourselves and by doing so we aim at achieving social justice. Shor (1999) points out that critical approaches turn us more conscious of the fact that we are historically constructed beings whose experiences are formed within the web of specific power relations (1). A critical approach uses language or words that "question the social construction of the self" and seeks to construct reflective citizens (Shor, ibid.: 1).

Images are a very important and integrated-to-our-lives social practice. Questioning the knowledges they create and the experiences viewers live through them might lead us towards a more active citizenry. The purpose of the study of images has an underlying social ethic: it will show that some kinds of inequalities are perpetuated through the visual code and it will aspire to

improving social life. Moreover, it will attempt to demonstrate the connection visual knowledge has to power and how patterns and codes of exhibition and the knowledges they construct serve specific political, economic and social interests.

Shor (1999) defines a critical approach as follows:

"Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional cliches, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse" (12).

Taking unfamiliar routes of thought, or better, rethinking our patterns of thinking and received knowledge might be some of the ways we can take in order to become critical of our own knowledge. A critical methodology is interested in counter-hegemonic resistance by critically reviewing the internalized ideas of the dominant classes or ethnic groups. Human agency is the weapon people have in their hands to fight authority and we can find human agency in almost all contexts. Discourse and language are used as tools to understand experience and this way the symbolic can influence the concrete and vice versa.

Being critical means learning to unlearn the concepts we have been constituted by, a process that is slow, dialectical and unending. It crosses borders and becomes "transnational literacy that involves thinking against the grain of what we think we know and don't know; it demands alertness to the changing function of what it means to take certain positions within local and global contexts" (Brydon, 2004: 83). For Guerra (2004) critical consciousness "is that moment when we think we know something that we didn't know before, something that is both personally and politically significant" (9).

Studying the patterns of exhibition *National Geographic* uses in order to represent subaltern groups can help us discern the political aspects of the knowledges the magazine creates. We attempt to stop seeing its images as neutral by reaching an understanding of the patterns used to map the world and how they influence the ways the magazine's readers relate to this world.

We will follow Kathleen McCormick's suggestion in *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English*:

> "First, students must become able to analyse how they themselves are culturally constructed as subjects-in-history… Second, they must learn to analyse how texts are likewise culturally constructed, how they are produced in particular sets of social circumstances and reproduced differently in different circumstances. Third, they can then use such cultural and historical analysis to develop and defend critical positions of their own" (9) (apud. Brydon, 2004: 71).

This genealogical research of our beliefs, this looking back is part of the process of understanding better the present and hoping for a better future, it is about seeing the world a bit different from the way we know it. Brydon (2004) believes that identifying the historical beginnings of our ideology will "affect how we see the present and the potential for the future" (76). If we succeed in changing our minds, we might also succeed in changing this world and create "a respect for all humanity and for the natural world we inhabit" (ibid.: 77). Brydon (ibid.) relates also the phenomenon of the production of social ignorance and the consent that this ignorance acquires socially (80). She continues that nationalist pedagogy, unlike postcolonial one, silences differences by not letting them emerge in the classroom context.

As we have mentioned before, the western cosmovision and ontology creates a subject/object relation between the viewer and the image. The viewer occupies the position of the subject while the image is the object: passive, fixed and objective. However, images can take up a subject position and be analyzed as provoking different 'seeings' and different interpretations according to the meanings this 'same' object acquires in the eyes of people that belong to different cultures and communities. The image, although fixed, can be used as a different stimulus by different people and lead to a variety of interpretations

The humanistic perspective of western civilization has created an ontology of subject/object. However, there are cultures, such as several indigenous cultures of the Americas whose "knowledge is constituted on the basis of an ontology of *non-humanistic perspectivism*" (Castro 2000). According

to this non humanistic approach the world is made up of inter-related, equal beings that have equal importance. Moreover, the different views of the world adopted by the different beings have equal worth. This perspective changes the mainstream western conception of the world seen as a relation between a subject and an object and turns it into a subject-subject relation. The end product of this cosmovision hinders the development of a privileged perspective. As De Souza and Andreotti (2008) state:

"What one knows depends on what ones sees; what one sees in turn depends on where one is located ("from where I am located" - i.e. "from my perspective" the sky is blue, it is a cold day, you are telling the truth etc.). The only privileged forms of knowledge are those held to be of value to the social collectivity of the community also in a specific context; here the perspective is considered to be collective ("Everybody knows that/Everybody sees that the sky is blue, that it is cold etc.")" (5).

Different perspectives are linked to different locations and knowledge is a question of location. What we know, say or see depends on where we are speaking from. Thus, there is no idealization of a certain perspective and there is an understanding that in order for communication to happen, the different beings that compose a community have to expose themselves and be exposed to different interpretations.

Hoy (1994) referred to the principle of being *against nonconsensuality* (176) as the attitude adopted by people when they meet other beings with views different from their own. This posture should involve understanding where these differences stem from, which historical, social and economic circumstances created the nonconsensuality. Moreover, the pursuit for common ground for discussion should be the starting point. This common ground, which is called the "principle of charity", represents the beliefs that are shared by both parties and serve as a foundation for any kind of discourse exchange to happen. (ibid.: 183).

Gadamer uses the term "fusion or melting of horizons" to refer to the phenomenon of attempting to understand the horizon of another culture by using the horizon of your own culture (apud. Hoy, 1994: 192). Perceiving that differences are the result of different perspectives acquired by beings belonging

to distinct locations makes us expand our horizons without ever being able to abandon our own. Nevertheless, these understandings from the other's horizon transform and enrich our perspectives and consequently us. We find ourselves going through a process of self re-interpretation without ever forsaking our own tradition but becoming critical of it.

When people find themselves making different interpretations of images, if they ever get to some consensus about the truth of the image this truth is the result of a discourse situation and not its relation to some external truth. This variety of interpretations and the understanding that each one belongs to its own regime of truth that is historically constructed makes us aware of the non universality of perspectives and of the effort we should make to reach some kind of understanding of the other's context-bound truths. Communication after all happens because of the difference of interpretations.

By trying to understand the processes of construction of truth in *National Geographic*, we do not aspire to a more truthful representation. We undertake to figure out the rules or the ideology or the regime of truth that lead to such representations and show that "truth is the name we give to the choices to which we cling" (Veyne, 1984: 127).

INTRODUCTION

National Geographic has, through its use of photographs, convinced the world of the realism of its representations. On one level, when the magazine makes its "realistic, neutral and transparent" visual representations of the "Other", it seeks to speak ABOUT them and make this "Other" who is distant become a more intimate figure. On a second level, the analysis the researcher makes of the way visual representation of subaltern groups is constructed in the magazine attempts to speak FOR the "Other". In both cases the location of the speaker (anthropological photographer or researcher) influences the claims s/he makes in the visual or analytical fields. Moreover, they both find themselves conducting practices of privileged people speaking on behalf of less privileged people. As Alcoff (1991-1992) supports, in these cases we are confronted with what has been called the "crisis of representation" (9):

"For in both the practice of speaking for as well as the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other's needs, goals, situation, and in fact, *who they are*. In post-structuralist terms, I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions rather than simply discovering their true selves" (9).

We investigate how these representations can empower the less privileged people represented. José de Souza Martins suggests that any photograph can be a valuable document of sociological information. In this case, we can treat photography as visual knowledge and as the object of the sociological knowledge and not simply as a means of documenting objective facts[2]. Therefore, we have to question each and every photograph as an expression of the conceptual world of the photographer, the photographed and the reader of the image.

And in this sense, one of the main subjects of the sociological use of photography is not what it shows but what it hides because sociological structures are complex systems and knowledge gained on them is always partial and incomplete. When this knowledge is gained through the visual field

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[2] Revista Fapesp, Novembro 2008

and more specifically through the photographic medium which can only represent bits and parts of the complex reality then this knowledge is fragile and "contingent" (Cilliers, 2005: 264). It depends on the choices made by the photographers who are responsible for reducing the complexity and for using their creativity in the process of representation.

The photographer experiences the world s/he encounters in certain ways and this influences his/her knowledge of it (Roth, 2009: 687). The representations s/he makes of places and identities are descriptions of complex systems which are decomposed by taking into account only a limited number of their characteristics (Cilliers, 2005: 258). When photographers find themselves in a trans-cultural experience, their culture mediates the perspective they develop towards the culture of the Other. The characteristics he chooses to represent and describe the Other are based on concepts of his own culture. Denis (1997) explains this:

"I may be able, within my own language, to make some sense of aboriginal ways, but once I have redescribed some of their cultural language into my own, I have not produced one single language, one single description of the world. It is as when I began: there are two cultures, two descriptions of the world. Not one. To claim otherwise would be to reinstate the exact cultural authority which I have tried to destabilize" (158).

Let us turn, then, to the cultural authority both the photographer and the reader of the photograph exercise over the "subaltern" cultures they are willing to describe and understand. Alcoff (1991-1992) believes that speaking for others can be "arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate" (6) since the dangers of speaking across differences of race, culture, sexuality, and power become clear.

In anthropology, the representations of the researcher should be questioned since his/her culture exercises power and authority over the culture of the subaltern Other. Alcoff (1991-1992) agrees with Trinh T. Minh-ha who "explains the grounds for skepticism when she says that anthropology is "mainly a conversation of 'us' with 'us' about 'them', of the white man with the white man about the primitive-nature man...in which 'them' is silenced" (6).

This "us" occupies a social position, speaks from somewhere, has a location which is impregnated with its own history, ideology, religion and beliefs. The place where we speak from affects the way we conceive reality and give meaning to it. This location neither the subaltern Other, nor the photographer, nor the reader of the picture can transcend. The place each one of them occupies affects the claims they make on the representation and the truth value they apply to it.

However, Alcoff (1991-1992) supports that privileged locations are "discursively dangerous. In particular, the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for" (7). The fact that less privileged people need the more privileged ones to speak for them re-enforces and does not disrupt the discursive hierarchies that operate in public spaces. The subjugated are still silenced and their point of view is still unheard.

The context of the speaking subjects influences their epistemological perspective and the political and social causes they purport to fight for. Speaking about others, the practice of trying to represent the Others, who they are, the way they live and the values and concepts that form their world stumbles in what has been called the "crisis of representation". Since the one engaged in the act of representing does not really discover the true self of the represented but s/he is participating in the construction of their subject-position based on his/her own situated interpretation. The truth about the Others and their realities are, in fact, unrepresentable but the effects of truth of their partial representation are powerful. Stereotypes are such partial representations or *single stories*, using Chimamanda Adichie's term[3], which are effective in articulating belief (Britzman, 1997: 32).

The discursive situation positions the speakers as the knowing subject and this empowers them. On the other hand, the subaltern group represented is turned into an object to be studied and is victimized since it can not speak for itself and has to be defended by those who exercise authority over them. The speaking subject, academics, politicians, NGO workers, occupy a privileged

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[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

position in the discursive act and manifest a desire to understand the truth and promote the cause of people that find themselves in a predicament. While this attitude offers the speakers recognition and praise among their own community, it ends up not empowering the subaltern.

When people speak for themselves, they construct and create an identity that occupies a subject position by creating a public and discursive self. This self with its own characteristics and its social and cultural background positions itself publicly and experiences this practice in a way that affects his/her interiority (Alcoff, 1991-1992: 10). This possible self, which is created according to the requirements of the immediate context, offers a possible subject position in the world, a way of living and being in this world.

The speaker who takes upon himself to represent the subaltern should perform a genealogy of himself as the knowing subject and as the subject of knowledge and how this knowledge can exercise power over the represented. Moreover, the researcher should perceive himself as a self-constituted moral subject and therefore the subject of ethics (Chokr, 2007: 6).

I would like to illustrate this ethical aspect of representation by showing images of the August 2008 issue which features an article about Equatorial Guinea's Bioko Island. The article published two pictures that attract our attention. The first one shows (black) island residents helping land supplies on Moraka beach in preparation for biodiversity surveys and the photographic blitz.

Figure 1: Island residents help land supplies on Moraka Beach in preparation for biodiversity surveys and the photographic blitz.

This image is not very different from the verbal and visual narratives constructed by explorers in the 19th century which portrayed the natives as serving the European scientists by carrying them and their stuff and guiding them into their land.

Below there is a picture of (white) biologist Gail Hearn of Drexel University whose trained eyes always look on the treetops in order to track Bioko's primate populations. This photograph reminds us of the scientists Pratt (1992) describes as observing or innocently gazing at the abundant fauna and flora of the found land in order to catalogue it into their western categories and systems. Nowadays, the western presence is there to observe and save these spaces from destruction. Like the biologist Gail Hearn says in the article: "I just fell in love with the whole place. We've done so much damage to this planet. Here it's undamaged and impossibly beautiful. It feels like a place where one person could make a difference." The western presence is clearly implied as the one that can make a difference since it is the culture more updated with the latest scientific, economic and political approaches and the most capable of making a difference when it decides to.

Figure 2: Eyes trained on the treetops, Drexel University biologist Gail Hearn has been tracking Bioko's primate populations for a dozen years. "It's so lush here it's overwhelming," she says, "a real monkey paradise." And unlike so many ecosystems worldwide, "humans are still in a position to save it."

In September 2008 issue of *National Geographic*, an article appeared entitled: Lost Tribes of the Green Sahara. In this article, we read about the amazing discovery of Sahara's Stone Age graveyard by a team of

paleontologists led by Paul Sereno of the University of Chicago. The picture shows three skeletons in the process of being unearthed by six pairs of white hands. Still the power of scientific knowledge is held in white hands. While the locals loot their treasures, European and American scientists perform their rational, positivist activities of radiocarbon dating of the teeth of the skulls discovered, studying the burial rites and getting to know the traditions, value system and beliefs about the supernatural of the tribes buried in Gobero.

Figure 3: The bodies of a Tenerian woman (at right) and two children were buried carefully arranged in a tender embrace. Pollen in the grave indicates they were laid on a bed of flowers. How the three died remains a mystery, but scientists think they probably perished within 24 hours of each other.

The natives dressed in traditional robes and acting out millennium old traditions seem incapable of rational or scientific thinking that is necessary in order to reach some knowledge of their buried past.

Figure 4: Undaunted by a sandstorm, Wodaabe men promenade at a Niger festival of herding tribes. Like the Wodaabe, Gobero's last known inhabitants may have been keepers of livestock.

These pictures prove the triumph of a scientific-technological world and of the social order proper to this world. The task of philosophy would be to expose the mechanisms through which Western European thinking perpetuates this social order.

When we analyze the representations of subaltern groups, we should focus on the setting, the narrative devices, the style, figures of speech, "the historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original" (Said in Britzman, 1997: 34). Representation always involves presentation of some elements and absence of others. The representations of subaltern groups should aim at shaking the foundations of perceived notions of what subalternity is and the logic that informs its actions and its aspirations for social and economic ascendance.

Visual representation, in the case of subalternity, is taken not only as a form of art but as a way to denounce social realities. The motivation is social and political and seeks to arouse the conscience of the elite by using art as its medium. Photography is first and foremost an artistic expression in which photographers imprint their ideology. It is true though that social photography can motivate people to engage with social causes. This kind of photography does not only reveal a new reality but also teaches us to look at the suffering of "Others" while trying to restore the oppressed their dignity.

The ethical questions raised when representing the subaltern focus on the exploration of the poor and suffering for commercial reasons which is performative of a colonial attitude towards the suffering since they are still silenced. These subaltern photographed people become symbols of some story that exists in the imagination of the photographer and not of themselves. Who would be happy to be represented as a symbol of poverty even in a highly artistic picture? Do those pictures hide the drama they are supposed to represent? Is the dignity of the poor saved by the aesthetization of their poverty?

The ethical and political implications of speaking "about" and "for" others should be researched and taken into account when we assume such discursive positions. We should question the effects of such positions and analyze the power relations that it establishes and perpetuates. How can the empowerment of oppressed people be enabled? Spivak suggests ""speaking to," in which the

intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed, but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a "countersentence" that can then suggest a new historical narrative" (Alcoff, 1991-1992: 23).

CHAPTER 5 - THE SUBALTERN GENDER - CHOLITAS

The article entitled "*Cholitas* fight back" was published in September 2008 and depicts women from Bolivia's Aymara ethnic group performing the extraordinary spectacle of the *cholitas luchadoras*, "a free-form spectacle somewhere between a passion play, a wrestling match, and bedlam". The article constructs these subaltern women as courageous, fearless and heroic. The city of El Alto, where these wrestling matches take place and where the *luchadoras* live, is described as a "cold, treeless, comfortless city" and pictures of this city that rises 13,000 feet above sea level prove the poverty of the place. El Alto is a city that overlooks Bolivia's capital La Paz. Most of El Alto's one million citizens fled the countryside during the last three decades in order to "escape the countryside's pervasive misery".

The Aymara represent the second largest ethnic group in Bolivia after the Quechua[4] and, in the article, also one of the poorest inhabitants of Bolivia. *National Geographic* describes the poor women of the developing world, this means the subaltern of the subaltern identities in the world and in this way the magazine shows its tendency to focus on peripheral, subaltern and exotic-to-the-western-eye cultures. These Bolivian women are represented as heroic because of their efforts to rise beyond their economic and social barriers and become famous for some hours.

When reading this article and trying to understand this cultural expression of *lucha libre*, the narration of these women's lives makes sense allegorically for us (Clifford, 1988: 107). Since we are incapable of reaching these women's essence by analyzing their cultural manifestation of the wrestling match, we find ourselves just being able to construct a story based on our own understanding of their culture through the lenses of our own. At a surface level, we see how their lives are culturally different from ours. But at a deep level, we try to identify the common feminine experience. The *lucha libre* that takes place in El Alto raises our consciousness and shows us how "Other" women find ways to survive their subalternity in this world.

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[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolivia

What we manage to see in these women and their cultural expression is what our culture permits us to see and understand. And through the narrative we construct, we try to understand by means of the symbols that are common to both cultures the experience of being a subaltern woman in Bolivia. James Clifford (1988) elaborates on this process:

"Strange behavior is portrayed as meaningful within a common network of symbols-a common ground of understandable activity valid for both observer and observed, and by implication for all human groups. Thus ethnography's narrative of specific differences presupposes, and always refers to, an abstract plane of similarity" (101).

For someone not acquainted with South American culture, it is important beforehand to understand the meaning of the word *cholita* and the connotations that this word carries. In the article of *National Geographic* the reporter Alma Guillermoprieto does not give any explanation on the word. *Cholita* is the female term for *Cholo* which means a person of racially mixed origin: "Cholo is an ethnic slur created by Hispanics (criollos) in the 16th century, and it has been applied to individuals of mixed American Indian ancestry, or other racially mixed origin. Currently the precise usage of Cholo has varied widely in different times and places"[5].

The magazine does not elaborate on the history of the country and its subaltern groups. We learn that most of the *alteños* work in La Paz: some have steady jobs, others have stalls selling pirated DVD's, Barbie dolls, clothes, car parts and small desiccated animals for magic rituals. In the western eyes, the fact that El Alto's dwellers sell desiccated animals turns them into irrational people that are adept of black magic and perform ancient rituals. But the poorest of the poor of the *alteños* work as beasts of burden and this brings them closer to nature than culture. They are like animals such as donkeys or oxes or elephants that are used for transporting loads or doing other heavy work. Moreover, these are animals that usually are thought to be brainless, good enough to serve only the human beings and their needs. Moreover, the community to which the *cholitas* belong suffers from infant mortality related to

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[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cholo

diseases such as scarlet fever and diarrhea which the first world has gotten rid of.

The *cholitas* are depicted as poor women who fight not for the money but for the love of their public. The values they display are not based on capitalistic and individualistic frames of thought but are formed by the importance given to community and cooperation. Dressed in the traditional fashion of the Andean highlands they greet the cheering public which is made up of people who feel sad at home and come to the fight for the distraction and in order to forget their troubles.

Geertz (1973) claims that inspecting events performed in a culture is one of the ways we use to gain access to the "Other's" culture and its symbol systems. The *lucha libre* might seem barbaric and despicable to the Western eyes. Although the wrestling is seen as an act of emancipation by these women, the activity's aggressiveness does not fit the Western models of enfranchisement struggles. In the West, the feminists who fight for women's emancipation belong to the intellectual elite. In Bolivia, the *cholitas* show that access to education is not the only means of acquiring some consciousness of their position in the society and exhibit "Other" ways to fight their social and gender subalternity. Performing a wrestling match and gaining the love of the public transforms the way they perceive themselves and results to a resistance to the established order of things from below. The *lucha libre* subverts the *status quo* by conferring a higher status on the *cholitas*.

The fight does not appear civilized in the Western eyes. The activity is filled with aggression and although it does not position the women in their traditional roles, it is not a noble endeavor that western women would undertake in order to redeem themselves. Western women find it difficult to identify with the *luchadoras* and in consequence no process of homogenization of the Bolivian subaltern women and Western women occurs. The *cholitas'* lacy petticoats and traditional clothing connects them to their own roots and Indigenous origins and shows the world that feminism is lived in different ways by women in the world. Furthermore, it demonstrates that emancipation can be experienced in diverse and creative ways that look unconventional in the western eye.

Figure 5: A fluttering of lacy petticoats won't ease the sting of the leg drop Juanita the Loving One is poised to inflict on her opponent. The spectacle of native Aymara women in traditional dress—cholitas—theatrically mauling each other draws crowds in El Alto, high in the hills above La Paz.

The Alteños are the people that make up the *lucha libre's* audience. The public gymnasium where the wrestle takes place is also located in El Alto. The *cholita* Juanita la Cariñosa (Juanita the Loving One) makes people cheer the moment she "bursts from behind the curtain and strides towards the ring". Dressed in flashy garments with the traditional shawl and the bowler hat, she hails the public and her "ardent fans strain to touch" her.

Figure 6: Ardent fans strain to touch "Juanita the Loving One" ("Juanita la Cariñosa") as she bursts from behind the curtain and strides toward the ring. The fighting cholitas see themselves as symbols of strength: Their opponents include bigotry and sexism. "My goal," says one fighter, "is to lift up indigenous women, who have been treated with contempt."

The bowler hat, which was invented by the British some 200 years ago, has been adopted and reinvented by Bolivian Indigenous women. A symbol of

status and pride, the bowler hat reconnects these women to their traditions and shows acknowledgement of their roots. The hat can be worn in different manners according to the *cholita's* taste. The caption reports that the fighting cholitas see themselves as symbols of strength and they oppose bigotry and sexism. One fighter says that her goal is to lift up indigenous women who have been treated with contempt.

Although the *lucha libre* enfranchises the *cholitas*, it does not transform these subaltern Bolivian women into a modern woman identical to the western stereotype. Although feminist and emancipatory ideals have been linked to enlightenment and modernity, western readers would not qualify the *cholitas* as modern women. There are many characteristics of the apparel and the performance that try to keep the local identity. Maintaining the local cultural tradition emerges as an important feature of these subaltern women. Their fight for gender and social equality is performative and not discursive and it is done for their own pleasure and self-esteem. At home they might be ruled by their husband or father, but while they are fighting they turn to be independent and finally able to express their wrath that accumulates because of the offences they have to suffer at home and at the subaltern jobs in which they are employed.

The *cholitas*' demeanor bears no resemblance to the Westernized female manners. The violence of the spectacle completely opposes traditional Western gender roles. The *cholitas* have developed a consciousness of their social condition and through their performance they drive their spectators far from their subalternity: "The *cholitas* fight here, and we laugh and forget our troubles for three or four hours. At home, we're sad". And the *cholitas* in the audience add: "Our husbands make fools of us, but if we were wrestlers we could express our fury".

The *cholitas* have a manager, Juan Mamani who "is a tall, angular man whom it would be kind to call unfriendly. He cuts phone conversations short by hanging up, does not show up for appointments he has been cornered into making, and tries to charge for interviews. His *cholitas* are terrified of him. "Don't tell him you called me; don't tell him you have my phone number!" one of them begged." The reporter calls him "the ogre". His financial situation is not much different from his *cholitas*: "Mamani's wrestlers all hold daytime jobs, and

he makes a living from a small electrical-repair shop. But he has invested a good part of his life's earnings in a huge wrestling ring at home, where his group trains. He pays his wrestlers between $20 and $30 a match and probably doesn't clear vastly greater amounts himself. "Here in Bolivia it's impossible to make a living from this great passion of mine," Mamani said."

The *cholitas* have to mark their difference from men. Although they are women that have jobs, support their kids and wrestle like men, they show their femininity by dressing in a specific way which makes them feel beautiful. In the picture we see "Amorous Yolanda" fighting a man and the caption reveals: "Her slight form bulked up by the many layers of her *pollera* skirt, "Amorous Yolanda" humbles burly "Craquen." Female fans relish victories over male wrestlers by tough *cholitas*-scripted though they are. "I am a loving person outside the ring," Yolanda says. "But once in the ring, Amorous Yolanda becomes 'Hateful Yolanda.'"

Figure 7: Her slight form bulked up by the many layers of her pollera skirt, "Amorous Yolanda" humbles burly "Craquen." Female fans relish victories over male wrestlers by tough cholitas—scripted though they are. "I am a loving person outside the ring," Yolanda says. "But once in the ring, Amorous Yolanda becomes 'Hateful Yolanda.'"

The classical patriarchal society is put into question by the roles and the attitudes these Aymara women adopt. The native cultural identity is under transformation but tries to maintain elements that are thought to be important to its people. These women feel that they need to reconstruct themselves and fortify themselves to face the changes happening in the society in which they live. The role of these women at home and outside the home has changed. These women, like all women, draw their resolutions for change from different

resources: the traditional gender roles, modernization, Westernization, capitalism and the will to enrich oneself, and the principle of equality in a democratic society.

The patriarchy of the Bolivian society seems to be inverted in the public gymnasium where the *cholitas* fight their *luchas*. They do not only wrestle with women but also with men and they beat them up. It is all staged and scripted but it represents the women's secret desire to deliver themselves from male domination. They are mistreated by their husbands, ignored by their fathers and exploited by their employer. In all domains of their life, they find themselves to be subordinate. On the ring, they can finally take hold of their lives, be aggressive, funny and heroic for some hours. They are honored and respected by their audience and loved in a way no one seems to love them in real life.

The *lucha libre* symbolically speaks about their wish to subvert their inferior gender position. In the ring, the *cholitas* are not anymore wives, mothers, daughters or goddesses of their homes. They are allowed for some hours to rid themselves from all the roles and labels that the society has stuck on them in order to control them. The society obviously needs to perpetuate this kind of labeling in order to maintain its structure since women are the main care takers and love givers in the family and the guarantee that some kind of healthy social structure is possible.

The female gender has always been considered as the one perpetuating the values of the traditional society. Women, in more traditional societies, stay at home, bring up their children and take care of their household. They are usually perceived as more domestic figures than external ones. Modernization is usually seen as a byproduct of the contact the East or the South have with Western ideas and there have been attempts to "modernize" the condition of women across the globe since the mid-nineteenth-century. These attempts can be considered, from the western point of view, as "liberal, rationalist and egalitarian" in content (Chatterjee, 1997: 240). However, modernization is a product of the western context and it reflects the ideas of Enlightenment that tend to be regarded as universal truths that all people should aspire to. Modernity, however, may mean different things to different people.

One of the tasks of the modernization project was to civilize traditional societies that tended to use barbaric methods in order to control the behavior of

women which was usually perceived as being impure in its appetites and mischievous in its conduct. The civilizing mission would emphasize the unworthiness of traditional customs and would introduce a civilized social order. As it has been mentioned before, although Europe's "civilizing mission" claimed to help natives improve their societies it, in fact, perpetuated older forms of colonization (Pratt, 1992: 74).

This kind of penetration of "foreign" knowledges never occurs without local resistance, though. There are always popular attitudes that avoid giving in to reform movements. This resistance tends to glorify the past of the nation that is passing through a process of modernization and foster traditionalism and conservatism. Imitating the West in aspects such as customs, modes of living and beliefs is seen as a way to lose your national identity and acquire customs that look irrelevant on you. The importance the *cholitas* show to the use of the traditional attire of Bolivian Indigenous women shows their resistance to processes of modernization and the importance they give to their national and Indigenous identity.

Modernization in such countries as Bolivia and more specifically among its subaltern classes should be examined in its difference from the cultural modernity in the West. When reformers, in general, purport to push forward changes, they seem to use an ideological sieve that helps them determine which changes to adopt and which ones to refrain from. As we have mentioned before, each culture struggles to keep in touch with "the essentials of its heritage" (Geertz, 1973: 321) as a way to preserve its special identity. Recognizing the existence of such ideological sieve might be helpful in detecting how reforms cause cultural and social problems in the societies where they are transplanted since they are not the result of a continuous process towards that direction.

In the next picture, we see the *cholitas* training in a makeshift but colorful ring in a scruffy backyard which proves the poverty of the slum. There is no visual harmony between the gray and brown waste materials that are used as rooftops and the vivid colors of the ring. The contrast of the gray reality of the slum and the cheerful respite people find in this performance are expressed through the contrasting colors of the two coexisting realities. The paleness of their reality gains some color when the Aymara perform or assist the *lucha libre*.

The disarray and squalor that characterize the space of a slum are made evident in this photograph. *National Geographic's* readers become more familiar with this reality but at the same time take a rationally detached view of this world. The high angle of the viewer when *National Geographic* displays the poverty of El Alto convinces us of the hierarchical relations that exist between the viewers and the represented participants and the articulation in the photographs of race, gender and class asymmetries.

Figure 8: In a makeshift ring in a scruffy backyard, Carmen Rosa (center, in yellow) squares off with Amorous Yolanda in a practice match. Carmen Rosa is the leader of the upstart Goddesses of the Ring wrestling group—fighting cholitas who split off from the Titans of the Ring after disputes with Titans manager Juan Mamani.

In the last picture we see Veraluz Cortés climbing a hill near her home. The picture has been taken at twilight in order to blur the poverty exhibited and make it more aesthetically attractive. At the background we see La Paz lit and in the foreground there is El Alto, La Paz's satellite town where the *Cholitas* live and the wrestling spectacle takes place. The photograph does not disclose the poverty of the place, though. It just displays some of its elements. The brick wall, the garbage left on the stairs and the electric wires crisscrossing everywhere symbolically speak about the materiality that comprises the space of a slum.

Veraluz Cortés, who becomes Amorous Yolanda when she adopts the identity of a *luchadora*, constructs her identity as rooted to her origins and at the same time breaking with them. On the one hand, unlike some fighting *cholitas*, she proudly wears traditional dress outside the ring. On the other hand, Amorous Yolanda, a fierce wrestler, is proud of herself for becoming a

luchadora. By defying her father's wish to have a son "so he could follow in his footsteps as a *luchador*", she assumes responsibility for her identity and inverts long established gendered roles. In spite of their harsh living conditions, these fighters carry within them "a kind of fire that nothing can quench". For these courageous women who are fighters inside and outside the ring the *lucha libre* represents a respite from life's difficulties.

Figure 9: Darkness falls over La Paz as Amorous Yolanda—Veraluz Cortés in her daily life—climbs a hill near her home. Unlike some fighting cholitas, she proudly wears traditional dress outside the ring. Daughter of a lucha libre wrestler, she lives for the matches: "We fighters carry within us a kind of fire that nothing can quench."

There are different vectors in the picture that represent the struggle to rise when all forces are pulling you downwards. The photograph has been taken from a high angle that shows that the photographer and the viewer exercise some power on the represented participant (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 146). The *cholita* does not look straight to the camera but her look is cast downwards. However, she is performing an upward movement, she is climbing the stairs which symbolizes the *cholitas*' wish for class mobility. These vectors symbolically speak of the inferior position these women occupy in their societies and their venture towards emancipation. Bodies, surfaces, lights and gazes contribute to the meanings making processes the viewers are involved with.

Let us study the outfit the *cholitas* use to perform the fight. Most of the *cholitas* have incorporated the traditional fashion of the Andean highlands with its shiny skirts over layers of petticoats, its embroidered shawls pinned with filigreed jewelry and bowler hats just during the wrestling match. Just a few of them have chosen to adopt this attire as their everyday clothes and consider

themselves authentic *cholitas*. Their attire seems to express a turn towards traditionalism and nationalism.

The *cholitas* are represented as fighting not for materialistic profits. They earn very little from each fight and even their families try to dissuade them from continuing with the wrestling: "Sometimes my daughters ask why I insist on doing this," she said. "It's dangerous; we have many injuries, and my daughters complain that wrestling does not bring any money into the household. But I need to improve every day. Not for myself, for Veraluz, but for the triumph of Yolanda, an artist who owes herself to her public". The narrative Yolanda constructs distances her from the Western materialistic culture since this dangerous activity does not promise them social mobility, wealth or luxury.

There is significance in the *Cholita*'s choice to change their names while performing the *lucha libre*: Yenny Wilma Maraz Herrera becomes Martha la Alteña, Veraluz Cortés turns into Amorous Yolanda. This shows their will to create another fictitious identity while fighting and redefine their social roles. When their names are Amorous Yolanda, Juanita la Cariñosa or Carmen Rosa they are not a delicate, homely example of women. They are courageous fighters that construct another kind of female identity, a very different model from the dominant one. Are these wrestling matches a kind of emancipation for these suffering women? Surely, emancipation, in their context, does not seem to come from acquiring an education. Education is not even mentioned in the article.

Subaltern women may be considered more oppressed than modern women who have the capacity to reach higher education, acquire better-earning jobs and the respect of their husbands and family. Access to education and capital makes women feel safer since they are not dependent on their family or husband's will and do not represent for them a burden anymore. Lack of means of getting knowledge and profitable jobs turns the woman into an oppressed member of the society, subject to the whims of people who turn to be responsible for providing the means for her survival.

Although these are not well-educated women, they do not seem incapable of seeking their emancipation by fighting against their social inferior position and their economic predicament. They might not have refined manners but appear capable of requesting their political rights and demanding a welfare

system for all the citizens Bolivia. The wrestling match symbolically refers to the *cholita*s' struggle to survive and their pursuit of happiness.

The political context of Bolivia in the period this article was published was one of political turmoil and ideological commotion. Nationalism was the dominant discourse of that period. The article does not make reference to the political conflicts in the country at the time the piece was written. However, the identity the magazine constructs of the *cholitas* becomes symbolic of the courage of these Indigenous people of Bolivia who at the political arena were fighting for redistribution of their county's land. While in nationalist level, the ethnic government was fighting against the dominant, "colonial" classes, the magazine chooses to represent another group, subaltern women, who were fighting for their survival in another level.

In September 2008, when *National Geographic* published this article about Bolivia, it did not touch upon the clashes that were taking place in the country at the same time. The conflict was between the government and the opposition leaders from the rich eastern regions. Wealthy eastern areas were opposing Mr. Morales' left-wing reforms, sparking violent anti-government protests. The wave of violent clashes in opposition-controlled areas had left at least 30 people dead, most in the province of Pando. The unrest had centered on Mr. Morales' decision to hold a referendum on a new constitution in December. Mr. Morales wanted to re-distribute Bolivia's wealth and give a greater voice to the country's large indigenous community. But opposition leaders opposed the plan and wanted to have more control over natural gas revenues in their areas. Meanwhile, the US encouraged its citizens residing in Bolivia to leave the country, saying special flights were being made available. President George W Bush said Bolivia had been put on a black list of nations that failed to meet obligations to limit drug production in the past year. Relations between La Paz and Washington, moreover, had deteriorated sharply when Mr. Morales expelled the US ambassador from Bolivia[6].

Despite *National Geographic's* well known unwillingness to represent areas of conflict (Bryan, 1987: 265), it is obvious that the magazine does not refrain anymore from speaking about such areas. However, it still does not talk

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[6] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7619853.stm

explicitly about the main political turmoil that took place in Bolivia at that time but refers metaphorically to another kind of fight. Bolivia's discourse of nationalism was seen as harmful to the big land owners and this was what brought about conflict in the country. Still, the nationalist aspect of the *cholitas'* performance does not appear threatening to the "non-conflict" position the magazine has adopted.

Are the *cholitas* modern, emancipated women? They are definitely women that go out in the world and fight, working women of the lowest ranks of the society that have to "battle hopeless traffic, a constant scarcity of fuel and water, the dull fatigue of numbing labor, the odds that are stacked against them". One of the sentences that mark the article is: "In *lucha libre*, no defeat is ever final". Metaphorically, this is the Aymaras' way of facing life. They hope that there can be a light at the end of the tunnel.

These women do not seem to fear that modernization and Westernization threaten the local institutions of home and family. The performance of wrestling does not imitate alien Western ways as a form of emancipation. The *cholitas* can be traditional and at the same time break with the gender roles passed down through generations. Their inner identity has not been destroyed in spite of all the adversities they have to deal with every day of their lives. They want to establish new norms of who they are and how they are seen in the society where they live.

These are women that are not exclusively domestic figures. They are hard working women that seem to support their household and their children since their husbands are never mentioned in the article. They need to pursue material possessions and not just elevate themselves spiritually in the home sphere. The traditional norms of family life have broken down because of the circumstances of life. New norms are being constructed that seem more suitable for the new context these women find themselves.

Life's adversities make these women review the gender roles society has imposed on them. In spite of their traditional costumes, their behavior does not enter the mold of the woman that is unaffected by the harshness and troubles of every day life. These women are not modest and are not interested in being refined. In fact, the aggression they are allowed to show in the fight must work as a catharsis from a life of pressures. They do not seem to pursue the

spirituality of women that try to maintain a peaceful home as a safe haven from the aggressions of the external world. They vent their animal feelings and this relieves them from the pain they feel.

The coarseness of the world has turned them into less tender human beings. They have to conduct their lives not just at home but in the outside world. And this is their way of survival. Daughters of distant fathers and wives of divorced husbands they have to take upon them male roles, struggle to support their families and wrestle to release the tension they find themselves living with. Furthermore, the *cholitas* try to hold on to their femininity and national identity by wearing the traditional attire and fighting a South American (Mexican) fight. And this is how they mark their difference from the Western modern woman.

Although the wrestling might seem an irrational and barbaric practice in the eyes of the elite or Western observers, it reveals the *cholitas'* poise towards life. And there are Westerners interested in watching these fights, as the article shows: "I'm the prettiest!" Claudina yells at the audience. ""You're all ugly! I'm your daddy! I'm the one the gringos have come to see!" Indeed three rows of ringside seats are filled with foreigners, all pop-eyed, but they're actually irrelevant. It's their fellow Bolivians the *cholitas* are performing for.""

What attracts these foreigners to these fights that are a bedlam? The wrestling is noisy, theatrically violent and in some ways tacky. However, foreigners seem to enjoy this cultural manifestation. The *cholitas* look like no other women these foreigners have ever known. They look bold, proud of their ethnicity and their gender, agile and finally feminine.

These women might seem quarrelsome, vulgar and loud. However, they do not appear to be sexually promiscuous. In spite of the fact that they wear the traditional apparel while fighting and the skirts fly high and show more intimate parts of their bodies, their sexuality is not the main issue here. They belong to the lowest classes but they do not appear to be degenerate. They realize that they need to reform their lives and knowing that big changes in their lives are hard to come, they find an outlet in the *lucha libre*. The wrestling represents a channel where they can vent their frustrations about their status in the society and about the way they are treated at home by their fathers or husbands. They are oppressed in real life but the fight is a way of emancipating themselves.

Culturally they are inferior to the dominant and superior Spanish culture of Bolivia and socially they are ranked unworthy both at home and in the outside world. Social mobility does not seem to be a choice for these women. Access to education as a means for social ascendance also does not appear to be an alternative. They have to fight their way through life by expressing physically their anger to the situation they find themselves in. It might be that through education they would acquire the knowledge that the economy of La Paz could be brought to a standstill if only these women decided to go on a strike.

The *cholitas* are women that constantly move between the home and the outside world. In many ways, they break with traditional barriers: they earn money, support and take care of their children and find a way to enjoy their lives. They are revolutionary women and an example of a new kind of woman that does not necessarily follow the Western pattern of femininity. They are women that are aware that to survive in their subaltern condition, they have to change their ways of being, at least in the sectors that they can.

By performing the *lucha* they become respectable in a society that constantly puts them aside, oppresses them and makes them suffer. These are autonomous women limited by the positions life makes them occupy. Formal learning does not result in social mobility. The certificate of "secretaria executiva" that is hanging on the wall of the bedroom of Yenny Wilma Maraz Herrera has not been a ticket to a better life. The benefits of formal learning do not lead to a betterment in living conditions.

Figure 10: In the room that she and her daughters share, Yenny Wilma Maraz Herrera—who wrestles as "Martha la Alteña"—prepares her fighting finery on Sunday morning. Cholitas make $20 to $30 a match wrestling for Titans of the Ring. The money supplements Maraz Herrera's income from making and selling traditional clothes and handicrafts.

The only way these women can experience freedom is through the wrestling. Does this activity make them lose their femininity? In the traditional way of defining a woman, she must "develop such womanly virtues as chastity, self-sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience, and the labors of love" (Chatterjee, 1997: 255). None of these characteristics the *cholitas* are interested in developing. They have been hardened by the adversities of life and taken up activities predominantly male.

On the ring they are able to produce themselves in a completely different from the traditional way. They are keen on doing away with all the labels of self-sacrifice and subordination to which they have to adhere in every day life. They even do not need to produce themselves as sexual objects for male pleasure. All the equality rights that are denied to them by the society can be exercised for some hours during the *lucha libre*. No one denies that this is a superficial mode of liberation. Despite the literal fight in the ring, there are no real advantages earned in real life. The spectacle does not lead to a debate in the political arena on the rights of subaltern women in Bolivia and the financial gains of this endeavor sum up to "$20 or $30 a match".

In the Western eyes, the *cholitas* would be "common" women, "low-class", coarse, deviating from what we consider a "standard" woman. However, the *cholitas* represent sweeping amounts of population that are considered minorities, are pushed to the borders of society and are excluded from social, cultural and economical privileges. They face social prejudice since they can not consume the goods that would give them status, economic prejudice since they are underpaid only because they are women who come from the poor neighborhood of El Alto and cultural prejudice since their habits and manners do not seem refined in the eyes of the dominant classes. They, as a consequence, are not integrated in the activities that would provide them with some status in the Bolivian society. So, they are led to create their own kinds of entertainment where they can be valorized.

The photographs of the *cholitas* look realistic and full of social meanings and messages. However, western spectators face ambiguity in reading these images and constructing a narrative on these women. The *cholita*'s artistic performance makes us realize that the transparency of images is a myth. We can describe them, their flashy clothes and the environment where they move

as "poor", "exotic", or "tacky" but it is almost impossible to describe the meanings they communicate. We recognize that by "merely" describing the magazine's representation of the *Cholitas* "we are ourselves participating in the reshaping of the semiotic landscape; and we realize also that this is by no means an unproblematic activity, but a highly political enterprise" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 42).

We try to make a "thick description" of the cultural manifestation of *lucha libre* (Geertz, 1973: 9). We are aware though that the structures of signification we have exposed are our own constructions and we consider this inevitable. Our analysis is not de-emotionalized, though (Geertz, ibid.: 30). Our description of the cultural phenomenon makes reference to how these wrestling matches influence the emotional universe of the *cholitas* and our own.

Some pictures use the oblique angle and others the frontal one. So there is a play between detachment and involvement of the spectator with the event depicted. Somehow the *cholitas* are and are not part of our world. They are women and consequently subjected to the human condition of being a woman. On the other hand, they have a strong local culture that shapes them and makes them different from other women.

In the pictures the *cholitas* never look straight to the camera and eye contact is not established with the reader of the image. The gaze of the *cholitas* is never turned towards the viewer. In some of the pictures, the *cholitas* appear with their backs to the camera or the picture shows their profile. Moreover, whenever the picture shows the slum or their house in the slum the photo is taken from a high angle to signify the power the viewer exercises over the represented participant. On the other hand, in the pictures where the *cholitas* perform the *lucha libre* the photographer uses an eye-level-angle that shows equality between the viewer and the participant or a low angle which shows the represented participant's power.

It appears an act of great significance the *cholita*'s tendency to change their names while performing. By changing their names, they acquire another identity that removes momentarily their "subalternity" label and gives them glamour and the love of their public. This turns them into symbols of a change that is hard to happen in the political, economic and social level but can occur in the context of the *lucha libre*.

A critical reading of our analysis of the *cholitas'* performance would point to the creation of a narrative that focuses on fictitious similarities between these women's search for emancipation and women's common and universal struggle for enfranchisement. We figure it is quite difficult to draw the line between the universal and the local (Geertz, 1973: 36) and our cultural lenses make us interpret the symbols of the *cholitas'* culture by using our patterns of meaning that have been historically transmitted to us (ibid.: 89). We admit that the social activity of *lucha libre* may be informed by systems of ideas that are inaccessible to people that are not part of the Aymara culture.

BARE-BREASTED WOMEN - THE FEMALE GENDER EXPOSED

Globalization processes have changed the ways identities are perceived. The Other who used to be foreign and alien has passed from the process of what Mendieta (2007) calls the *detranscendentalization of alterity* (21). This means that, on the one hand, this Other has become a more intimate figure within the frontiers of the nation-state and that, on the other hand, cultural identities have been uncoupled from notions of geography, locality and place. However, the production of knowledge on the Other has not changed much in postcolonial times, at least not in some contexts.

National Geographic has been one of the main popular vehicles of knowledge production on identities for more than one century and constructed identities of "exotic" people for its national and global public. We analyze a photograph that appeared in the magazine in a May 2009 article: "Searching for Shangri-La: Two Visions of the Future Compete for the Soul of China's Western Frontier" and we try to decolonize the gaze: the photographer's and our own. We argue that although on one level the photograph conforms to colonial stereotypes, on another level it disrupts the colonial gaze by denying the viewer the pleasure of viewing the women depicted as exotic and erotic objects.

National Geographic draws upon images of the world that are coagulations of "spatiotemporal configurations" (Mendieta, 2007: 41). Those world images are ways we understand our relationships to space and time and this conceptualization of the world "mirrors the way we conceptualize ourselves as humans" (ibid.). We suppose that the world images that *National Geographic*

constructs reconfirm and simultaneously, destabilize and relocate local space and time in our globalized world. In the case of Shangri-La, for example, where Tibetan culture has been commercialized in China's West, it is expected that space and time will be destabilized and relocated backwards in a developmental line since the space is still more natural and pure than constructed and the time is more spiritual than materialistic.

The question we focus on is if globalization has altered visual representations and conceptualizations of the world. We set out from Reingard Nethersole's idea that globalization demands a "theory that is both connective and disruptive" (in Cooppan, 2004: 22). We also like the relational image that Damrosch conjures for the world literature: it occupies an "elliptical space" defined by the "twin foci" of "home tradition" and "radical otherness" (ibid: 20). We believe that the globally circulating photographs of *National Geographic* also occupy an elliptical space where there are two centers: the home culture of the represented participants and the cultures where those images circulate. Viewers undergo processes of familiarization and de-familiarization since they are acquainted with some aspects of them and estranged from others.

The picture we address is of women that belong to the Lisu ethnic group, one of the 56 ethnic groups officially recognized by the People's Republic of China. It is supposed to be a characteristic photo of *National Geographic* since it depicts bare breasted women, a staple of the magazine. The photograph was taken by Fritz Hoffmann, a photographer who has lived for thirteen years in China as a resident photojournalist and his pictures have contributed to people all over the world catching a glimpse and an understanding of China and its processes[7].

We examine the meanings that are attributed to this photo in our globalized world. Brydon, in her article "Difficult Forms of Knowing': Enquiry, Injury and Translocated Relations of Postcolonial Responsibility." (forthcoming), "reads textual and visual forms of expression to stress the challenges they pose to routine or easy forms of knowing and the assumptions on which they rest". By conducting the process of genealogy of our assumptions, we can get to

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[7] http://www.fritzhoffmann.com/about.php

some understanding of the reasons we hold certain beliefs and know in certain ways.

Let us turn now to the question of power. Any kind of printed material creates a relationship between its community of origin, the represented community and its community of arrival. This relation is characterized by power relations which are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed as the printed material circulates among its readers. In the case of *National Geographic* its images circulate beyond transnational borders. When the western photographer takes a picture that is supposed to represent a subaltern community, s/he exercises a power on this community by representing it in certain ways and not others. Readers also find themselves in a dominant position since they have the power to interpret the subject represented. And how about the subjects represented? Do they have any power?

Although the represented subaltern subjects seem to have limited power in the way they are represented and interpreted in the different communities where their representation circulates, their corporeality, facial expression and gaze have the power to transmit meanings that create for them a subject-position. The landscape where they are photographed also contributes and affects the construction of their identities. However, their representation sometimes empowers them and others they turn them into an object or victim.

Genealogically speaking, *National Geographic* has depicted a large number of bare breasted women in its history. Although nudity can be interpreted in different ways, culturally nudity has been associated with lack of modesty. Color has also been linked to lack of modesty and a close-to-nature disposition (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 172). Civilized white women tend to cover their body.

The picture that follows is a *National Geographic* milestone. This photograph of a Zulu bride and groom in Witwatersrand, South Africa, became the magazine's first picture of a bare-breasted woman when it was published in the November 1896 issue. The decision to run it set a precedent to publish photos of indigenous peoples "as they are".

Figure 12: Zulu bride and groom
      in Witwatersrand

Figure 13: A 1986 photograph of Ulithian women. Photo by David Hiser

Most of the women that have appeared bare breasted in *National Geographic* have been black or from the Pacific islands. On the one hand, black women who bare their breast have been shown as exuberant and with excessive sexuality. On the other hand, Asia Pacific women have been depicted as possessing a passive sexuality and a ready-to-please nature (Lutz and Cllins, 1993: 137). When representing certain racial types in the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, *National Geographic* was inclined to depict their women naked. One of the reasons for this trend is the fact that the magazine was managed by and addressed to sexually repressed men. These women with their relaxed sexuality represented a temptation for them. *National Geographic* fulfilled the function of *Playboy* by disguising its voyeuristic tendencies under the veil of its scientific mission.

These photographic representations of bare breasted native women follow a long tradition of Europeans trying to understand the essence of the people that are different from them and being attracted to this difference. Painters such as Gauguin painted Tahitian women while emphasizing their sexuality. At the end of the 19th century, the European eye fulfilled its voyeuristic need for the nude by contemplating the native body of the Other. Black bodies were represented as muscular while Asian Pacific feminine bodies were plump and irradiated gentleness and comfort. Black women usually stared back at the photographer and the viewer. On the other hand, Asian Pacific women looked away and did not challenge the photographer or the viewer.
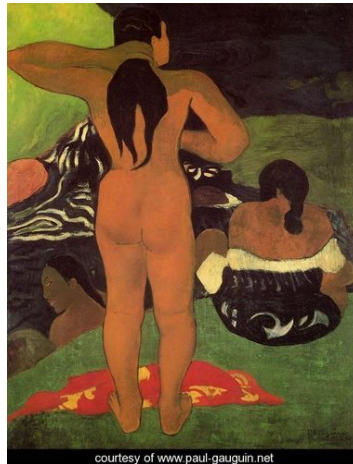
Figure 14: Gauguin   Figure 15: Gauguin

Figure 16

Let us turn now to Hoffmann's gaze and figure out if it repeats patriarchal and voyeuristic patterns of representation that have been dominant in photographs of subaltern people. The print in which the subjects appear in full length suggests some distance between the photographer and the represented participants since of the twelve people that appear in the picture only two have their torsos turned to the camera. There are five women in the foreground and six more figures that appear to be masculine ones but are peripheral and backgrounded. Most of the bodies are depicted sideways or with their backs to the photographer.

The women's bodies are lit and we can see them more clearly than the rest of the bodies. Nonetheless, the women's faces are hardly discernable because the photograph is blurred, a strategy that enhances the spirituality of the picture. The Lisu women are indifferent to the camera and they make no

eye contact with the viewer. They seem to be unaware of the photographer's presence and neither their expression nor their eyes can be clearly seen.

Figure 11: Lisu women bathe in thermal pools to celebrate the coming of spring. A proposed dam would drown this site, one of the valley's few remaining public baths. Developers have turned other springs into tourist resorts.

The women's bodies are portrayed in all their natural beauty and imperfection. The photo does not seem to have been retouched in order to correct the body flaws: some breasts are small, others are sagging, the body skin of some is wrinkled and of others with cellulite. Furthermore, some of the women are depicted washing their hair and body. By showing these women, covered with the foam of white soap, rubbing themselves in the thermal pools, the picture intensifies the meanings of purging and spirituality that the picture seeks to represent.

The eroticism in the representation of bare breasted women in history usually lay on the disposition of the bodies or the limbs. The women were usually just posing for the photographer and their bodies and limbs were positioned in such a way as to emphasize their beauty and sensuality. Although black and Asian women could have been represented as complex human beings and be depicted in million different ways, they were usually unclothed for the appreciation of the European bourgeoisie. They were the image of freedom and exuberant erotic urges.

However, this photograph of Lisu women embraces the native bodies and at the same time tries to subvert the stereotype constructed over the years. These bodies do not necessarily arouse desire. The main participant, the woman washing her hair in the source, possesses a slender and muscular body. The woman covered with the foam of soap has a small and well rounded breast although she has a protruding belly. These two women are wearing pink underwear that give a more romantic aura to the picture. The woman in the middle of the bare breasted women, has her face completely turned to the camera. She is skinny, with sagging breast. The last bare breasted woman is exhibiting an abundant breast, although part of it is covered by her hair. The viewer looks at the bodies and the faces seem to vanish.

The scenery is not particularly picturesque. Although the Lisu women are photographed in a natural space, this place is not aestheticized. There are more human figures than nature and the backdrop is black. Somehow, lack of an exuberant nature makes the reader attribute fewer exotic characteristics to the women depicted since the close association between femininity and nature does not take place. The geography of the bodies does not indicate a sexual aesthetic and this disrupts the voyeuristic gaze. On the other hand, the silence of the photograph, the absence of awareness of the bare breasted women of being beheld and the lack of disclosure of any signs of desire from their part enhances the position of the viewer as a voyeur (Mitchell, 2005:44).

The photograph is dimly lit and has a spiritual aura since the vapor of the thermal pool makes the picture acquire a blurring that matches its theme. It depicts the women performing a ritual that somehow tries to quench the Western audience's thirst for spirituality. However, the photograph disrupts the western framework of seeing the east as a *locus* of spirituality and attributing to it a mythical, non-historic time. The politics of the place and the processes it is going through appear in the caption: "A proposed dam would drown this site, one of the valley's few remaining public baths. Developers have turned other springs into tourist resorts".

Lefebvre (1991) explains that "the lyrical space of legend and myth, of forests, lakes and oceans vies with the bureaucratic and political space to which the nation states have been giving form since the seventeenth century. Yet it also completes that space, supplying it with a 'cultural' side" (231). This caption

also makes the readers grasp the complexity of such spaces and results in the non-essentialization of the non-west as the opposite of the west's rationality and modernity. Chinese society has been moving towards a certain direction and so has its space.

The modern material world demands that the non Western nations make the necessary adjustments in order to comply with the rules of the contemporary capitalistic world. However, nationalism demands that this process take place without the individuals' losing their spiritual essence and, consequently, their national and 'true' identity. Many traditional cultures that go through the process of modernization, are resistant to changes in relation to social class distinctions and the patriarchal forms of domination in the family. In this spirit, gender role changes tend to be more symbolic than substantive.

The magazine separates the domain of culture into two spheres-the material and the spiritual". The materiality of the world is something that dominates human lives and because of globalization humans find it impossible to work out a different material order, other than capitalism. Nevertheless, in order to compete with the West, the East and South need to get financially independent and stop being materially subjugated. As Chatterjee (1997) explains:

"It was in the material sphere that the claims of Western civilization were the most powerful. Science, technology, rational forms of economic organization, modern methods of statecraft-these had given the European countries the strength to subjugate the non-European people and to impose their dominance over the whole world" (244).

The ideological sieve towards modernization does not reject the West and its frame of mind but works according to the principle of selection. Reformers choose what liberal ideas to accept since it seems important to be selective in the choice of what suits you to adopt and what does not. People who support reforms in the traditional way of being usually believe that imitation of the West should only take place in the material aspect of culture and not in the spiritual since the East and the South are considered to be much superior in

this domain than the West. They are assured that the loss of the spiritual aspect of identity would lead to a loss of the distinctive national identity as such:

"The discourse of nationalism shows that the material/spiritual distinction was condensed into an analogous, but ideologically far more powerful, dichotomy: that between the outer and the inner. The material domain, argued nationalist writers, lies outside us-a mere external, which influences us, conditions us, and to which we are forced to adjust. But ultimately it is unimportant. It is the spiritual, which lies within, that is our true self; it is that which is genuinely essential" (Chatterjee, 1997: 245).

This distinction between the material and the spiritual world is also a differentiation between the inner and outer world. In traditional societies, it is men who represent and move in the outer world where the material pursuits are manifested. On the other hand women represent the domestic and inner world where spiritual balance and fulfillment are aspired to. The external sphere is where the humans compete and exteriorize their aggressiveness. On the other hand, the internal, domestic world is where the true and balanced self can find its expression.

This separation of the social space conceives the world in a patriarchal frame of mind and perpetuates the traditional aspects of society and culture. However, societies that pass from the process of modernization in a manner that is more abrupt than the process of modernization in the West, acknowledge that there are some aspects of their social order that they have to preserve. For this, they might seem to be conservative and manifest a resistance to bring change in their internal social sphere.

In the picture of the Lisu women, we see the materialistic world invading the spiritual world and causing its destruction. Although Chatterjee's (1997) theory separates the two domains, we see that capitalism penetrates spiritual and natural sites and only permits few of them to persevere as touristic sites and reminders of a pure past. Although Lisu women are portrayed in the external sphere, they maintain the spiritual characteristics attributed to women.

Finally, we argue that Hoffmann contests singular notions of colonial gaze and defies the construction of Shangri-La as a spiritual site, stuck in a

mythical time and inhabited by exotic women. This way he calls into question essentialist views of places and identities and disrupts hegemonic notions of representation by rewriting the relationship among the photographer's gaze, the subject that is depicted and the viewer.

CHAPTER 6 - THE SUBALTERN SPACE - SLUM

The criteria the magazine uses to select which cultures and their manifestations are depicted in it are part of the political as opposed to the scientific decisions the magazine has to make. Or better, its scientific decisions are always permeated by political aspects. Interrogating the cultural politics that are constitutive of the representational grammar used by the magazine seems essential in order to understand the aspects of culture worthy of being disclosed.

In May 2007, *National Geographic* constructed India's poverty through images and words in the article "India's shadow city: Dharavi". By representing one of the biggest slums of the developing world in its pages, *NG* adopts a trope which follows the cultural and philosophical currents of our times: not only representing the periphery, but also the borders of the periphery. In the title the use of the word "shadow" denounces people's indifference towards this eyesore in the center of Mumbai. Dharavi can be ignored since it is a shadow and not something real. The word shadow refers to a parallel, virtual reality, a state between materiality and illusion. Dharavi is Mumbai's darker self.

In the case of Dharavi, we can assume that the cultural politics that underlie the visual narrative is that of social documentation. According to Sontag (1977), photography as an instrument of social documentation emerged as a result of the middle-class attitude called humanism. However, this demeanor was not just something pure and superior. It was, in her opinion, "both zealous and merely tolerant, both curious and indifferent" (56). This humanitarian attitude appeared first in the United States when slums appeared to middle-class intellectuals as "enthralling decors" (56), she recalls. It was thought that the purpose of the social documentation aspect of photography was to uncover "a hidden truth" (56) and at the same time show middle-class intellectuals that the existence of parallel realities unknown to them but living by them could be of some aesthetic interest.

This conflicting character of photographic representations as social documentation is taken further by Sontag (1977). She claims that this kind of photography "tended to praise or to aim at neutrality" (63). The photographer, an outsider to the harsh reality he was representing, was declared a fair

reproducer of the different and maybe exotic reality. This experience of getting to know what is out there but out of reach does not only express the fulfillment of a scientific interest, from the part of the creator and the beholder, but also an enhancement of "an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted" (24). The strange, the exotic became interesting, attractive and even beautiful and came to coexist with the humanitarian objective.

Although this kind of photography stirs the feeling of compassion and the desire to help these people, it also makes western people want to straighten up the situation in which "subaltern" people find themselves. This is the attitude that Sontag (1997) calls "the colonization through photography" (64) because even when documentary photography is done with the best intentions it always reveals "a relation to geographic and social reality that is both more hopeful and more predatory" (63). Predatory probably because the West is obsessed with trying to make everybody fit its mould, look and be like it.

National Geographic culturally produces the subaltern Indianness and this kind of representation takes the form of the found object (Mitchell, 2005: 114), of what has been hidden or rejected and is now discovered or rediscovered by the so-called centers of knowledge and power and offered for consumption. Although representing and interpreting the subaltern are forms of exercising power over these groups of people, power should be conceived not as absolute but as relational because wherever there is dominance there is also resistance. This resistance appears in the magazine in the narratives the slum-dwellers construct and the endurance they exhibit in the photographic narrative.

Although Dharavi is in the metropolitan city of Mumbai, it occupies a subaltern position in the stratification of the city life. It is a parallel universe whose people coexist side by side with Mumbai's middle class population but their realities are completely different. This spatial polarization makes local real estate agents and, probably, the state eager to clear the slum from the center of the metropolis and build high-rise apartments in the space it occupies. The procedure involves dividing Dharavi into five sectors, "each developed with the involvement of investors, mostly nonresident Indians. Initially, 57,000 Dharavi families will be resettled into high-rise housing close to their current residences. Each family is entitled to 225 square feet of housing, with its own indoor plumbing. In return for erecting the "free" buildings, private firms will be given

handsome incentives to build for-profit housing to be sold at (high) market rates." The relocation of the slum dwellers will apparently result in improving their living standards, provide improved and healthier surroundings and better accommodation for these people. However, many of them will lose their professional space since it is in the slum they practice their craft and will probably end up becoming even more impoverished.

The slum is portrayed as "unique among slums", in the heart of Mumbai. Its location right in the middle of the map gives it a privileged status. Once upon a time, the slum was located on the northern fringe but the city of Mumbai grew and surrounded Dharavi. "It was a quirk of geography and history" that large masses of poor people inhabit the center of the city. The center got closer and closer to the periphery and ended up valorizing the slum and turning it into a valuable asset. Lefebvre (1991) supports that "social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another" (86). This may also be explained by Pratt's (1992) concept of "contact zone" (4). In this case we can see Dharavi as the "contact zone" where the wave of capitalism that characterizes the Indian society nowadays collides and interferes with the local networks characteristic of the poorer strata of this society. It is undeniable that the great movement of neoliberalism tends to smash the lesser movement of local networks.

The picture of the aerial view of the Dharavi at twilight portrays the contrast and coexistence of the slum with the upscale Bandra neighborhood to the north. This kind of "grabber" image is common in the magazine because it gives the reader an overview of the story to be developed, is visually exciting and contains information relevant to the article. The aesthetically disorganized and slightly lit image of the slum is set in comparison to the organization and lights of the rich neighborhood in the background and the natural space of the large mangrove swamp that borders the slum. The horizontal space of the slum symbolizes submission and the vertical space of the Bandra neighborhood power. The caption reveals that "if city planners prevail, high-rise residential blocks and industrial parks will replace the dense web of metal-roofed homes and shops in Dharavi".

National Geographic qualifies Dharavi as a kind of "subcontinental Harlem". This characterization is used by the magazine as a signifier loaded

with meanings for the Americans. Readers construct Dharavi as an Indian version of Harlem. Like Dharavi, Harlem is a poor neighborhood in the New York City borough of Manhattan, one of the richest spaces in the world. Like Dharavi, the American ghetto's very privileged position in the center of New York has turned it into a profitable site in the eyes of the capitalistic world. So much so that in the 1990's began the gentrification of Harlem that introduced the restoration and upgrading of the deteriorated urban property of the ghetto by middle-class or affluent people and resulted in the displacement of lower-income people.

Figure 17: Cleaned up, cleared out: If city planners prevail, high-rise residential blocks and industrial parks will replace the dense web of metal-roofed homes and shops in Dharavi. Bisected by 60 Feet Road, the slum borders a mangrove swamp and the upscale Bandra neighborhood to the north.

Mumbai as a big city attracts the poor of the rural areas that look for better living conditions and job opportunities. Many times they find themselves becoming the poor of the urban areas, they live in slums and create in these communities an informal sector that runs parallel to the formal sector of the economy (Santos, 2002: 323). This is also how things work in Dharavi. To get water you have to walk a good distance and when you get to the spigot you have to pay the local "goons" to fill your buckets. As slums are constructed as non-places by governments, they are deprived of public services such as water supply, electricity and sewage. Because of the illegal status of informal housing, slum dwellers often find themselves at the mercy of the local "mafia" that takes upon itself to provide basic services such as water or electricity.

Santos (2002) explains that in every big city there is a globalized economy that is produced from above and a sector produced from below (323). In the parts of the city that are modern and bright, the technical object creates a mechanical routine, a system of non-surprising gestures that are based on rationality. These areas are juxtaposed to the use that the poor make of the city, in the "opaque" areas where they live. Santos (ibid.) considers these as spaces of creativity and approximation (326).   However, this aspect of creativity still privileges the few (the local mafias).

The knowledges involved in producing space are very different in the middle and upper class spaces of the city as opposed to the poorer areas. Rationality is the main ingredient of the knowledges that produce upper and middle class spaces. On the other hand, creativity and survival instinct produces spaces in the slums.

In the photo sequence *National Geographic* produces, it offers a series of photos that show people at work in order to make explicit the slum's parallel universe and its local networks. The picture on the cover portrays a potter's son in the yard of his father's shop. This kind of store is characteristic of the Kumbhar caste in Dharavi and typical of the local kind of business in the slum. The dominant color is brown and the texture of the yard exhibits the different materials accumulated that are characteristic of slums: wood planks, plastic bags and tin slates. The walls look old, chipped and dirty.

Figure 18: Bowled over: A potter's son surveys a yard paved with drying clay bowls, the traditional work of the Kumbhar caste, who set up their communal clay pits and kilns in the 1930s. The Kumbhars fear that any slum renewal will shrink their space or force them to relocate.

The boy, in the middle of the picture, although barefoot, is smiling and looks proud of his father's shop. The picture is taken from a high angle that shows the power we as viewers exercise on the represented participant, the little boy (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 137). The boy also does not return the gaze of the viewer, does not challenge us or want something from us (ibid. 122). The shot is long distance and oblique and thus creates a feeling of detachment between the viewer and the representation (ibid. 130).

There are six pictures of people at work. However, all the jobs are associated to lower-class, low income laborers: potters, used-cooking-oil-cans repairmen, sweatshop, laundry pool and tanning industry laborers. There are work districts in the slums where "off-the-books, largely unregulated industries annually churn out some 500 million dollars' worth of goods", as the caption reveals. Although, western perception expects slums to be only poor and messy places, the pictures prove that there is a highly developed system of society established there. In the slum, workplaces and dwellings are intertwined. The space of a slum is an ensemble of the activities, professional, social and religious, that take place there.

The jobs are pictured as arduous and merciless. Laborers wash clothes where there is sewer runoff and kids are portrayed as taking a nap between shifts in an around-the-clock garment factory or sweatshop.

Figure 19: Elking out a living: The chance to earn a few dollars a day-and save for family and future-draws laborers from across India to Dharavi, whose off-the-books, largely unregulated industries annually churn out some 500 million dollars' worth of goods. In the Kalyanwadi tanning district, workers handle dry cowhides that will end up as purses and jackets stitched with fake designer labels. Often the work is dirty and punishing.

These photographs illustrate Marx's "commodity fetishism" which affirms that in the capitalistic societies products are fetishized because their process of production is blurred (Kapoor, 2004: 629). This happens because the relationship between the labor forces and the consumers is one of alienation since the manufacturers are based in developed countries and they "subcontract the most labor intensive stages of production" (Spivak, 1994: 83). In fact, consumers nowadays try to know as little as possible about the processes involved in the production of the commodities they consume. In the picture of the Kalyanwadi tanning district, the caption communicates that "workers handle dry cowhides that will end up as purses and jackets stitched with fake designer labels. Often the work is dirty and punishing".

Most of these pictures are taken using a high and long distance angle that represents the submission and lower status of these people. Moreover, the properties of the pictures make the viewer get only partially involved with these people's hardships and observe them with an aesthetic and anthropological interest. The workers never stare back at the viewer as they are always absorbed in the professional activity. Squalor and unsanitary working conditions embrace these grassroots laborers.

In the visual narrative both men and women are constructed as hard working. Although *National Geographic* usually favors images of "men at work" here we can see a breach to this conception. Most of the images where there are people working, both men and women participate. So the society that emerges from this representation is one where women are an active work force.

Figure 20: On a break: Out of sight behind flimsy walls hum hundreds of sweatshops. At an around-the-clock garment factory, a worker from Tamil Nadu sleeps before his next shift.

The picture in the sweatshop is taken from a high angle. The laborers are boys whose faces are more hidden than exposed. These garment factories work around the clock and the workers sleep on the floor between shifts. Space is always limited and passes a sense of confinement. Yet, the blue color of the wall and the sleeping boy's blue shirt animate the picture and give it a hopeful tone. Although we can not see the boys' faces very well, the exposed arms seem to belong to youngsters who should be at school, instead.

Life in the streets of Dharavi is represented as poor but picturesque. There are always people walking the narrow and dirty streets of the slum that are aesthetically interesting to the curious Western eye. In the first picture, a barefoot little girl in pink dress and a bag hanging from her arm is seen "strolling along a leaky water pipe through Dharavi's industrial district". There are other people, mainly kids, in the picture performing what seem to be every day activities. The messy appearance of the place with the colorful clothes that are hanging everywhere, the plastic bags on the roof tops and the painted wood of the houses make readers catch a glimpse of a piece of the slum reality. The materials the construction of these houses requires is of interest for the understanding of this space. This space is a product of Indian history, the consequence of migrations from poorer states that the government, embracing modernity, is about to erase.

The slum is a place where its inhabitants are surrounded by a recycled and deteriorated world. However, the proliferation of such places in the urban space makes them become an integral component of our urban networks. Slums might be seen as non-places by governmental institutions or as a place that can be turned into profitable real estate by entrepreneurs but for the residents of the slum it is "home". Some of the families have been living in the slum for more than three generations. By being born there, by laboring in that space, by creating a home in the slum and even being buried there, dwellers have created ties to this piece of land. Their identity is linked to this space since the fulfillment of their material, spiritual and mental needs happens there.

Figure 21: A neighborhood walk: A young girl strolls along a leaky water pipe through Dharavi's industrial district.

The fulfillment of spiritual needs can be seen in two different kinds of pictures. In the first one we observe crowds in the streets because of Ganesh Chaturthi, "a Hindu festival honoring a favorite god of the working class, elephant-headed Ganesh, who offers good luck", as the caption reveals. People look colorful and cheerful and in the background we can see movement of cars and buses. Life is buzzing everywhere in Dharavi in spite of the poverty. The magazine shows the importance of religion to the poor since it is in religion that they find consolation for their problems in everyday life. Religious devotion is also used as glue which helps hold communities together. It is a bond people create that gives a feeling of approximation. The population in Dharavi is portrayed as Hindu. There are no Muslim or Singh's religious practices represented in the visual narrative.

Figure 22: Good times, good luck: A Dharavi street pulses with merriment for the Hindu festival honoring a favorite god of the working class, elephant-headed Ganesh, who offers good luck.

Another image of life in the streets of the slum is the one of a rainy day. There is a play in the picture between the shadows and light. There is a religiosity and spirituality in the picture, because of the atmosphere the green Hindu temple creates with its small, red lamps. We can see a person kneeling down in the entrance to the temple. The mysterious aura the photograph carries is linked to its religious element. Holy spaces are present in the slum because its dwellers are capable of feeling the presence of god in spite of their hardships. Religion is one of the institutions that have an important significance in the consciousness of the subaltern. We agree with Hardiman (1997) and his explanation of the reason why religion is so important for subaltern consciousness: "All religions consist to a large extent of assimilated folk beliefs. It is this that gives them their mass appeal and great pertinacity over time" (105).

Figure 23: Refreshing aggravation: Rain brings mixed blessings to the streets of Dharavi. A downpour cools the air, fills buckets for washing, and thins foot traffic, bringing brief meditative quiet to a corner Hindu temple. But rain also leaks through tattered roofs, turns floors to mud, and floods the lanes with excrement, cause for more urgent prayers to the gods.

All the participants in the photo seem in a moment of meditation. Poverty does not seem to weaken the faith and spiritualism of the dwellers of the slum. The caption comes to ironize and anchor the effects this picture has on the readers: "But rain also leaks through tattered roofs, turns floors to mud, and floods the lanes with excrement, cause for more urgent prayers to the gods". The use of the plural "gods" affects the reader's interpretations whose belief in the truth of his monotheistic faith and the power of his god is unshakeable.

The last picture of the article which also shows life in the streets of Dharavi has a melancholic or nostalgic streak. The little girl is enchanted by the little lamps that were hung there because of a wedding. The fact that the little red lights have been put there because of a wedding shows the persistence of hope in the slum in spite of all the difficulties.

Figure 24: Moment of enlightenment: A barefoot child finds enchantment in a string of lights hung for a wedding, a grace note of survival in Mumbai's die-hard slum.

Living conditions in the private space of the slum are also symbolic of the deterioration and scarceness of means. Dharavi's dwellings are pictured as poor, but colorful for the appreciation of the magazine's readership. In the picture we see eight of the fifteen members of a family who live in two small rented rooms. The patriarch of the family is reported crippled (the man on the right) and the household is supported by the women since husbands and fathers are missing or dead. The picture is very dark, as most of the pictures of this visual narrative. The subaltern that resides in the slum is more hidden than made obvious in the pictures. The elites show desire to penetrate the secrets of the life of the subaltern but in a moderate manner. In this picture we can only see clearly the face of the woman whose yellow sari throws light on her face. The little girl's white and pink shirt also animates the picture but her characteristics are obscured.

In this picture there are no material goods exposed. Only people and the intimate physical relationship they have built because of lack of space. Some of these dark bodies are exposed and most of them sit on the floor. The spatial experience these people have is very different from that of people that live in

middle or high class spaces. The intimacy and safety Tuan (2007) refers to when people experience place (107) acquires different connotations in this context.

Figure 25: Family life: Fifteen members-and three generations-of the Shilpiri family dwell in two small rented rooms. With the patriarch crippled, at right, and husbands missing or dead, the household survives on what the women earn by cleaning houses and selling sugarcane.

In the article, it is made clear the multiculturalism and heterogeneity that constitutes Indian subaltern society: "The Kumbhars came from Gujarat to establish a potter's colony. Tamils arrived from the south and opened tanneries. Thousands traveled from Uttar Pradesh to work in the booming textile industry. The result is the most diverse of slums, arguably the most diverse neighborhood in Mumbai, India's most diverse city". Similar to Harlem, and probably other slums around the globe, the ethnic combination of Dharavi is the result of migration waves in the beginning of the 20th century. The magazine deconstructs the homogeneity the western mind applies to the Other. The picture we get from the article is that of many different ethnicities coexisting peacefully in the same space.

The special status of the Kumbhar potters is stated in the article: "Their special status derives not-only from their decades-long residence but also from the integrity of their work. While Dharavi is famous for making use of things everyone throws away, the Kumbhars create the new". The slum has its own caste system. One of the reasons why the Kumbhars have a special status is because of their profession which is different from the most prominent activity of the residents of the slum: recycling.

However, the magazine suggests that the international system of modernization has infiltrated into the non-space and there are capitalistic forces operating in the slum: "But, one day, as in the case of Dharavi, the slum might find itself in the 'wrong' place. Once that happens, the bulldozer is always a potential final solution".

Slum clearance is one of the reasons *National Geographic* is publishing this story. The article juxtaposes the point of view of the inhabitants of the slum, which shows a personal perspective with the professional point of view of Mukesh Mehat, a real estate agent who has honed his plan for "a sustainable, mainstreamed, slum-free Dharavi". The narratives of the people who voice their opinions in the article structure the article as a play, a movement from the personal to the professional. Although the real estate agent has absorbed American capitalism and sees America as an inspiration, he is also concerned with the opinions of the dwellers of Dharavi.

The identity of the real estate agent is constructed as being on the contact zone (Pratt, 1992: 4) of global western trends and local Indian viewpoint. He arrived at Dharavi, opened an office and was ready to tear it down. However, after he started "talking to people, seeing who they were, how hard they worked, and how you could be there for months and never once be asked for a handout" he had an epiphany. He saw that these people were not different from his own father that had also migrated to Mumbai from Gujarat. They have the same dreams for the future. And this is what made him dedicate the rest of his life to fixing the slums. Although, the real estate agent is clearly influenced by the rules of profit, he has a very personal, sentimental and compassionate approach to his capitalistic project. He does not see the slum dwellers as an undifferentiated mass of people but he identifies them as heroes who struggle for their lives. Therefore, a variable of western capitalist is created that carry characteristics of Indianness.

Indian identity is constructed as having agency and resisting India's capitalistic processes. Both the real estate agent and the inhabitants of Dharavi are represented as questioning their value and culture systems and in this manner they are transformed into agency. This agency emerges from the understanding that cultures and identities are highly heterogeneous and complex and that the local survives by both embracing and rejecting the global.

Furthermore, the narrative that emerges is at the same time influenced by global and local philosophical and cultural currents. The local acquires a dialectic with global economical, political and social issues.

The people of the slum are depicted as masters of themselves. They have a power that does not come from outside, but from the self. They seem to master themselves and, in consequence their universe. They resist western modernity and create Indian modernity. During these processes Indian culture becomes more globalized and at the same time it is Indianizing the world, by making the world more familiar with Indian values.

The residents of the slum give conflicting receptions to the real estate's plan. Having a private toilet does not seem enticing. It is impressive the fact that throughout the article, Dharavi's dwellers are constructed as having strong opinions about everything. They seem to be politicized and updated with what is happening. Shaikh Mobin, a plastics recycler in his mid-30s describes his business as "the post-consumer economy, turning waste into wealth". He thinks that change is necessary because "polluting industries like recycling have no business being in the center of a modern metropolis". However, he also declares that the main reason for the existence of slums is the government's failure to create housing for the middle-income people.

Corruption is also one of the reasons slums are there to stay. It is called bureaucracy in the article, though. What Mehta calls ""vote bank"-a political party, through a deep-rooted system of graft, lays claim to the vote of a particular neighborhood. As long as the slum keeps voting the right way, it's to the party's advantage to keep the community intact."

The abstract truth that is constructed through the language of our analysis is imposed on the reality of the senses, bodies, wishes and desires of the people that inhabit the space described visually by the magazine and linguistically by the magazine's text and our analysis. Dharavi acquires a symbolic value since it represents a reality that most urban spaces have to deal with. Is India's manner of dealing with this issue an example of political decision? The Indian government's decision of how to deal with spaces of informal housing can be used as a model or standard for similar cases in the global world.

The reading we make of this space derives from the standpoint of knowledge the researcher occupies. Dharavi proves that modern and bright spaces exist side by side with opaque and poor areas in Mumbai. There is a movement between the two poles that is visually and verbally represented in the article. Finally, the vertical aspect the state and real estate agents would like Dharavi to acquire conceals and reproduces 'meanings' of arrogance, the will to power, "a reference to the phallus and a spatial analogue of masculine brutality" (Lefebvre, 1991: 144).

CHAPTER 7 - THE POLITICAL SUBALTERN - IRAN

It would not be appropriate for *National Geographic* to represent America's biggest enemy, Iran, in the stereotypical way the media use nowadays: as a despotic, irrational and inferior to the values of the West country. In the August 2008 issue of the magazine, the article "Persia: Ancient Soul of Iran" was published. From the title of the article we understand that it seeks to picture Iran not only as a fundamentalist country but as a country with an ancient civilization that influences the construction of identity of the Iranians nowadays.

The large number of images that illustrates this article is like a prop or proof of Iran's ancient Persian identity. Most of them are images of ancient monuments and archeological sites such as Persepolis, Konar Sandal and Choga Zanbil which are evidence of Iran's early civilization. By emphasizing the remnants of the Persian civilization, the discourse and images of the magazine rescue this layer of Iranian history that participates in the constitution of who the Iranians are today. The verbal and visual representations the magazine makes in this article remind us of White's "fictions of factual representation" since the narrative the magazine constructs on Iranian identity refers to actual events and places but it assimilates these events and places to a highly personal view (apud. Holland and Huggan, 2000: 10). *National Geographic Magazine* tries to convince its readers that the existence of these Persian archeological sites proves the presence of some Persian identity in the making of the contemporary Iranian identity.

The magazine's timeline of Iran's civilizations shows a very dense civilizational evolution from 2500 B.C until the Arab conquest in 641-642 A.D. However, after the Arab conquest, the timeline stops as if the civilization progress was hindered with the outset of the Arab rule. Through the depiction of Persian monuments, the article is interested in constructing the Iranian identity nowadays based on its Persian ancestral heritage. The story and the photographs create a reality of their own that is internal to the discourse and the visual narrative (Bruner, 1990:44). *National Geographic* as a "professional center of truth" (Veyne, 1984:31) constructs Iranian people according to 'truths' that are based on modalities of beliefs and ideology that have their own interests. These beliefs gain validity because they are scientific and rational,

related to archeological findings in this case, and allegedly not related to political power (Latour, 1993: 29).

The picture of the schoolgirls in the city of Dezful cooling their feet on a sweltering summer day is taken with a bridge as background which is reported to be one of the "physical reminders of Iran's long history", since its foundations were built to span the Dez River in the third century A.D.

Figure 26: Schoolgirls in the city of Dezful cool their feet on a sweltering summer day. Physical reminders of Iran's long history abound, such as the foundations of the bridge in the distance, built to span the Dez River in the third century A.D.

In this image we perceive the way the different elements that belong to distinctive cultural contexts and historical moments exist side by side in Iran. The cheerful girls with the scarves covering their heads smiling at the camera while refreshing themselves, represent the Muslim layer of the Iranian identity. However, there is not a threatening aspect in them. They are just children enjoying themselves. At the backdrop, we see the bridge that represents the Persian element in the Iranian identity. The beautiful, massive and solid bridge symbolizes the distant but substantial participation of the Persian culture to the molding of Iranian people. The cars, on the other hand, that circulate in front of the bridge are part of the modern aspect of Iranian identity. The calm waters of the Dez River we can assume represent this supposedly "pacific" coexistence of the three elements. Nevertheless, we are quite certain that identities do not co-exist passively, but as Pareck (2008) assures us "their interaction pluralizes each of them, and discourages their essentialization and reification" (24).

It is not pragmatic to essentialize and reify identities since identities are plural, fluid, always interacting and entering in conflict with each other because of the different views they hold (Alcoff, 2003: 7). Each one of our identities is incomplete and has limitations that can be partly overcome by using the insights of the other social identities we hold. People understand these social identities as a way to be linked to certain groups of people and through them they attribute meaning and depth to their lives.

There are five pictures that portray Iranian people, four of which have archeological sites or art from the Persian civilization as background. There are 12 more photographs of archeological sites and art with no live participant in them. This form of representation of Iranian identity illustrates Pratt's (1992) concept of anti-conquest, a strategy of representation used by Western bourgeois subjects which seeks to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert their hegemony (7). There is a scientific innocence in the form Iranians are depicted in the article that is articulated by the power relations that override the antagonism between the world's superpower and Iran. In the case of Iran, there is resistance to the hegemonic truths and this turns the country into a threat.

The article starts with a description of Persepolis, the ancient capital of the Persian Empire whose stone walls depict soldiers holding hands and not fighting. The "absence of violent imagery" on the ruins, the portrayal of soldiers that carry weapons but do not draw them and the depiction of "people of different nations gathering peacefully, bearing gifts, draping their hands amiably on one another's shoulders" are reminders to Iranians of their Persian ancestors and the values they held. Persepolis is described as having been a cosmopolitan place in an era of barbarity. Persia is constructed in the article as "a conquering empire" but also as "one of the more glorious and benevolent civilizations of antiquity" and the author Marguerite del Giudice sets out to find "how strongly people might still identify with this part of their history" or "what "Persian" means to Iranians".

Figure 27: "The art of Persepolis was brilliant propaganda," says archaeologist Kim Codella. It played to aspirations: Persian nobles ascending stairs hand in hand to the Tripylon hall may signal fraternity among the empire's elites.

On the back wall of this part of the stone walls of Persepolis there is a procession whose participants are donning simpler garments than the ones that are portrayed in the foreground. They are representatives of subject nations bringing gifts to the king and paying homage to their ruler. It is a gift-bearing delegation that establishes the loyalty between a king and his subjects. In the foreground there are figures of Persian nobility "ascending stairs hand in hand to the Tripylon hall" and they may signal "fraternity among the empire's elites". This image opposes the reality in Iran at the time of publication of the article when Iranian citizens, mainly students, were showing their opposition to abuses of power, not only domestic but also foreign and not only contemporary but also historical.

The publication of this article anticipated the 2009 elections in Iran which were followed by protests against the controversial victory of the Iranian president Ahmadinejad. The loyalty the governed of the Persian Empire used to show their governors is not part of the contemporary Iranian reality. The protests that took place in Iran after the 2009 election were also nicknamed Persian Awakening and exalted the Persian principle of cosmopolitanism and interaction with the foreign element. Iranians having been shunned by the international community and suffering sanctions that have thrown large numbers of the population to poverty are craving for contact with the Other. The article reveals that some officials such as the Iranian vice President Esfandiar Rahim Mashaee see "the bond with antiquity as a focus for hope".

The article is digging into the souls of Iranians in order to find in them their Persian layer that is more appreciated by the magazine's hegemonic perspective than their Muslim shell. Iranians have been constructed in the western world, as *National Geographic* points out, as people living under the "world's first constitutional theocracy" which imposes "an extreme version of Islam". In an era when Iran is "being shunned by the international community, their culture demonized in Western cinema, and their leaders cast, in an escalating war of words with Washington, D.C., as menacing would-be terrorists out to build the bomb", *National Geographic* looks for a root of cultural proximity of these people to the West.

The Iranian identity is constructed as part Persian, part Islamic and part Western: "This would be a story about those Iranians who still, at least in part, identify with their Persian roots. Perhaps some millennial spillover runs through the makeup of what is now one of the world's ticking hot spots. Are vestiges of the life-loving Persian nature (wine, love, poetry, song) woven into the fabric of abstinence, prayer, and fatalism often associated with Islam—like a secret computer program running quietly in the background?" The categories created by the magazine disclose its secular mindset. Since the magazine presents itself as a Western instrument of science, it tends to frown upon religions' involvement in state issues. And as Islam is perhaps the only religious tradition that resists Westernization, it is not seen with a positive eye (Jameson, 2000: 67).

Parekh (2008) affirms that each person possesses a variety of social identities since we are all members of different ethnic, religious, cultural, occupational, national and other groups. Every social identity has its own way of looking at the world. Therefore, multiple identities mean multiple perspectives which create the possibility of a broader, more nuanced and differentiated view of the world (24). The article strives to expose an Iranian identity whose perspectives would fall nearer to the Western ways of seeing the world.

Marguerite del Giudice constructs Iranians as possessing a historically inherited identity which is authentic and might free them from the influence of Islam. Islam is seen as the cause for their marginalization in the international community and they are portrayed as if they could fight hard to trace the roots

of their identity and thus become accepted by growing into the people they used to be 13 centuries ago.

Figure 28: On location at Persepolis, an actress in Islamic dress passes before 2,500-year-old carvings proclaiming the might of a Persian king.

In the opening photograph of the article, an actress in Islamic dress is seen passing before 2,500-year-old carvings proclaiming the might of a Persian king. The woman, in the foreground, uses the traditional black outfit and scarf that Islam requests. Her exotic characteristics attract the eye of the beholder. She does not look straight at the camera challenging the viewer but diverts the look of her alluring eyes. She is photographed between two male characters one of whom is a guest showing his loyalty to the king. The nobility of the carving can be seen in the poise of the king and the guest and in the respect they seem to show each other. The king is carrying a staff of office symbolizing his authority and a lotus flower which probably symbolizes divine birth. In this case, the science of archeology is used in order to prove the layer of Persian national identity (Said, 2003: 73). The consolidation of this identity has to happen in the ancient site that bears proof of the existence of such culture.

The first characteristic of Iranian identity that is revealed in the article is that of hospitality. Hospitality is part of a system of ritual politeness (*taarof)*, an unwritten code for how people should treat each other that covers areas also such as courting, family affairs and political negotiations. In spite of the word having an Arabic root, the idea of ritual politeness is explained as being Persian in origin. Giudice ends up considering this seeming sincerity that involves hiding

your true feelings as "artful pretending". It is apparent that the hegemonic view of the magazine highlights this trait of Iranian identity because of its Persian origins. However, the look it casts on it valorizes such values as honesty and straightforwardness that are supposedly Western.

The article traces human settlements in Iran at least 10,000 years ago and reveals that Iran took its name from Aryans that settled there around 1500 B.C. Iran is described as occupying a strategic position where the East meets the West. Its location and its wealth are the reasons why it has been invaded by the Turks, Genghis Khan, the Mongols and finally by Arabian tribesmen. The latter, the article discloses, began a period of Muslim greatness that was distinctly Persian. Persian culture is described as dominant in times of invasions in such degree that it turned conquerors into conquered. The Persians' "capacity to get along with others by assimilating compatible aspects of the invaders' ways without surrendering their own—a cultural elasticity that is at the heart of their Persian identity" is being spoken admirably of in *National Geographic*.

Iran is constructed as the cradle of such principles as freedom and human rights in the sixth century B.C. during the first Persian Empire. It appears to be the world's first religiously and culturally tolerant empire: "Cyrus, reputedly a brave and humble good guy, freed the enslaved Jews of Babylon in 539 B.C., sending them back to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple with money he gave them". By having the magazine highlight this characteristic of tolerance and kindness of the Persian Empire, the reader ends up wondering how the nowadays Iran has become the complete opposite of what it used to be in the eyes of the Western world. Nowadays, Iran is talking about the extinction of the state of Israel.

The tomb of Cyrus the Great comes to exhibit the remnants of the first Persian emperor who was admired as an early champion of human rights and "allowed religious diversity and respected the local customs of those he conquered". The values that permeated Persian culture are highlighted since they are supposed to be similar to the principles the hegemony holds in high esteem and are allegedly the opposite of the values contemporary Iranian society is constituted by. This may be explained by Mignolo's (1995) concept of *cultural relativism* (apud. de Souza, 2008), a strategy used by hegemonic

cultures. *National Geographic* accepts difference as long as it can bring to light values in the history of the Other that are believed to be objective and universal.

Figure 29: Pasargadae: Scaffolding surrounds the tomb of Cyrus the Great (ca 559 to 530 B.C.), the first Persian emperor, while archaeologists strive to restore its roof. Admired as an early champion of human rights, Cyrus allowed religious diversity and respected the local customs of those he conquered.

In figure 29, we see the tomb of Cyrus the Great which has been photographed at dawn in order to represent the beginning of a new period for Iran if the principles of the Persian Emperor are followed. Iran is represented as having to trace back to its history the values of its own ancestral culture in order to be able to construct a better present. The scaffolding which is there because archeologists are striving to restore the roof of the tomb illustrates the need to revitalize the concepts of freedom and human rights that "may not have originated with the classical Greeks but in Iran, as early as the sixth century B.C. under the Achaemenid emperor Cyrus the Great".

The proof that the foundations of such human rights can be found in the Persian period is the Cyrus Cylinder, made of clay which has inscribed on it, in cuneiform, a decree "that has been described as the first charter of human rights". This decree is "a call for religious and ethnic freedom; it banned slavery and oppression of any kind, the taking of property by force or without compensation; and it gave member states the right to subject themselves to Cyrus's crown, or not". Persia is constructed by the magazine as the complete opposite of contemporary Iran that is usually conceived in the West by its last 30 years of Islamic revolution.

The Persian Empire, "a kingdom that at its height, under Cyrus's successor, Darius, extended from the Mediterranean to the Indus River" and "comprised more than 23 different peoples who coexisted peacefully under a central government" was "the world's first superpower". The empire included "today's Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and the Caucasus region". A local speaker, Saeed Laylaz, is quoted saying that Iranians have a nostalgia to be a superpower again and "the country's nuclear ambitions are directly related to this desire".

Figure 30: A griffin and a winged goddess, representing a fanciful blend of Persian and Greek imagery from a time when Persia's rule stretched far and wide, accompany breakfast at the opulent Dariush Grand Hotel on the island of Kish.

In this picture we see upscale Iranian men having breakfast at the "opulent Dariush Grand Hotel on the island of Kish". The piece of art hanging on the wall portrays the griffin, a legendary creature with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. The griffin was supposed to be a very powerful creature because it mixed the lion, the king of the beasts and the eagle, the king of the birds. In ancient times, the griffin was a symbol of divine power but in the Achaemenid Persian Empire the griffin was considered "a protector from evil, witchcraft and secret slander"[8]. The griffin is supposed to have originated in Greece but it also appears in such sites as Persepolis. The winged goddess must be Nike, the Greek goddess of victory. She is represented pointing to a

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[8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griffin

certain direction. The bull at the top of the pillar probably symbolizes power. Symbolically this piece of art talks about the Iranians' ambition for power.

Another trait the magazine reports Iranians are interested in revealing to the world is that they are not Arabs and that they are not terrorists, as they tell Giudice. Even after the Arab invasion, they turned to the Shiite sect which was different from the Arabs, who are Sunni. The Arabs that conquered Iran "are commonly regarded as having been little more than Bedouin living in tents, with no culture of their own aside from what Iran gave them". This way of picturing Other people as a-cultural was common in the Imperialistic period of travel writing and not unusual in the hegemonic discourse of scientific magazines such as *National Geographic*. However, in spite of the Arab culture being described as inferior to the Persian one, the Arab invasion is depicted as the beginning of the end for Iran's ancient civilization. A woman in the article is heard saying: "Everything went down after they came, and we have never been the same!" And an English teacher named Ali expressed the following: "Before they came, we were a great and civilized power...They burned our books and raped our women, and we couldn't speak Farsi in public for 300 years, or they took out our tongues."

Iranians are represented as having fought back the influence of Arab invasion even after thirteen centuries by reading the works of poets who still use the Farsi language. Many times the works of such writers are consulted even more than Islam's holy book, the Koran, on matters of love and life it is revealed in the article. Again, the magazine uses the Western conception of the need for the written word and founding books for a culture really to preserve itself. In the Western imagination, oral storytelling would not play such a decisive role in the transmission of cultural and social identity and cultural knowledge as the written book. Oral modes are not considered to bear the same cultural seriousness and prestige as written forms of cultural transmission.

The display of the archeological sites and the demonstration of the importance of works written in Farsi are artifacts that are used by the magazine to revive the Persian strand of the collective cultural memory. Still, they are positivist ways the magazine adopts to construct such complex a texture as cultural identity. As Klapproth (2004) affirms "although Western *philosophical* thinking has transcended the tenets of positivism, the basic premises of the

positivist view of the world are still deeply entrenched in Western socio-cultural life and still largely guide educational and academic practices" (51).

Shahnameh, or *Book of Kings* is an epic history of Iran written by the poet-hero Ferdowsi. He has been given the credit for helping save the Farsi language from extinction. Moreover, the stories of *Shahnameh* are very significant for the way Iranians perceive their identity. Klapproth (2004) believes that "we understand our own existence in this world in terms of the prototypical story structures of our culture" (57). Iranians, as most human beings, undeniably understand their own biographical existence narratively in terms of internalized, culture-specific, and prototypical story structures (ibid.: 58).

Iranians still celebrate cultural touchstones such as the New Year called Nowruz that is a holdover holiday from Zoroastrianism, at one time the state religion of the Persians. The article declares that "by the time the Arabs arrived, bringing what was for them the new idea of worshipping a single God, Persians had been doing it for more than a millennium." The government is told to be trying to diminish the importance or even replace ceremonies inherited by the Persian culture but people react and declare that no one can control what is inside them. The Arab culture and Muslim religion are put in the background. The information the article shares with its readers may bring a slight modification in the western way of perceiving the Iranian identity but we wonder about its capacity to deconstruct the dominant ways of representing Iranians in the last 30 years.

National Geographic relates to a layer of Iranian identity that has passed from a process of marginalization. In order to share with its readers this aspect of Iranian identity, the magazine has to create it in a way that seems coherent and comprehensible to its readers. The article uses an organizational structure whose internal coherence aims at convincing its readership of the truthfulness of its representations.

Moreover, the article reveals the economic power of Iran by disclosing that it is "sitting on what Iran claims is an estimated 135 billion barrels of proven conventional oil reserves, the second largest in the world after Saudi Arabia." Iran also holds a strategic position since it controls the Strait of Hormuz, through which much of the world's oil passes every day. "So Iran is in a unique position to threaten the world's oil supply and delivery—or sell its own oil elsewhere than

to the West". In this later development of the article, the reader starts having a better understanding of the politico-economic nature of the conflict between Iran and the West. Although the media nowadays and "their spokespersons sometimes articulate it in civilizational terms, there is no reason to be fooled by their rhetoric" (Parekh, 2008: 163).

The article discloses how the United States has interfered in Iran's public affairs after World War II. In 1953, the CIA together with the British government participated in the overthrowing of Iran's elected and popular prime minister, Mossadegh because he had kicked out the British after the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was nationalized. Mossadegh was imprisoned and the shah was returned to power and commercial oil rights fell largely to British and U.S. oil companies. This intervention by western elements is thought to have caused the fundamentalism that has characterized Iranian society since then.

The shah is reported as having tried to westernize Iranian society which did not understand western culture. When reactions started taking over, the shah's secret police executed, imprisoned, tortured and exiled who did not comply. Although Iranians welcomed the rule of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as a cleansing from westernized culture, they came to realize that the clerics were taking over commerce, government administration, the courts and people's private life. The narrative the magazine constructs on contemporary Iran can be explained by Parekh's (2008) statement that "fundamentalism...arises in a society with a deep and pervasive sense of disorientation and degeneration, and consists in using the institutions of the state to reconstitute it on religious ideas" (148).

The article presents Iranian society as a spying one, where brother turns in brother. The clerics are depicted as having tried to eliminate any sign of Iran's Persian identity by changing schoolbooks, names of streets and Zoroastrian symbols from their ancient religion. Although the magazine admits that only a tiny percentage of modern Iran's population now follows the faith, it reports that Zoroastrianism was once the state religion of the Sassanid dynasty—and its influence pervades much of the country's history. The spark of Zoroastrianism is still part of the Iranian identity, as the article tries to convince us. Iranians are constructed throughout the article as feeling that the "new" identity that has been imposed on them by the government does not represent them either.

In this picture we see a family celebrating the Zoroastrian holiday of Mehregan that has been celebrated since the first Persian Empire or even earlier. We get to know from the caption that Zoroastrianism has about 30,000 followers. In a country of 74.700.000 inhabitants, Zoroastrianism is definitely a peripheral religion. Its rituals and tradition are still celebrated by the majority of the population, though.

Figure 31: Candles illuminate the face of a Zoroastrian boy during Mehregan, an autumnal festival celebrated from the time of the first Persian Empire or earlier. Zoroastrianism survived the Arab conquest nearly 1,400 years ago and today has some 30,000 followers in Iran.

The innocence in the boy's face contradicts the fundamentalism with which Iranians are usually depicted. The peaceful moment the boy is having and his involvement with the practice of the ancient ritual of Zoroastrianism seem a more welcome tradition than the Islamic one. The fact that it is also carried out at home, in a private place with few participants shows this religion's inner force.

Iranians are described as spiritual people who keep with the Persian proverb "Knowledge of self is knowledge of God". Although spiritual, Iranians have adopted modernity and its mind set. If there had not been western interference to their internal affairs they "could have been the New York of the Middle East-of all of Asia, frankly-a center of finance, industry, commerce, culture, and a modern way of thinking" the founder of the online magazine *Persian Mirror* affirms.

Iranians are depicted as "schizophrenic" because of their mixed Persian, Islamic and Western identity. Again the magazine regards with contempt the

hybridity and multiplicity of identities which we are all constituted by. We concur with Said (2004) when he admits that what is interesting about cultures and civilizations is not their essence or purity but the combinations they make and the diversity they create by the continued dialogue they establish with other civilizations (48).

It is impressive how the images in this article come to show the monuments of the ancient Persian civilization as a proof of the existence of its essence still in the souls of Iranians. Moreover, the fact that the article does not seek to omit the actions taken by the western world in other countries to secure its own interests gives a more political than religious explanation to the Muslim chunk of Iranian identity.

The magazine's claim to truth is based on the narrative it constructs that seeks to represent the consciousness that built these archeological sites and the values they portrayed. The magazine records Iran's past with an eye to the present and, at the same time, uses the past in order to mold the present. By adopting such a stance the magazine stops seeing time as linear but, in this specific case, desires to see it as cyclical. The magazine somehow plays God and wants to rework the clay Iranians are made of. By doing this it cracks its own master narrative of linear conception of time and progress. Moreover, the magazine's hegemonic outlook does not appreciate their difference but seeks to find the supposed similarities Persian identity used to have to the West. By valorizing the principles of Persian culture, *National Geographic* identifies its hegemonic culture with these principles and implies that these are the values that the West is constructed on.

In the end, the construction of the Iranian identity in *National Geographic* reveals more about the West than about Iran itself. The description of the current Iranian identity shows that they are not quite at home in the international community and Iran is portrayed as having been more civilized in the past than in the present.

The reconstitution of Iranian identity, its ""indeterminism" is the mark of the conflictual yet productive space in which the arbitrariness of the sign of cultural signification emerges within the regulated boundaries of social discourse" (Bhabha, 1995: 48). Cultural translation is a complex process of signification

(ibid.: 49). The archeological sites represented in the article acquire the function of mimetic act of cultural representation.

National Geographic wishes to slow down the linear Iranian stream of life. It wishes to create a breach, a break that will give a chance to Iranian people to review their identity. Iranians need to renegotiate their identities, resist their Islamic reality and the sorrows it has brought upon them and open a door to salvation by reliving the stories of glory that are enshrined in the monuments that are still standing in the Iranian territory.

We see that the magazine constructs its discourse on the principles of culture-sympathy and culture-clash (Bhabha, 1998: 30). Iranians are different from the West because of religious and political reasons but at the same time there is cultural connection because of Iran's Persian past. Versions of historic memory are reconstructed in the magazine in order for the magazine to create a dialectic with the otherwise incomprehensible Other.

We should be very careful when applying and imposing our own Western categories on Other people. The stories *National Geographic* constructs are an important factor in the transmission of its own Western culture. While broadening our knowledge on Other cultures, the magazine disseminates its own conceptual patterns of thought. Not only the discursive environment on which the magazine constructs its discourse but also its structural and thematic organization of the stories it tells are culture specific.

Our objective was to describe and analyze the ways and methods the magazine uses in its attempt to create and communicate meaning. Each institution is characterized by specific forms of discourse: "...institutions are characterized by their specific and typified forms of discourse... Kress understands discourses as "systematically organized sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution" (1989: 7). This association of discourses and institutions has far-reaching implications for the organization of human social action. As Klapproth admits "what can be said within the area of concern of a particular institution, and how it can be said, is to a certain extent determined by the discourse that is appropriate within that institution" (40).

Finally, we see representations as a discursive process and not in the traditional mimetic manner since the word "remains distinct from the world,

does not participate in the world, partakes no necessary share in the essential nature of the real" (Garroutte, 1999: 949). Therefore, we call attention to the conflicts inherent in the process of signification and consider it useless to suggest a substitution of the discursive and visual images *National Geographic* makes of the Other (de Souza, 1996: 70).

CHAPTER 8 - THE SUBALTERN PROFESSION - RICKSHAW PULLERS

Academics writing on the subaltern find it hard to identify with people whose universe is completely obscure to them. We go along with de Souza and Andreotti (2008) when they support that what we see and understand depends on where we are located. The knowledge we acquire depends on the perspective we adopt which is not considered individual but collective and formed by the social groups to which we belong.

Rickshaw transportation in Kolkata is about to be banned as the article acknowledges since "Kolkata is bent on burnishing its modern image-and banning a potent symbol of India's colonial past". The workforce of rickshaw pullers is made up of migrants from the Indian state of Bihar which is one of the poorest states in India and is located about 200 miles north of Kolkata. The living conditions of the oppressed work classes and their well being fail to be connected to cultural specificities. The work and living conditions of subaltern workers are usually defined by class contradiction and the dialectic between labor and capital.

To understand the mode these postcolonial bodies are represented in the article, we create four categories to which our analysis refers: performativity, fetish, otherness and hybridity. We notice that these gendered and racialized bodies of migrants bear the marks of their subalternity: the rickshaw pullers are dark, run around the city barefoot and wear rags instead of clothes. We can start by talking about human rights, social citizenship and the demands these people should have from their government. However, the magazine does not let us get an insight into this counter-public sphere and its subaltern, unofficial knowledges. The readers attempt to constitute the identity of rickshaw pullers only from the hardships of their profession.

The construction of their identities is the consequence of historical and geographical location. These migrants show that "the power of historical locality becomes particularly persuasive as the problem of cultural identity is staged in discourses of geographical complexity-migration, diaspora, postcoloniality" (Bhabha, 1997: 434).

Figure 32: Pounding rough asphalt, often barefoot, earns a puller a meager but honest living. What will he do—and how will his clients get around—if rickshaws are finally forced off the roads?

Historical specificities such as race, class, gender, religion and age lead to the victimization, subordination, oppression but also resistance of these people. Nevertheless these people who have been excluded, displaced, discriminated and marginalized do not get a chance to gain voice and develop a public discourse that can turn into a social movement. As Bhabha (1997) affirms: "It is not what minority *is*, but what minority does, or what is done in its name, that is of political and cultural significance" (437).

Since in the article there is never a quotation in the first person of a rickshaw wallah, in some ways the representation of these people in *National Geographic* leads to a postcolonialist / neo-imperialist racial discrimination. They never get to have a voice in the article as they do not in the society where they live. They are always referred to in the third person. The closest the article gets to quoting these workers is: "When I asked one rickshaw wallah if he thought the government's plan to rid the city of rickshaws was based on a genuine interest in his welfare, he smiled, with a quick shake of his head—a gesture I interpreted to mean, "If you are so naive as to ask such a question, I will answer it, but it is not worth wasting words on". Still, the subaltern is not given a voice and this reminds us of Beverly's affirmation that the subaltern seeks to find a way to speak that would matter to the dominant classes. If it could make the dominant listen to it, maybe it would stop being the subaltern (apud. Kapoor, 2004: 639).

In these photographs indigenous and contemporary ways of life and culture are illustrated by the coexistence of rickshaws and taxis in the streets of Kolkata. Modernity positions rickshaw pullers in the crossroads of modern ideologies since the use of the human body as beast of burden has passed from a process of colonial stigmatization and needs to be suppressed in order for the nation to be considered modern. However, these bodies emanate meaning in the context of oppression. They are vigorous bodies but also alienated from the dominant culture. These bodies are subjected and at the same time resist their oppression and the violence they have to suffer.

Figure 33: A shopping expedition often begins with a rickshaw ride through downtown Kolkata's busy streets. Like these two women in pink, most passengers are middle class—the poor can't afford the fare, and the rich have posher ways to get around.

These suffering bodies remind the inhabitants of Kolkata of the unhealed scar of colonial rule in the collective memory of Indian people. These subaltern bodies which circulate in tatters revive memories of past colonial oppression, pain and suffering. In order to pull the heavy rickshaw the body has to incline forward and demonstrate its subjugation and ordeal. The different levels of oppression are woven together in the movement of their bodies.

The "compositionality" (20), "internal layout" (181) and "spatial organization" (Rose, 2007: 185) of the photographs of rickshaw pullers make us interpret these images in certain ways and not others. The forward movement of the body of the rickshaw pullers that overflows with energy, in spite of the apparently thin structure of their bodies, gives them a limited sensation of freedom despite the burden they are carrying. However, they are still beasts of

burden, with limited capacity to attend to their human needs while working in the streets and mostly living in them, too.

Figure 34: Risking a fine, a puller takes a shortcut by traveling against traffic on a one-way street. With little education or professional training, the men who do this grueling work have few other job prospects. Many come from Bihar, one of India's poorest states.

Moreover, like animals, they are physically separated from their families in order to earn a living. They rarely have the time and money to travel 200 miles north to visit their families. After they move to Kolkata "they sleep on the street or in their rickshaws or in a *dera*—a combination of garage and repair shop and dormitory managed by someone called a *sardar*".

Figure 35: Taking a break after lunch, rickshaw pullers crowd into their living quarters, called a dera. Though religious tensions often run high in India, Hindus and Muslims share the tight lodging.

They live in something that to the western eye seems like a stable but unlike horses they have to pay to stay there: "For sleeping privileges in a dera,

pullers pay 100 rupees (about $2.50) a month, which sounds like a pretty good deal until you've visited a dera." The space in the dera is represented as cramped and the different materials hanging give a messy aura to the place.

These contemporary bodies are reminders of the collective memory of colonial past. They are living recollections of oppression, humiliation and the deterioration of the human body into a beast. These people embody history and are permeated by historical events. They are living relics of the colonial past but their personal memories of current humiliation and degradation mark the continuation of the system in contemporary times.

The very existence of rickshaw pullers haunts the modern aspect of the economical, cultural and social life the dominant class wants to set up in the city. The Communist Party that used to concentrate "on its base among the rural poor and disdain outside investment has fiercely embraced capitalism and modernity and regularly courts Western delegations looking for investment opportunities". Kolkata now has modern shopping malls and modern overpasses and the existence of rickshaws degrades the image the city strives to create for itself.

The rickshaw pullers' dark bodies remind their fellow Indians of the colonialist's desire to sexually possess the indigenous body, dominate and discipline it. After possessing this body and dominating it, the colonialist starts oppressing it in order to turn into a docile one and deny it any agency. Although these exotic bodies become the object of desire of the dominant gaze, the dominant expels them while desiring to possess and explore them. The dark, subaltern and muscular body is desired as the unknown Other because there is a longing for the unknown, the peripheral and subjugated. However, these bodies are not promiscuous. Their corporeality and movement talk about their secret desire to free themselves from the reins of oppression.

In many ways, rickshaw pullers deconstruct dominant perceptions of the poor as lazy people. These people face social barriers in their human desire to climb the social ladder. "They gross between 100 and 150 rupees a day, out of which they have to pay 20 rupees for the use of the rickshaw and an occasional 75 or more for a payoff if a policeman stops them for, say, crossing a street where rickshaws are prohibited. A 2003 study found that rickshaw wallahs are near the bottom of Kolkata occupations in income, doing better than only the

ragpickers and the beggars. For someone without land or education, that still beats trying to make a living in Bihar". These are Spivak's (1994) communities of zero workers on the streets (84) who the system blocks in any possible way from having a decent life.

When these bodies charge into the streets of Kolkata, they express their yearning for freedom from the social, economical and racial chains that perpetuate their condition. However, the charging of these bodies in the confusing streets of Kolkata somehow leads to their fading and erasure. And this is what has made these bodies continue to exist 65 years after the establishment of the Indian nation: their capacity to disappear and seem like smoke.

Their corporeality does not empower or redress them. Their existence and way of living challenges the neoliberal-capitalist dominant discourse of the state and because of this they are turned into undesirable and intolerable objects, objects to do away with. The existence of these people disrupts the legitimacy of the dominant discourse which seeks to be modern. The leftovers of colonial occupation are there in front of the dominant class' bare eyes. The fact is that the colonial system continues to exist physically in the every day life of these people and resists contemporary government order. The complexity of the situation is part of the quotidian existence.

Figure 36: Outside a temple, with all his worldly possessions hanging in the open, Pankaj Pasman beds down with his son on the sidewalk. His family moved from Bihar to an empty area of Kolkata in the 1960s and built shacks to live in. When they were evicted to make way for development, they made the street their home.

Photographs in *National Geographic* come to aestheticize the poverty and humility of the rickshaw pullers. The aesthetics of the image does not stand in opposition to the political since these aesthetics do not get to perturb the established power relations related to racial, social and economical inequalities. In the picture above we see a rickshaw puller sleeping together with his son outside a temple, with all his worldly possessions in the open. The photograph produces a cheerful version of poverty with all the colorful clothes that animate the picture. The two people sleeping outside the temple also endows the picture with an air of peacefulness.

When we look at these dark, muscular and sometimes squashy bellied bodies which motion forward carrying the burden of their own history, the history of their nation, their social and caste status handed down to them through generations, we can understand the angry look they seem to possess at the inheritance and burden they literally have to carry. The *politics of the people* (Guha, 1997: xiv-xv), that is the narratives these people would construct on their lives are not part of the verbal and visual narrative *National Geographic* constructs on them, though. Their voice is silenced and the representation of this subaltern group still has to be made by the dominant perspective. The histories of these people and their condition are used by the magazine and scholars in order to quench the magazine readers' thirst for difference and the scholars' ambitions for ascendance in their career.

Figure 37: In the midst of a monsoon rain, Mohammad S. K. Rostam and his fellow rickshaw pullers provide the best transport through flooded streets.

The performativity of these bodies does not only express their subordination but also their resistance to the *status quo.* Although Belgiti (2009) talks about the healing process taking place through indigenous dancing, we think there are aspects of this process in the charging bodies of the rickshaw pullers:

"The movements of throbbing and sprouting constitute a choreography that is integral to an indigenous cultural dynamic in which the body is both a medium and a signifying agent articulating its own imaginative rebuttal and enacting its communal connectivity through motion. Instead of being frozen in a romanticizing rhetoric of lament of the colonial pain that is inflicted on them, the indigenous dancers in this fancy dance are connected as a community of bodies partaking in a common effort to narrate their physical ability to endure—that is, continuing to exist through pain. Dance, in this case, is a process of healing disjunctures as it helps the dancers to exorcise the colonial violence that "devours" them" (11).

Figure 38: During Durga Puja, one of the biggest Hindu festivals of the year, people have to hail a rickshaw or walk to get around in some neighborhoods. For five nights crowds of thousands pack narrow streets to visit specially constructed shrines, completely blocking regular traffic.

In spite of our genuine will to translate through images the resistance that these bodies' industry shows to the violence of colonial power and submission, we have to admit that we face what Bhabha (1989) calls mistranslation or even untranslatability of the Other's culture. In our effort to construct a narrative on these people we have to mediate "between different cultures, languages and

societies and there is always the threat of mistranslation, confusion and fear" (140).

The colonial eye wanted to possess and understand these bodies so that it could conquer them. In *National Geographic*, these bodies become a kind of fetish because of their aestheticization. This artistic representation of poverty seems to give continuation to the colonial domination, this time through the eye. These half naked bodies are shouting for clothes, the barefoot feet demand shoes and the angry eyes ask for soothing.

Most of the rickshaw wallahs wear a sleeveless worn out shirt that exposes most of the upper part of the body. Their garments make reference to their identity: their caste, religion and social class. Their attire, apart from being an economic necessity, is also an ideological symbol with a message. The post colonial body is identified among other bodies that hold higher social positions in their own culture through its apparel. Their lives are hardly influenced by modernism and capitalism since their access to any kind of capital in minimal.

Figure 39: Live chickens ride on Gopal Shaw's rig from the wholesale New Market to a retail shop. A puller's day may begin with such early morning deliveries and end after midnight with passengers.

Their attire almost does not blend Western and Asian elements. They wear lungis around the waist that look like a skirt. And the upper part of their bodies is covered with ragged tank-tops. They are the only means of transportation people can use when there are torrential rains hitting Kolkata. These bodies are represented in the magazine as always carrying a burden, pulling the rickshaw against traffic while barefoot, standing in the middle of the

torrential rains, making the rickshaw their home or sharing the tight lodgings of a dera in order to rest their exhausted bodies. The exploitation of these dark bodies that struggle to survive in the post colonial world is inscribed on them. And they are turned by the magazine into symbols of extinction, end-of-the-road condition of the human being. They become a spectacle to be consumed by a society ready to consume everything that looks different and exotic.

Another interesting point is that the rickshaws portrayed in the magazine, in their majority, usually carry kids. Moreover, the presence of the kids of the rickshaw pullers is evident in most of the photographs. The difference between kids that use the rickshaw as their home and these that have the economic capacity to use them as means of transportation is somehow highlighted in the article. Many middle class kids use the rickshaw daily to go to school.

Figure 40: S. K. Bikari regularly pulls a pair of girls to school in the city's fading historic center, yet he rarely sees his own five children back home in the state of Bihar.

On the other hand the rickshaw pullers do not make enough money to send their own kids to school "so they will end up as unskilled labor, just like him". The perpetuation of the colonial order of things can be seen also here. There is almost no social mobility for these hard working bodies. They are convicted for generations to live like beasts of burden, sleep in the streets or places that look like stables, raise their kids in a rickshaw and perpetuate their miserable living conditions through generations.

Figure 41: A rickshaw stand is also home to Dharmindra Singh (at left) and Bhanu Paswan, who brought their families with them to live on the street rather than visiting them once a year in Darbhanga, Bihar.

These bodies are consumed as human menial labor and their representation is consumed by the readers of *National Geographic* as a fetish by men and women of higher classes who nurture a forbidden desire for what seems low and dirty. The hypocrisy of high class morality would probably have no guilt feelings when abusing morally or physically these people. These are people with no real value since they are not capable of subverting what is taken as the natural order of things.

The "I" that these bodies construct through their performative articulation is determined by their location. Butler (2005) admits that "there is no "I" that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence" (7) and "the "I" has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation-or set of relations- to a set of norms" (8). Subjects invent themselves according to a set of norms that is imposed on them since the conditions of life in which most of people on earth live are such that they would never have chosen for themselves. Rickshaw pullers' subjectivity is not found only on its own experience but is limited and "is always made in part from something else that is not itself-a history, an unconscious, a set of structures, the history of reason-which gives the lie to its self-grounding pretensions" (116).

National Geographic is compelled to tell truths that derive from certain "regimes of truth" (Veyne, 1984) to which the magazine belongs. When the magazine's reporters and photographers shoot the rickshaw pullers and report their conditions and forthcoming disappearance from the streets of Kolkata, the

narratives they create are products of their context's truths, ethics, language, religion, culture. The narratives are products of a collective that is predominantly Western, Christian and bourgeois:

"[Foucault] is making clear that we are not simply the effects of discourses, but that any discourse, any regime of intelligibility, constitutes us *at a cost*. Our capacity to reflect upon ourselves, to tell the truth about ourselves, is correspondingly limited by what the discourse, the regime, cannot allow into speakability." (Butler, 2005: 121)

In a way, the rickshaw pullers seem to have transcended the violence that is inflicted on their bodies. Like all of us, they interact with the world through their bodies, they know the world through their bodies. The colonial past is inscribed on these bodies. The manipulation and physical abuse they suffer are remnants of this colonial past and a reminder that the colonizer did not just possess spaces and territories but, in many and different ways, the bodies that inhabited those spaces.

What the pictures reveal is only the physical abuse inflicted on these bodies and not the verbal abuses that these people must also suffer. These are dirty bodies because access to hygiene is not easy when you live in the streets or in a stable that goes by the name of dera. Their feet are filthy from running barefoot through the streets of Kolkata. These bodies are not civilized but tamed and regulated through hard work that drives them to exhaustion. These postcolonial bodies are treated more as beasts and less as human. In a hierarchical structure these bodies would be defined as inferior ones.

We observe that *National Geographic*'s representations are founded on a concept of modernity that is tightly connected to the concept of time which has to opposite poles: progress and decadence (Latour, 1993: 72). The existence of rickshaw pullers in a space that seeks to achieve modernity proves that societies are made up of contrasts and coexistence of elements that belong to contemporary as well as premodern times. Therefore, time with its western characteristic of linearity is just one of the many ways that entities can be connected and evaluated in a scale. Latour (1993) suggests regrouping "the

contemporary elements along a spiral rather than a line...In such a framework, our actions are recognized at last as polytemporal" (75).

Moreover, the representation of rickshaw pullers in *National Geographic* proves that the magazine adopts humanism as one of its tropes. Its humanism is based on the assumption that rational, secular and critical pursuit of knowledge can lead to human emancipation and progress. *National Geographic* participates in and simultaneously constructs our modern humanism that wants to draw attention to the oppressed, peripheral and subaltern as a way to celebrate diversity. In this manner, the magazine adopts a modern humanist approach that is being asked "to take into account that, which it had deliberately ignored or suppressed with its high Protestant standard" (our translation) (Said, 2004: 69).

Todd (2009) does not pretend to see humanity as an ideal but more as praxis that is located in the proximity where self and other meet:

"Humanity's name *is* the responsibility that is forged out of trauma and the ever-present threat of violence...I think we need to inform the work we do with re-imagining humanity *as* we confront the particular difficulties, conflicts and tensions in our encounters with others" (8).

According to Said (2004) the essence of humanism is to understand human history as a continuous process of self-understanding and self-realization, not only for us, white, male, European, American, but for everyone (46-47). The criticism, Said (2004) makes of all representations is tied to their imperfect nature and how they are intimately tied to mundanity, that is, power, position and interests (71). The attitude of social documentation has been invested with interests that are neoliberalistic in nature since in many ways, liberalism has been constituted "by its difference with a degraded Other" (Denis, 1997: 155). Fanon criticized Europe for having divided humans into a hierarchy of races that dehumanized and reduced the subordinates not only to the scientific eye but also to the desires of the superiors (Said, 2003: 52).

CHAPTER 9 - THE SUBALTERN RACE - INDIGENOUS GROUPS

There are large numbers of Indigenous people around the world. It would not do them justice to homogenize them and see them as one since they are located in different parts of the world and each one of them has its own particular culture. However, some of the challenges Indigenous groups face are common: their survival, the preservation of their culture and their traditional knowledges, the preservation of the physical space they have occupied for thousands of years and their fight for equality and emancipation in a modern society.

The photo series that we have chosen to analyze belongs to what is supposed to be a typical photo series in *National Geographic*: photos of exotic tribes. Nowadays, however, the magazine does not represent them anymore as newly-discovered-by-the-west-tribes but exposes how traditional tribes survive in the modern world. The magazine usually shows how these "exotic-to-our-eyes" people interact (usually not beneficially) with modern values and ways of life.

According *National Geographic*, the Tarahumara who live in and above the canyons of northern Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental, where they retreated five centuries ago from invading Spaniards have been inaccessible to conquerors but irresistible to miners, loggers and a development-hungry nation. However, "their culture is remarkable in its tenacity..., which is why the language remains vigorous, the religious beliefs intense, and so many women still wear the scarf and long skirt".

The magazine promotes a juxtaposition of the traditional and modern elements in the Tarahumara's life style when the traces of these two ways of life in fact coexist by preserving characteristics of tradition and absorbing others from modernity. How does this conceptual juxtaposition between tradition and modernity reveal itself in the photo sequence on the Tarahumara? Technically speaking, one of the first things that attracts our attention is the appearance of the Fuji film print in the borders of the pictures. These pictures were not taken with a digital camera, but have registers of early photography. Robb Kendrick

the photographer of the Tarahumara chose to shoot them by using the tintype[9] technique, typical of traveling commercial photographers working outdoors at fairs and carnivals.

The use of this technique matches, in many ways, the subject and the style. First of all, these are not typical *National Geographic* photographs. The magazine's photographers are well known to produce a great series of photos of the same subject matter that are then put under scrutiny and the one that best fits the ideology of the magazine is chosen. However, Kendrick chose to gain the trust of this Indigenous people by shooting them with their consent and by not taking a whole lot of series of pictures but by narrowing them down to a few through the use of this technique. Moreover, Kendrick does not introduce modern technology in his pictures when at the same time he is critical of it through his photography.

Many of the pictures are framed by the camera's ring light. This flash light has the characteristic of softening the shadows, bringing out wrinkles and giving the model a shadowy halo[10]. In the case of Tarahumara, most of the portraits have a black ring around them. This black ring stands in contrast to the colorful garments the Tarahumara use but matches the black color of their eyes and the sadness they express. The ring light also is telling the readers to focus on these people, protect them and turn them into a subject of their concern.

The first image that appears in the visual narrative is that of a girl avoiding the camera while simultaneously collaborating with the photographer. Donned in a bright pink blouse and a glistening green skirt, she covers her head with a red and gold scarf and plaited purple, pink and gold ribbons.

She is ten-year-old Leticia Mancinas García whose name points clearly to the presence of the Spanish in the tribe's history. The caption reveals that in the village of Guagüeyvo, people put on bright, flamboyant colored clothes and flounces to celebrate the Easter holiday. The material her clothes are made of is flashy but of inferior quality.

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[9] http://www.answers.com/topic/ferrotype-1
[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ring_flash

Figure 42: In the village of Guagüeyvo, ten-year-old Leticia Mancinas García shows off the flamboyant colors and flounces of holiday fashion.

This image reminds us of what has been called the "Red Shirt School of Photography" which refers to the constant use of red or other bright colors by *National Geographic's* photographers in order to intensify the aesthetic effects of their pictures. The girl does not look straight to the camera. The biggest part of her face is covered by her scarf, her hands are dusty, her hair is flecked with white and she has a pin holding together her shirt. She does not seem very willing to collaborate with the camera. She appears to be shy and inclined to turn away from the camera and the readers' world.

The photographer has chosen to take pictures of the tribe before Easter celebrations which articulates the hybrid aspect of their religious beliefs which mix traditional Indigenous and Christian elements. In the second picture we see members of the remote community of Choguita prepare for their roles as Pharisees "costumed for pre-Easter rituals that merge ancestral beliefs with Christianity... Three days of dancing and a symbolic battle between good and evil will end with Judas, the traitor, burned in effigy".

In contrast to the previous picture of the girl, these members look straight into the camera, dressed in costumes that must be typical outfits of religious rituals celebrated in their tribe. The feathers, the sandals, the Indigenous patterns painted on the rods they are carrying and the motifs on their bodies bear testimony to the connection they have to their ancestral past. The western

eye can hardly recognize any Easter symbol. The only sign of "modernity" is the watch the one on the right is using which connects them inevitably to the present and the future through the concept of time.

Figure 43: Costumed for pre-Easter rituals that merge ancestral beliefs with Christianity, members of the remote community of Choguita prepare for their roles as Pharisees. Three days of dancing and a symbolic battle between good and evil will end with Judas, the traitor, burned in effigy.

National Geographic's choice to present visually the Tarahumaras just before Easter festivities fosters the idea of Christianity having reached and formed even the most remote cultures. The concept that forms the visuality Kendrick exhibits is summarized well in Groce's words when he affirms that "we cannot not call ourselves Christians" (in Vattimo, 2004: 33). The processes of westernization and maybe Christianization of the world are undeniable and unlikely to be reversed. The influence this tribe has received from Christianity is evident in the performance of Easter festivities. Nevertheless, these festivities have gone through a process of dilution, weakening and adaptation to rituals that are also part of the Tarahumara tradition.

In the article the Tarahumara are qualified as extraordinary endurance runners. In their own language they call themselves the Rarámuri which means "foot-runner" or "he who walks well". The land they have inhabited for generations is full of canyons and narrow footpaths and since they live very far from each other they need to use their own feet as a means of transportation. In a world that valorizes mechanical means of transportation and speed the Tarahumara still commute by using their physical strength. This trait of their

culture also connects to tradition. By the way, they are known to irritate American ultramarathoners because they almost always beat them.

The system of economy the Tarahumara use is conducted by means of barter or exchange and is based on the value of sharing that means fair distribution of resources. It is interesting that in English the above value of *kórima* could be called charity but, in fact, there is no exact translation for *kórima* in English. The constitution of their economic system is based on values completely different from the dominant capitalistic one. Individualism and the principle of "self-made man" are opposed by a culture where sharing and justice in the allocation of riches are the dominant maxims.

The next image is one of the few of this visual narrative that is taken in open space and shows a young mother and her two children making their way towards Guagüeyvo from their secluded homes in Sierra Madre in order to celebrate Easter. There are "some 106,000 Tarahumara living in Mexico, most scattered among a rugged, empty landscape". This caption reminds us the way colonizers perceived the "new" lands they were exploring: as empty and unhistoricized since they were not exploited for their resources (Pratt, ibid.: 51). But the same space for its inhabitants has always been meaningful and intimate.

The constructions look simple and scarce and although the landscape is breathtaking, the represented participants look poor. This brings us to a sentence told in the article: "Poverty is not noble...even when it lives in splendid canyons and dresses in beautiful skirts." Mother and daughter are dressed in red and green flounced blouses and skirts. We observe that the green and red colors are a repetitive pattern probably during Easter celebrations. The use of these colors connects them to the national hues of Mexico which are red, green and white and enhances their feeling of national identity. In spite of the Tarahumara's differences from other Mexican communities, they have a feeling of belonging to a "national imagined community" (Anderson, 1991: 140).

Figure 44: Easter celebrations bring families into tiny Guagüeyvo from secluded homes in the Sierra Madre. Some 106,000 Tarahumara live in Mexico, most scattered among a rugged, empty landscape.

We observe that *National Geographic* fosters the logic of modernity which is "the logic of linear time, a continuous and unitary process that moves towards betterment, in the Enlightenment vision of modernity at any rate. But even when, as in reactionary thought, the process is conceived as a road sloping toward decadence, the logic remains linear, with time as a single strand unraveling toward the worse instead of "making progress" (Vattimo, 2004: 50). Modernity uses time as its main parameter and locates cultures and groups of people at some scale between the two extremes of progress and decadence. The Tarahumara are located in an awe-inspiring natural space that does not bear marks of progress such as industrialization, technology and modernization. Therefore, when seen under the prism of modernity, the Tarahumara's clothes, living conditions, eating habits and means of transportation positions them as poor and decadent.

On the other hand, the idea of postmodernity is the negation of this unilinearity of historical time. Postmodernity resists the temporal and axiological dimensions of modernity and refrains from assigning people and cultures places "a backward and primitive place on an evolutionary line leading to western civilization." (Vattimo, 2004: 50, 66). The Italian philosopher believes that "the decline of the West signifies the dissolution of the idea that there was a unitary significance and direction to the history of mankind" (ibid.: 20). Postmodernity refrains from using linear time as the axis for the evaluation of different civilizations and cultures. It seeks to free western thought from the chains of time and develop other dimensions when studying people and their cultural systems.

The next photo is of farmer Martín Bautista Jesús who has come into Cusárare with his wife, Diana, for an ancient spring farming ritual. The represented participants in the picture are placed against a pink wall that enhances the contrast between the hardships they have to endure in real life and the meanings the pink color passes in Western culture. The irony is that their life is not pink since farmers like Martín have to defend their farm land because chabochi (who is not Tarahumara, foreigner) commerce, "legal and illegal, is pushing hard...displacing Tarahumara families from their corn, bean, and squash fields". The picture literally shows the Tarahumara being pushed against the wall by the dominant culture and its modern progress towards lands that are bound to cultures that are formed by principles and values different from the Western ones. The center of the image is occupied by Martín who in spite of his typical Indigenous characteristics has modern registers, like the cowboy hat and Christian ones such as the cross. The women in the picture occupy a secondary position or are peripheral to the image. Different from western people this Tarahumara man does not waver to pose in front of a pink wall.

Figure 45: A faithful farmer, Martín Bautista Jesús has come into Cusárare with his wife, Diana, for an ancient spring farming ritual. The couple may do some shopping, too, before heading home—most likely by hitchhiking. If they're lucky, they'll get a ride in the open trunk of a car traveling down a dirt road toward their distant ranch.

The next photograph shows the simple sandals of Tarahumara's ancestors that many of them still favor and are "now usually soled with a piece of old tire". As the Tarahumaras are renowned for their long-distance running ability and endurance this image comes to bear testimony and homage to these feet that know the feel of earth and that have inscribed on them their history with the land they tread. It is noteworthy that *National Geographic* represents the Tarahumara motionless in spite of exalting their running capacity. These feet and sandals do not and can not belong to western people. These exotic feet talk about the survival of these people who have endured by pursuing prey over long distances in bare feet, or in the simple sandals of their ancestors.

Figure 46: Famed for their endurance, Tarahumara hunters once pursued prey over long distances in bare feet, or in the simple sandals of their ancestors. Many still favor that footwear, now usually soled with a piece of old tire.

Next in the photo sequence comes the portrait of the Tarahumara Francisco Rico Chávez standing in the community center wearing, as it is the custom, a blanket to protect himself from the cold. Above him, on the wall, there is a wooden bow and a raccoon quiver full of arrows, symbols of the Tarahumaras' ancient activity of hunting. The caption makes a point of disclosing that "occasional hunting has long contributed to a diet mainly based on corn, beans, and squash, but today the Tarahumara are turning more to convenient packaged foods". Indigenous tribes apparently suffer all the downsides of modernity seeing that they are pushed away from the land they

have occupied for generations and are tempted to taste and base much of their eating habits on junk food. The picture of Francisco has been taken with the community wall as background in order to enhance the feeling of solidarity and the ties that bind this social group. This portrait is also framed by the camera's ring light. All the other shadows in the picture are softened and Francisco's characteristics become prominent. He is looking straight to the camera without smiling and with serenity. Wrapped in the registers of the Tarahumara culture - blanket, bandana, bow and arrows - he seems determined to endure in spite of the onslaught of the dominant Mexican culture.

Figure 47: Keeping with custom, Francisco Rico Chávez wears a blanket to ward off December's chill in a portrait framed by the camera's ring light. Above him, on the wall of Panalachi's community center, hang a wooden bow and a raccoon quiver full of arrows. Occasional hunting has long contributed to a diet mainly based on corn, beans, and squash, but today the Tarahumara are turning more to convenient packaged foods.

In the next picture, Juan Daniel Reyes Moreno is portrayed carrying his goatskin tambour on which the Tarahumara beat out their ancient rhythms around the clock for three weeks before Easter in order to bring Easter festivities to a crescendo. "A bead centered on the single string vibrates with each percussion, creating a unique buzz. Three weeks before the holiday the haunting staccato from scores of drums begins to echo off canyon walls and metal roofs throughout Tarahumara territory". The religious rituals the Tarahumara practice mix elements from their ancient faith, such as the use of the tambour and the paint they cover their faces and bodies with, together with Christian components. Hybridization of western ways of celebrating Easter is

evident in the picture and the caption. In spite of being dressed for the festivities, the white of his painted face added to the white wall give a ghostly aura to the picture. It still has the characteristics of a *National Geographic* picture, the bright colors and the exotic characteristics of the subject-matter. However, in all of the pictures the subjects stare back sadly at the camera.

Figure 48: On his goatskin tambour Juan Daniel Reyes Moreno will beat out ancient rhythms around the clock to help bring the Easter festivities in Choguita to a crescendo. A bead centered on the single string vibrates with each percussion, creating a unique buzz. Three weeks before the holiday the haunting staccato from scores of drums begins to echo off canyon walls and metal roofs throughout Tarahumara territory.

The Tarahumaras' living conditions can be seen in the next photograph. In the article it is told that they "live long distances from each other, in small adobe or wood houses, or caves, or homes partway under outcroppings so that the rock itself provides the roofing". The tribe's relation to natural space is evident. They live far from each other, use natural materials to construct their houses that sometimes use the nature and its rocks as roof.

Even though in this photograph, there is no Fuji film print on the borders there is again a black ring made naturally by the cooking fires on the rock that serves as a roof for Petra Vinegra Sinaloa. Her patio holds a now typical mix of hand- and machine-made goods. In most of the photographs and captions, National Geographic aims at foregrounding the ways modern and traditional elements mingle in different aspects of the Tarahumara's life.

Figure 49: Blackened by countless cooking fires, a sloping cliff forms the roof of Petra Vinegra Sinaloa's home near Creel. Her patio holds a now typical mix of hand- and machine-made goods.

And here comes a more modern version of a Tarahumara. The boy's T-shirt pictures rapper Eminem whose looks the young boy imitates. Modernity can be seen in the 16-year-old Edgar Silverio Galearra Rodríguez's preferences and combination of clothes. The boy has adopted the urban style in the manner he wears his headband which is also a Tarahumara element, his shirt showing the famous rapper, his flashy necklace, and his low-slung black jeans.

Figure 50: Modern life is already pushing aside the old ways in distant Chihuahua city, where 16-year-old Edgar Silverio Galearra Rodríguez was born and raised. Though his headband is common in his own culture, it also fits with the urban style he has adopted—a shirt showing rapper Eminem, a flashy necklace, and low-slung black jeans.

The perils of modernity threaten the Tarahumara youngsters who are forced to become narco workers, glue sniffers or beggars. Many girls have

children in the age of thirteen, numerous Tarahumara suffer from diabetes and high pressure because of the junk food they consume and various children are malnourished because their parents are too drunk to realize their kids have not had enough food. We see through the choice of images and the captions that accompany them that the magazine feeds the juxtaposition between the modern and the traditional, the urban and the rural, progress and degradation.

The two last photographs juxtapose two distinct age groups and how each one of them is affected by modernity. The 80-year-old María Roselia Cobes Huelinachi weaves and sells baskets near the Copper Canyon. The state tourism office is planning to attract millions of tourists from the U.S and Mexico to the Copper Canyon and create an artificial Tarahumara village where craft vendors like María Roselia can sell their crafts.
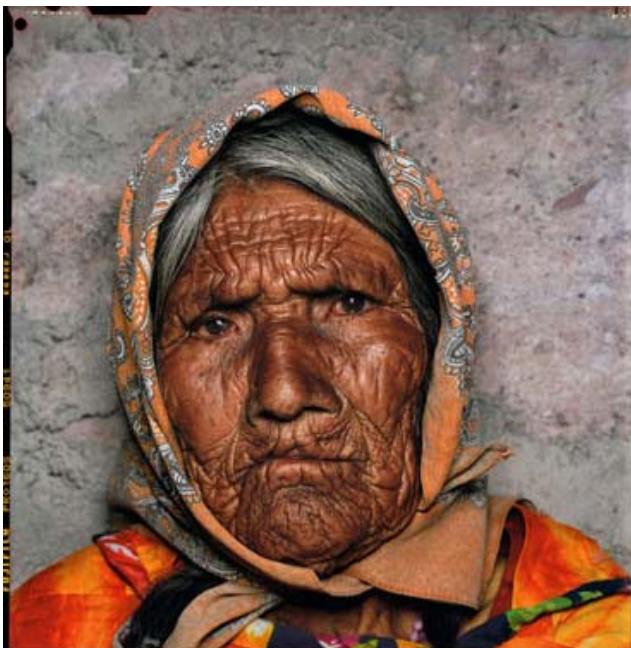

Figure 51: Proper attire includes a head scarf for 80-year-old María Roselia Cobes Huelinachi, who weaves and sells baskets near the Copper Canyon overlook in El Divisadero—for now. A controversial development plan that aims to attract more tourists would relegate Tarahumara craft vendors to an artificial village.

The Copper Canyon is about to be produced and the raw material from which it is produced is nature (Lefebvre, 1991: 84). The natural space is produced as a leisure-oriented space, or non-work space for the people that come to consume these beauty-spots. Economically and socially these spaces are subjected to a sort of neo-colonization by people from urban centers that look for temporary accommodations in ecological paradises (ibid.: 58). The

capitalistic mind sees in this beautiful but underdeveloped spots a touristic potential that could serve urban people's nostalgia for natural spots. Numbers of people seek to flee from the modern world temporarily and enter in touch with nature, its people, their folk traditions and the originality of their arts and crafts. Touristic spots are consumed and become major areas of investment and profitability. Even in their old age, the Tarahumara have to deal with aspects of modernity, such as tourism. The little girls wearing a scarf and wrapping themselves in the customary blanket to protect themselves from the cold may make different dressing choices as they grow up and enter more in touch with foreigners or urban people from Mexico and the US.

Figure 52: Still taking after their mothers, shy girls at a school in Panalachi wrap themselves in shawls rather than jackets when winter temperatures plunge. As they learn more about the outside world, though, they may make very different choices.

The ideology and codes that form our vision are molded by our conceptual world and their analysis allows us to attain some knowledge on what Vattimo (2004) calls the "ontology of actuality" (87) which should be philosophy's task. The ontology of actuality seeks to practice an interpretation of an epoch and give form to peoples' sentiments about living in a certain society, in a certain historical period. One of the conceptual frameworks humanity is formed by nowadays is that all cultures from the ones that are considered the most primitive to the ones that are supposed to be the most developed "belong to the West and westernization is a destiny that even the Other cultures that have freed themselves from colonial status and the label of primitive are unable to escape" (ibid.:33). Westernization is a global tendency that is enforced on the

different societies around the world and whose cultures are affected by this process.

Many of the photos in the visual narrative are taken in front of white, gray or pink walls representing how limited the Tarahumara are in their choices or that their culture is arriving at a dead end in our modern world. The Tarahumara in *National Geographic*'s photo series are not portrayed in their natural landscape. Unexpectedly the aboriginal dweller is not seen as part of the landscape. The images acquire a nostalgic, sociological meaning. The Tarahumara have endured for five centuries but how long will their perseverance last, the article wonders. The concept of perseverance, however, of some original culture and against western values and way of life, presupposes some metaphysical closure, some attachment to originary cultural principles. But their culture has already been formed by western and Christian values and principles.

In most pictures the Tarahumara look straight to the camera but they never smile symbolically showing that they are being affected negatively by modernity and its downsides. There is no way they can completely isolate themselves from the rest of the world and resist modernity and the invasion of forces from the modern world. The magazine touches upon the effects of tourism on the Tarahumara, or of the move to the city from the rural area, the incorporation of junk food in their eating habits, the use of western clothing and modern registers such as cowboy hat, jacket, jeans and a bandana. The discourse and images of *National Geographic* places the Tarahumara on the degrading side of the linear process towards westernization and modernization.

Modernity conceives our world as having centers which influence technologically, culturally, religiously and politically passive peripheries which become subordinated to the dominant model. However, cultural anthropology has become aware of the multiplicity of cultures "each endowed with its own individual logic and rationality, and each resistant to reductive classification as a primitive phase of the only supposedly authentic human culture, our western civilization" (Vattimo, 2004: 52). Western civilization is usually taken as the yardstick with which Other cultures are measured. Yet, traditional and newly adopted cultural elements mingle in different and surprising ways in the cultures

where the processes take place making difficult the clear classification of each culture.

The narrative of the magazine and the images of the world it releases foster conceptually the juxtaposition between modernity and tradition. Nevertheless, our times are characterized by a mingling and mixing of these two elements. Tradition would not exist without the perseverance of the living repetition of customs by a certain community and the cultivation of these practices. Expressions such as 'bridging tradition and modernity' reveal a conceptual gap between the two tendencies that uses time as succession to evaluate cultures. Time as succession is abstract and time as simultaneity is concrete because it is the time that our lives possess. The study of Geography is a form of seeing time as simultaneity (Santos, 2002: 159-160) since there is no space where the use of time is identical for all people, companies and institutions. Space represents the order of possible coexistences.

Vattimo (2004) declares that to assume the heritage of the West would "entail an *explicit* acceptance of the world now as mixture, crossbreeding, a site of weak identities and evanescent and "liberal" dogmatisms (religious, philosophical, and cultural)" (33). There are neither purely modern societies nor purely traditional ones. The simultaneity of diverse temporalities in a certain space is the domain of Geography.

The Tarahumara's language and eating habits have been heavily influenced by the Spanish tradition. However, they still prepare their meals from scratch by collecting the corn kernels, soaking them in water, grinding them and smashing them into a meal before making tortillas. And this is the way that tradition and modernity mix in the real world and take on different forms and hues in the different cultures undergoing constant processes of hybridization. The Tarahumara find it hard to resist modern amenities such as a refrigerator, digital clocks, TVs and laundry soap and appear inclined to adopt western technology in order to make their life easier.

The Tarahumara's religious celebrations are a mixture of Christian and ancient rituals. The traditional religion mixes with the once global tendency of Christianization and creates religious expressions that demonstrate the combination and cooperation of the different elements. Still, it is repeatedly mentioned in the article that during Easter festivities the members of the tribe

get quite heavily drunk. Poverty and exclusion lead them to degrading and humiliating behavior.

Furthermore, the Tarahumara are indigenous people who cover their bodies. These postcolonial, clothed bodies sometimes look grotesque embellished with colors and signs from diverse origins. Their style is a kind of bricolage with elements from different trends. Their appearance is an assortment of fragments that are characteristic of different regions, urban and rural, and distinct historical times.

It is worthwhile now to look at a different way of representing Indigenous people. Brazilian Indigenous people are portrayed for the appreciation of the Western gaze in the article "Amazon: Forest to Farms", published in the January 2007 issue. The Panará Indian kids are represented naked and running. The photograph is blurred, a strategy used by some fine-art photographers and painters who seek to produce "pictures that are intriguing because they show so little" (Elkins, 2008: 63). The photograph makes us create a narrative that is not based on presence but on absence. We are unable to describe and interpret the facial expressions of the Paraná, their garments or cultural manifestations.

Figure 53: Village life: When the paving of BR-163 is complete, land speculators may pressure the surviving Panará Indians in their village of Nãnsêpotiti. Once scattered in nine settlements in southern Pará, the Panará were decimated by diseases in the 1970s, when the road was begun.

We can see the village's ocas, or thatched roof houses, in the background of the photograph. The rain creates a melancholic atmosphere and

the image of children running and playing under the rain connects them to nature. The caption enhances the meanings the picture passes about the conditions in which the Amazon Indians live. Modernity and development have squeezed the 300 Panará Indians into smaller and smaller regions.

They find themselves inhabiting the contact zone (Pratt, 1992: 4) where capitalist and subsistence societies meet in unequal relations of power. Therefore, the Paraná's space is shrinking and they will end up being confined to their village of Nânsêpotiti. In the past they were scattered in nine settlements in southern Pará but now due to progress and diseases which the arrival of the "white man" brought a big number of them has died and the rest is forced to be confined to a very restricted space. This isolation in a specific territory works against the linking their culture has to the earth.

The Amazon rainforest where the Panará and other Indigenous Amazonian tribes live is deconstructed in the first image we get which is the one on the cover. As it is commonly done in *National Geographic*, this introductory image offers an aerial view, in this case of the Amazon rainforest that clearly shows the destruction that is taking place. It is the picture of a lonely tree standing in a land ready to be cultivated.
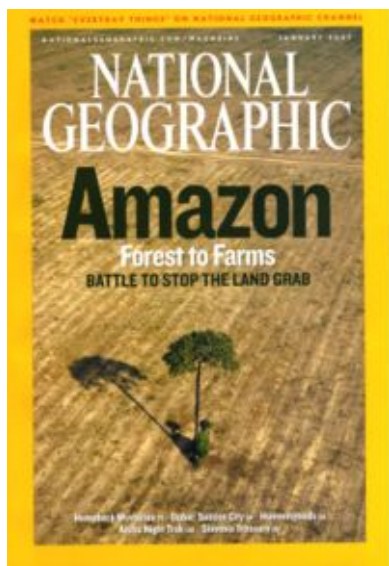

Figure 54: Cover

This "opening" or "grabber" image immerses the reader in the reality represented. When Western people refer to the Amazon rainforest, they probably imagine a very dense forest in which wild and, at the same time, exotic

species live. The purpose of this image on the cover, where a human being seems to be protecting himself/herself under the last tree that remains standing and the opening picture of the article is to deconstruct the western perception of tropical rainforest and show that, nowadays, there are only patches of green remaining or lonely trees.

The magazine's rhetoric is further enhanced by the article's opening image that depicts huge pieces of land completely naked of trees with small patches of forest still standing and the three-page image that shows timber mills spewing smoke. The picture depicts the ugliness of certain areas of the Amazon where there is full-scale industrialization of what used to be a natural place.

Figure 55: Vanishing forest: Remnant patches of Brazilian rain forest, the world's most biologically diverse habitat, edge land chain-sawed, bulldozed, and scorched to make way for crops and cattle. Hard-to-remove trees may be left standing. At current clearing rates, and with climate change continuing, scientists predict that 40 percent of the Amazon will be destroyed and a further 20 percent degraded within two decades.

Environmental issues have long been the focus of *National Geographic*. The maintenance and preservation of our natural environment and its species is nowadays also a politically correct subject. Environmental conservation is seen as an important topic and we can see the magazine's involvement with the preservation of the environment in *National Geographic*'s site, where there is nowadays the motto: "*National Geographic*: Inspiring people to care about the planet."

Stories on environmental degradation began to be featured in *National Geographic* in 1970, and the magazine has subsequently published articles on the smuggling of endangered species, on hazardous waste, acid rain, and the

destruction of tropical rain forests. So when the article appeared in January's issue, it did not come as a surprise. The destruction of Brazil's tropical rainforest has been on the agenda of politicians and environmentalists for some time. However, we also have to be critical of the timing: there is renewed attention paid to the Amazon Forest because of the demand for fertile land to plant products that can be used to extract biodiesel.

Nowadays, everybody is interested in protecting the environment but at the same time everything promotes its harming. Natural space is disappearing and it is becoming the background of the picture (Lefebvre, 1991: 30). Although nature is vast and resistant, it has lost its battle with the human beings and their will to occupy space that is deemed profitable. Nature is now seen as merely the raw material out of which the productive forces of a variety of social systems have forged their particular spaces (ibid.: 31).

The images in the article about the Amazon Forest can be divided into the following categories: of destruction of the Amazon forest, of production, of the inhabitants of the forest and of the measures taken to combat the cutting down of trees. The visual narrative provides information together with an aesthetic dimension that communicates feeling and emotion. We believe that the photographs selected to represent the reality of the Amazon rainforest are necessarily influenced by the institution's theory of what is going on in the world and "by the intellectual and political currents of the time" (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 79). And what, finally, emerges from this visual narrative is the studied juxtaposition of traditional and modern, of the natural and the civilized man which are favorite themes of *National Geographic*.

The title "Last of the Amazon" and the beginning of the article that reads: "In the time it takes to read this article, an area of Brazil's rain forests larger than 200 football fields will have been destroyed" serve to alert the readers. The magnitude of the destruction is represented in terms that easily define space: the size of football fields. Although it is difficult to measure deforestation, the magazine adopts an accessible to its readers' measure of space and time.

Figure 56: Smoky skies: Timber mills spew smoke across BR-163, Brazil's "soy highway," in Mato Grosso. Environmentalists fear that when the road is fully paved, assaults on the forests flanking its 1,100-mile (1,770 kilometers) length will intensify.

This image makes clear that industrialization and massive production are the trends that conservationists and preservationists of the forest have to fight against. But they also have to battle against the opinions of people that hold the power and make decisions.

The visual narrative continues with a picture which focuses on one of the groups of people that, naturally – in the western imagination - inhabit the Amazon Forest and shows Manoki Indians "displaced from their ancestral territory, return to reclaim the land ritually and lament its degradation". They are dressed in typical Indian clothing and they seem to be worried about the degradation of the forest because this is the land which connects them to their history and to their ancient traditions and this is also their natural habitat which provides them with food and sustenance. Their exotic characteristics, the painted patterns that embellish their half-naked bodies, the bow and arrow one of them is carrying, the reed-flute hanging from the old man's neck connects them to the past and together with the ritual they are about to perform renders them exotic. The Manoki Indians are represented as calling for a return to tradition.

Claude Levi Strauss in his pioneering study of aboriginal thought, the *Savage Mind*, argued that "aboriginal totemic logic or thought process is based predominantly on perception of the natural world rather than on concepts or language" (in Lawlor, 1991: 314). Indigenous communities use linguistic categories and logic that are based on perceptual knowledge. The Indigenous

way of life, the experience of being hunting-gathering communities makes all perceptions be organized around place. Aboriginal peoples move through space, and we move through time. Lawlor (1991) affirms that "aboriginal stories, be they about life or the Dreamtime, focus on place descriptions and spatial directions rather than time designations such as *when, before,* or *after* (239). The aboriginal identity is defined by the knowledge of the space where they are located (ibid.: 236). However, the Western world leaves no place for such archaic realm to survive. With the destruction of the rainforest, the Indigenous are losing the connection to their ancestors, the metaphysical being that created this world and to their history.

Figure 57: Return to tradition: Manoki Indians displaced from their ancestral territory-a fate shared by many of Brazil's 170 indigenous Amazonian peoples-return to reclaim the land ritually and lament its degradation.

There are two pictures of highly mechanized, industrial-scale soybeans farms situated in the tropical rainforest in the state of Mato Grosso which come to complement the meanings created in the previous picture. These pictures are characteristic of *National Geographic* since a good number of the images that appear in the magazine are of people at work. The magazine seems to adopt the protestant work ethic and its values by representing men at work. The product of high-scale production is made aesthetically attractive and this process of production makes readers attach to it positive characteristics.

Figure 58: Man versus machine: Industrial-scale soybean farms such as this 100,000-acre (40,000 hectares) operation in Nova Mutum in the state of Mato Grosso help make Brazil the world's second largest exporter of the legume, after the U.S. Highly mechanized, the farms employ only one person for every 400 acres (160 hectares).

The juxtaposition of these pictures to the previous one explores the contrasts between the traditional and the modern, degradation and progress and man versus machine. Moreover, it is clear that if pictures with the same subject were taken in North America or any other place in the world, they would not look much different. So, in spite of these soybean farms being situated in what used to be part of the Brazilian tropical rainforest, the photographs show that development and industrialization have reached natural spaces and turned them into productive spaces similar to any other productive space in the world. Pratt (1992) explains this very well: "Subsistence lifeways, non-monetary exchange systems, and self-sustaining regional economies are anathema to expansive capitalism. It seeks to destroy them wherever it finds them" (154-155).

Such productive spaces in the Amazon rainforest can not be used anymore as tools for the analysis of the societies that inhabited these social spaces originally. The forest is losing its so valued authenticity with the invasion of capitalism and its ideology and is turning to be a productive and not a mythical space anymore. The forces of history have "smashed naturalness forever and upon its ruins established the space of accumulation (the accumulation of all wealth and resources: knowledge, technology, money)" (Lefebvre, 1991: 49).

Figure 59: Boatload of soy: Golden cargo on the Madeira River, this boatload of soybeans belongs to Blairo Maggi, the "King of Soy." The world's largest producer, growing 350,000 acres (142,000 hectares) of soybeans, Maggi is also the governor of Mato Grosso. He insists that concerns about Amazon deforestation are exaggerated.

And what comes next is the image of a grave yard made up of white and red crosses: the white ones representing the victims of land wars and the red ones symbolizing local people now under death threats. The caption reads that "a boy mourns activist Dorothy Stang at a gathering to mark the first anniversary of her murder". *National Geographic* chooses to foreground the fight of a foreigner against deforestation.

Figure 60: Crosses of conviction: A boy mourns activist Dorothy Stang at a gathering to mark the first anniversary of her murder. The 73-year-old nun, who dedicated her life to saving the forest and helping workers, was killed by hired gunmen in 2005 after trying to stop ranchers from clearing land. White crosses represent 772 victims of land wars in the state of Pará, and 48 red crosses symbolize local people now under death threats.

Dorothy Stang's fate enhances the image that *National Geographic* constructs in the minds of its readers: that the Amazon rainforest is not anymore

the blessed and sacred place it used to be for its Indigenous populations but has turned into an unruly place where arguments are solved with guns. If we contrast this image to the image of the Manoki Indians that try to preserve the land of their ancestors with rituals, we see two different ways of dealing with the forest's devastation: the local and the foreign, the religious and the political. In this case, both seem to be fruitless.

The users of the land of the tropical rainforest are silenced, manipulated by the all-encompassing system of production. When they get revolted they suffer the consequences of their resistance to the damaging of their spaces. Many times protests are left to elite groups who are not directly affected by the effects of development

The logger who illegally fells a hardwood on a private ranch proves the impossibility of controlling the devastation of the forest because of its vastness. People that have come to own parts of the Amazon are constructed as unwilling to contribute to its preservation.

Figure 61: Caught in the act: Sawdust flies as a logger illegally fells a hardwood on a private ranch. "The Amazon is too big for police to shut down all illegal operations," says Enrico Bernard of Conservation International.

The cowboys with their cattle herds that appear in the next picture might be seen as performing not a very modern activity. However, it is one that generates capital. The existence of such activities in a space that used to be called tropical rainforest makes clear that part of the devastation of the forest is due to global demands of the meat market. Global consumption needs affect

natural spaces. Again, what underlies this image is the western opposition between subsistence way of production and large scale or capitalistic one.

Figure 62: Hoofin' it: Cowboys herd prime assets: Beef exports earn Brazil three billion dollars a year. With cattle numbers now topping 60 million, the demand for new pastureland drives much deforestation.

In this visual narrative, although we are talking about the biggest and wildest green area in the world, nature is not represented as "a spiritual domain in which the ills of civilization could be cured" (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 95) which is a common practice in *National Geographic*. In fact, it is represented as a degraded environment. The Indigenous villages look melancholic in the photographs. However, where the forest has turned into a means of production, the images have a clearer definition. The colors are exuberant and they portray *National Geographic*'s favorite subject: "the view of a world at work" (ibid.: 106). The natural space has been turned into a social space where labor and the organization of labor, technology and knowledge and the relations of production play a part in the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991: 46).

Although, the Amazon Indians are rendered exotic, a common way of *National Geographic* of portraying "subaltern" people, and are naturalized, they are at the same time portrayed as destitute, willing to go back in time and not to be part of the international system of production and consumption that is governed by the global market and leads to the destruction of their natural habitat. Their ancestral home is in the process of deterioration and disintegration because of the shock of contact with a potent monoculture (Clifford, 1988: 112).

Finally, it becomes apparent, that although *National Geographic* preaches caring about the planet, in this article the pictures that are most aesthetically attractive are the ones that are related to production. The magazine suggests that the international system of modernization and progress has infiltrated into the tropical rain forest and there is no way back.

The Amazon rainforest is represented as a hybrid space where the traditional and the modern coexist, the foreign and the local mingle, subsistence societies live side by side with capitalistic ones, the spiritual mixes with the material and finally preservation fights deforestation. The photographers of the magazine do not produce work that does not reflect the ideologies they endorse. However, being in the "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992: 4) makes them rethink the validity of the values and currents that underlie their work. This kind of hybridity implies a juxtaposition or coexistence of contraries that never result in a third element. Therefore, the hybridity of this genre creates a very productive ground with ethical and aesthetic values that belong to no specific culture.

CONCLUSION

Our main hypothesis in the present research project is that producers of images and text in *National Geographic* construct visual and verbal narratives of subaltern cultures which are products of socio-historical and cultural processes that are not universal and objective but local and subjective. These constructions do not gain their truth value by their correspondence to some external reality but by the internal coherence found in the text and images. The magazine's perspective is infused with western values, such as modernism, development, rationalism and capitalism. Moreover, when readers of the magazine narrate the Other cultures represented in the magazine, they create a discourse that also has a perspective that is permeated by the culture of the place where they are located, by their locus of enunciation. By researching the way discourse and images are constructed in *National Geographic*, we acquire a better understanding of the concepts employed by the West to the understanding of the Other.

We construct our interpretations of *National Geographic*'s visual and verbal narratives by applying theories that are critical of the concepts the West uses to understand Other people and spaces. Therefore, our thesis has two parts. In the first part we reflect on theories that support the approach we adopt to the magazine's representations. Therefore, in the first chapter we show that the genre of travel writing, on which *National Geographic* bases its language and structure, together with geography had in their history become tools imperialism used in order to establish and fortify itself. Nowadays, geography and travel writing are used by *National Geographic* as mechanisms to articulate the authority of the hegemony and the *status quo* through an apparent scientific objectivity and innocence that blurs the hegemonic concepts on which its discourse is founded.

In the second chapter, we establish that *National Geographic* has embraced photography as one of the best ways to prove its objectivity since photography is considered to be one of the most "realistic" and truth-telling instruments of representing reality. We prove that the magazine's visuality that presents itself as universal, in fact, produces visual hierarchies of gender, race,

class and space that are products of the dominant ideology of capitalism and development.

In the third chapter, we show how culture conditions and regulates people's thoughts and actions. We point out that when we observe cultural manifestations we perceive them through our own *webs of significance* that our culture has spun for us. *National Geographic* can only study the Other's culture by using conceptual frameworks that are western and fraught with the capitalist, modernist, industrial and "democratic" ideas. Anthropology is a science whose representations cannot be purified by eliminating the social pollution. Eliminating the social would lead supposedly to faithful representations (Latour, 1993: 143). But the eyes and the systems of thought have been formed by the social and that ends up making "faithful" an inappropriate predicate for representation.

In the fourth chapter, we justify our study of the representation of subaltern groups by a magazine that belongs to the dominant and we explain the reasons it should offer us an understanding of the conceptual framework, politics and ethics of the present. The magazine, a gigantic rationalized organization, publishes representations of Other people that are deemed trustworthy because it is supposed to base its findings on the universality of science.

In the second part of the thesis, we analyze different subaltern groups based on the theoretical background we discuss in the first part. In chapter five, we analyze the *cholita*'s performance of *lucha libre* as a subaltern manifestation of women's pursuit of emancipation. In chapter six, we examine the representation *National Geographic* makes of the subaltern space of Mumbai's biggest slum and the identities constructed in that space. We explain how modern and subaltern spaces coexist side by side in contemporary cities. In chapter seven we study the approach *National Geographic* adopts to Iranian identity and explain the reasons we see representations as a discursive process and not in the traditional mimetic manner.

In chapter eight, we scrutinize the representation of the subaltern profession of rickshaw pullers and show how the magazines' humanism perpetuates colonial dominance this time through the gaze. In chapter nine, we focus on Indigenous representations and contemplate how the narrative of the

magazine and the images it releases foster conceptually the juxtaposition between modernity and tradition when in fact these elements mingle in human spaces such as the Amazon forest.

We wrap up our research by confirming that *National Geographic* uses scientific frames of thought in order to validate its representations since western science valorizes its mode of thinking which it considers pure, rational, better and more authentic than Other modes of thinking that are considered local. However, the language it uses, its origins and history, spring from a culture that is also local but dominant. Western science has been victorious in its passing its modes of thinking as universal since its subject positions have acquired importance and efficacy in modern times (Pandey, 1997: 29).

Moreover, we as readers and researchers of *National Geographic*'s representations make interpretations and act as mediators between the subaltern representations and how they are conceived by the wider public. However, our interpretations are also based on ways of thinking that tend to purify and objectify our perspective and deem it "truthful". We need to be critical of our own systems of knowledge because researchers studying the cultures of Other people participate in the production of this Other.

In short, we can not purify neither the subject represented, nor the magazine making the representation and nor our interpretations. Although we are writing from a postcolonial perspective, we are aware that we can not detach ourselves completely from the hegemonic discourses we do not wish to reproduce. We are formed by the concept of Critical Humanism which sees our interpretations of the Other as a fruit of our histories and our systems of thought and our modes of thinking as local and subjective but not without value.

Critical Humanism shows a resistance to *idées reçues* and offers opposition to any kind of clichê and language without reflection" (Said, 2004: 65). Intellectuals and academics should see humanism as a praxis used in order to understand what they are doing and with what they are engaged as scholars and should be concerned with how to connect these principles to the world they live as citizens" (our translation) (ibid.: 25).

We accept that people are born into systems of thought and perception that are beyond them. These systems of thought and the way individuals engage with them contradict the core values of humanist thought since people

tend to use language without reflecting on the historical and cultural dimension of knowledge and truth. We demonstrate that there are no clear and distinct ideas free from the mind that possess them and from history (Said, 2004: 30-31). The rules that govern the formation of concepts, the vocabulary of languages, the mechanisms involved in the preservation of knowledge and anything that goes in the human mind, influences it and makes it impossible to say where individuality ends and the public domain begins (ibid.: 64-65).

We perceive ourselves as more in tune with non-European, decolonized and peripheral currents of thought. By situating criticism in the heart of humanism, "criticism as a form of democratic freedom and as a non lasting practice that challenges and accumulates knowledge that does not deny the historical realities that constitute the post-Cold War world, its former colonial formation and the alarmingly global power of the last remaining superpower of nowadays (Said, 2004: 69), scholars endeavor to think and act at the same time inside and outside their own systems of thought.

In our thesis, we show that the perspective on other cultures and other people adopted in the representations of *National Geographic* is inserted in the specific cultural moment. We show that thinking is created in a context and truths are social constructions. It is quite impossible to separate knowledge and the exercise of power. Modernity has the capacity to designate who the victors and vanquished are. Moreover, any change in the social order reflects on the perspectives adopted by science.

Humanism offers to people like us that come from the post colonial world the opportunity to understand our cultures better and our relationships to the Western dominant culture. We come to understand that the apparently pure scientific pursuits are related to Imperialism and cultural hegemony and that political power is connected to the construction of knowledge.

Finally, the anthropological subject speaks from a certain location which privileges the Western scientific and rational perspective. Is it possible for the postcolonial anthropologist to break with this tradition? It is not a matter of erasing the West but in a dialectic manner to show that the world is a place where there is always conflicting but productive positions. Self-criticism, interrogation of established ways of thinking and their interruption are at the core of understanding the way the Other is represented. Unlearning, through

criticism of our established ways of thinking about the Other is at the core of Critical Humanism. Modern humanism does not celebrate Western, abstract and hypothetically universal values but criticizes its own ways of thinking.

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