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Abstract

This article is about films which are like an ecological niche within the global corpus of movies that deal with WWII in the Pacific, films that stage the unexpected meeting of individuals who have nothing in common or are supposed to be foes on a remote island and invent, against the course of history, a community, and films that protest against war by playing with notions like utopia and heterotopia.

Keywords: Island, war, film, heterotopia, utopia, Pacific

Introduction

For very obvious reasons, war films have much more in common with movie-making or movie-manufacturing as an industry than with cinema as an art. This is all the more when these films' horizon is openly and directly propagandistic—when they are an integral part of the total mobilization of the popular audience they are intended for, in support of the great patriotic cause. During WWII, these films, as a full-fledged genre, invented and promoted by Hollywood, belonged to the national war effort in the United States, in exactly the same way as the mobilization of the car industry (like Ford, etc.). War films that extolled the heroic deeds and sacrifice of "our guys" on land, in the air, and on the sea in East Asia, in the Pacific, and later in Europe were then manufactured like they were on assembly line. Hollywood was at that time a "plant" that flooded the United States, with narratives and pictures which depicted and reenacted the current war, this was nonstop and had been so from its very beginning—Pearl Harbor. For this purpose, Hollywood put to work its best crews, most renown film directors, actors, music composers, and thousands of extras, injected big amounts of money in these films, and, last but not least, worked hand in hand with the Army, which provided ships, aircrafts, uniforms, human task force that were needed for reenacting all sorts of battles—on the sea, under the sea, in the air, in the jungle, perilous landings on tropical islands, etc.

As a consequence of this combination of propagandistic goals and of the priority given to technical issues (reenacting a battle involving thousands of combatants has never been an easy game), the artistic value of these films is, as a rule, very low. The interesting thing is that after the war, this war film genre dedicated to WWII did not fade—on the contrary, the war in the Pacific and in East Asia, in particular, became, in the post-war era, an inexhaustible source for less simplistic, less openly propagandistic narratives than those issued during the war.

As this war was still raging and its outcome uncertain, the films that dealt with it made the notion of total war to-be-won inseparable from that of the arch-foe (the Japanese) resembling a subhuman—worse than a barbarian, or, in the words of the propaganda pictures, a *monkey*. This animalization of the Japanese as a species opened the gates to the brutalization of the forms of war (from the extermination of the defeated enemy soldiers to Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Post-war films had to correct and rectify this narrative; at that time Japan was becoming a protectorate, a client state and an ally of the United States.

To finish this preamble, I have to add that war films have become rather paradoxical. As all kinds of new technical devices and tricks become available (color, special effects, Dolby sound, etc.), *entertainment films par excellence* for so-called popular audiences are captured by the dubious seduction of ultra-violence, noise, and fury, impressive in the megalomaniac dimension of many of these projects (like *Tora! Tora! Tora!* [1970], *Empire of the Sun* [1987], *Pearl Harbor* [2001], *Yamato* [2005], *Flowers of War* [2011], etc.).

Other Spaces

I have to mention these very general features of war films related to WWII before I move onto my subject. I will focus on war films that distinctly belong to the general corpus "WWII films in the Pacific," which belong to the category of "general public" or even "commercial" films —but those, from another angle, completely differ from and even sharply contrast with what I have sketched out in my prologue. What these films make a "close-up" on is a completely different dimension of war film: its *imaginary power*, that is, its capacity to displace the audience from the usual topography of war which is made of arms clash, extreme sufferings, ultra-violence, terror, desolation, massacres, etc., to other spaces which appear as "protected areas," unexpected recesses where the war raging all around is like *suspended*.

This providential *topos*, where fierce enemies are at close range but some kind of spell interrupts hostilities, is in most films I will deal with: an *island*, a small island lost in the vast expanse of the Pacific. A "lost," a providentially "forgotten," desert island. A splinter of firm land which, for this reason, is available for various imaginary projections. From the viewpoint of imagination, the issue "island" in this cinematography draws our attention on this very fascinating property of the island: it can be both utopia or the substratum for a utopian narrative (More 1992 [1516], etc.) and heterotopia, as Foucault (1984 [1967]) means it—*un espace autre*, a "space-other" rather than just "another space."

As Foucault stresses it, utopia and heterotopia are not only "different," they contrast, notably on this issue: utopia is the fruit of imagination, it has no real, tangible location. Heterotopia, by contrast, *exists*, it is a space or location (*emplacement)* that can be named, visited, peopled, etc. Foucault mentions, just in passing, all kinds of heterotopias, a ship, a garden, a brothel, an attic, etc., and says that they can be considered as heterotopias or become heterotopia(s), for they are endowed with this capacity to tear us apart from those "normal" spaces where everyday life is confined and to make us "differ" from ourselves, as we displace ourselves from familiar places to these "other" spaces. What utopia and heterotopia have in common, in spite of their marked differences, is their special, privileged link with *imagination*.

In sum, the island can be an imaginary stake from both the angle of utopia and the angle of heterotopia.

This is the matter which I would like to reflect a bit on by presenting some of the films where emerges a "counter-narrative" of war, a narrative-other (*un récit-autre*) in relation with the topos/topic *island*. An "alternative" narration of war is based on what Gilles Deleuze would name a "line of flight" or an "evading line" (*une ligne de fuite*) out of the standard war narrative which is placed under the sign of terror and death—suffocation or saturation of the reflection and the affects (of the spectator).

So, let me begin with two films I have a special inclination for—even if I know that they are not artistic masterpieces, just good Hollywood films: *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* (1957) by John Huston and *Hell in the Pacific* (1968) by John Boorman. Both of them are "actor's" films, starring famous actors such as Deborah Kerr and Robert Mitchum for the former and Lee Marvin and Toshiro Mifune for the latter—but they are not only that, far from it, and this is what I would like to show.

First, let's take notice of the dates of their respective shootings—1957, 1968. That is a decade for a generation's distance from the end of the war—time to take some detachment from the traumatic event, as well as from the first generation of why-we-fight films shot during the war, but not far enough for people to have a completely detached approach from the event—the ideal distance for the kind of ironical "counter narrative" Huston and Boorman were staging.

Huston's film is a perfect *robinsonnade*, by which I mean a variation on the plot of the famous novel by Daniel Defoe (2013 [1719]), *Robinson Crusoe*. The film is a discreetly but constantly ironical reenactment, perfectly unrealistic version, of Defoe's narrative—transposed to the conditions of WWII in the Pacific: Allison, a tough Marine Corps infantry man, has been stranded on a small idyllic island after a shipwreck of which he seems to be the only survivor. There, instead of having to grapple with a Japanese garrison, he meets a young and beautiful American novice, the only survivor of a group of nuns and priests who have been killed by a Japanese detachment that then left the island. Both of them rapidly become aware that they are alone on the island and placed under the constant threat of the return of the much-dreaded enemy (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Film poster of *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison*

Huston's narrative ability and cleverness consist in making nothing happens. After this

"promising" opening, as the audience anticipated it would or should do, there is no "return to nature" (jungle!) in the sense of free love in Woodstock's style, but self-restraint and constraint as the expression of the ethical value of both characters—this is what the narration insists on.

Heterotopian community

This film is a utopia sketched regarding terms or rather forms and intensities that are directed at a general public. The island is, of course, imaginary; it's a fiction including rather conventional signs—wonderful beaches, coconut trees, water springs, caves hidden in the deep forest, etc. What matters is that the island appears as a "world apart" in the general context of the war, a micro-topography which is like a miraculously preserved refuge in the devastated landscape of the war. As the French philosopher René Schérer (2009) says, *utopia* is *epoche*— cut or interruption in Ancient Greek. He suggests that the utopian, as *epoche*, is called up by a problem which comes from outside, that is, from a historical situation: a "violence" from outside which awakes the imagination (*l'imaginaire*).

It seems to me that this approach of utopia perfectly catches up the film's stake: the island on which Allison and Sister Angela meet is *an oasis in an "ocean" of war*. It is a *place for rescue*, not only from the angle of survival, not only of a place where survivors (from a shipwreck, a massacre, etc.) come together; more important than that, it is a place where a human *community* is set up and "saves" or rescues human civilization and values from the general war disaster and havoc.

In this social microcosm, the two protagonists "save" the whole of humanity from the apocalypse (the war) by resisting the temptation of becoming "carefree animals" that are living like Adam and Eva before the Original Sin. Allison, the poor devil, is of course, in love with Sister Angela. Allison is not a born gentleman, quite the opposite—he is an orphan, a rebel child raised up in a reformatory and then "made to a man" by the very trying training of a Marine school. But he behaves, and by respecting Sister Angela and treating her as *an equal*, he makes this island a refuge or a sanctuary where the essential values of civilized life are preserved—this is a time when the gates of barbarity are wide open, within the context of an extermination war.

More precisely, the small island becomes some kind of Noah's Ark where two survivors from the democratic world precariously are out of the woods, as the Flood of war overwhelms the planet: two humans, a man and a woman, incarnating the strong institutions (the Army, the Church) are face to face. Each of them has to work hard in order to understand and accept the other's position or angle of view on their situation, his/her "reasons," and his/her difference to him/her. This effort or form of recognition of the other's difference as respectable is the condition for their small and fragile "heaven" not to become a hell. Mutual respect and equality are, at this place, pointed up as the core of the human link. They talk, they argue, they disagree on many things, but force and violence never take precedence over communication and tolerance. Self-control or "self-constraint" (Elias 1998) over desire and passion appear at this place as the only possible "dam" which can resist the relapse of these survivors into a Hobbesian rather than a Rousseauist "state of nature."

Of course, this is a fable or even some sort of fairy tale for adults. This is an imagination game. But by imagination, what is meant here is not our capacity to elude reality, but, on the contrary, the capacity to work it out by imagining possible bifurcations as an escape out of the tyranny of "the given"—war as decivilization, in this context. *It is a game with the impossible*, for, very obviously, the situation depicted in the film is quite unrealistic. But this is not what really matters. What really matters is the "power" of a filmic narrative which actually is a counter-narrative or a "narrative of resistance" (I derive this notion from Foucault's "conducts or behaviors of resistance") and which is endowed with the capacity to "thwart" (*contrarier*) reality as "the given" in its most common form (now, I borrow this notion, "contrariété," from Rancière [2001]).

What is here at issue? The most common reality of war, as depicted by "realistic" war movies, is made of battles, sufferings, extreme violence, defeat, victory, crimes, cruelty, etc. As one watches most of the films on the war in the Pacific, one feels crushed and oppressed by the magnitude of all of this—battles on the sea, under the sea, in the air, on land, dozens of vessels submarines, aircrafts, thousands of combatants, imitations as realistic as real battles, etc. War cinema, from this angle, is captive of past events and past history and of those who made it; that is engaged in a constant *mimetic game* with real war "machines," powers, actors, etc.

The imaginative "game" of a film like *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* consists in distorting and thwarting this oppressive reality of war (or its servile imitation in many of the war films) by

imagining a flight line or a vanishing line (*une ligne de fuite*) out of it, that is, by inventing another "present (or presence) of war," another possible/impossible experience of war. What the film invents is very obviously a "world" (a microcosm and a narrative "realm") that is "virtual," but that still takes shape and substance in the guise of a fable or a fairy tale. This "operation" aiming at no less than "saving" us (the audience as a microcosm of mankind) from, let's say, Armageddon—it's a heaven-sent emergency exit that opens up at the last moment as the planet is on fire.

What this fable puts forward is the notion of a *bifurcation* based on the power of imagination and narration, a notion that conflicts with and resists to the widely shared idea that, under such extreme circumstances as total war, *there is no alternative* for anybody, be it in thinking about the present, feelings, conducts, and actions. Imagination is what makes it possible to stick to the conviction that the encirclement of any form of human life by the conditions and rules of total war cannot be accepted as a moral commandment. The utopian/heterotopian use of the motto "the island" in this film is what makes it possible to give shape to a narrative whose premise is: still, in spite of all (the landscape of ruins and desolation that surrounds us), "another world" *has to exist*, and this is what the film is the repository of.

Imagination at this place is what emancipates us from the tyranny of war conditions. The magic of cinema in such a case is its power of inventing in a splinter of time (about 90 minutes). Another world which, in terms of narrative expressivity, is *truer* than the so-called real one. The living community private Allison and Sister Angela set up on their desert island is more authentic (in terms of human values and principles) than the barbaric reality that bears the name of bloody battles and hecatombs—Guadalcanal, Leyte, Saipan, Okinawa, etc.

What is reality?

We have to face at this place a philosophical problem which Hannah Arendt (1961) has drawn our attention to: we, of course, have to face reality as it is first of all, made of "facts." We have to acknowledge it, even as it exhibits a very ugly and repulsive face. In other terms, we should never indulge in transforming or degrading facts, historical facts before all, which horrify us or challenge our imagination into a simple matter of opinion. We have to face reality even as it is equal to looking at Medusa's face (Auschwitz, Hiroshima, etc.).

But, at the same time, we have to stick to the idea that reality as a collection of undeniable facts is not the whole of truth, or in other terms that the truth of facts is not the whole of truth. We have to promote a more ambitious notion of truth. We must acknowledge reality, but not yield and submit to it at any rate or condition, and for this reason, we often have to oppose and contrast a certain notion of truth to reality as "the truth of things, the truth of the world."

If we think that reality is what we have to adapt to and accept unconditionally whatever it looks like, we will be inclined to say, for example, that in a time of total war (the Pacific war), the only rule which prevails is violence, the hate of the enemy, victory at any cost and God help us, etc. We will become the pure and simple *objects* of total war, the moral and political sleepwalkers who give up any ethic principle in order to adapt themselves to the situation placed under the sign of exception and try to survive. We will then be the moral hostages of total war. This is what most of the soldiers, American and Japanese, who had been involved in the armed conflict had been at that time (see, for example, Norman Mailer's [1948] outstanding war novel *The Naked and the Dead*). Imagination, as it "clips" on narrative capacities or devices (what movie-making is), enables us to shake off the yoke or the tyrannic reality of war and appropriate another notion of truth that makes it possible for us to *differ from* what makes of a war an overpowering fate for its contemporaries.

This is where our human capacity to say that the "rights" of truth, in determined circumstances, have to prevail over the tyranny of reality, and it is crucial. We can persist not only in being true to other values and principles, but also in "telling stories" and imagining narratives that make it possible to break the enclosure or encirclement of the draconian conditions of war. This is exactly what Huston's film does, in a slightly ironical and detached way (it doesn't "teach" us a lesson of philosophy, etc.), as it presents another, completely unexpected, face of war, of this apocalyptic war in the Pacific, which actually took place. Huston or maybe his film as a "process without a subject" (Althusser and Balibar 1968) invents and carves another possible (that is more livable) reality which brings us back to *humanity*, civilized life, that is, to the notion of *a habitable common world*.

But we have to notice at this place that, in order to perform this displacement from a suffocating reality to "true life," *we need a strong support from imagination*. We need to tear us apart from this reality that enslaves us; and this effort for emancipating us from the tyranny of this oppressive reality has to be backed by imagination. The island (taken into consideration from

the angle of utopia or, as well, of heterotopia—it is not what matters here) is the imaginary "material" or "prop" for this trial.

Of course, this "world apart" which embodies a great film director's (John Huston) capacity to oppose the devastating effects of war on human civilization with the truth (and power) of art can only be very fragile. We have to accept the convention and the artifice according to which two ordinary human beings lost on an island are "entrusted" with the mission of "saving" mankind from the disaster of war. As I said, this is a tale, and we, spectators, have to make a very risky *bet* (a philosophical and moral bet, Pascal 2005 [1670]) that, in certain conditions, this kind of very improbable *change of direction* (bifurcation—*clinamen*) can or might take place, not only in that kind of "dream" in Huston's film, but in reality. For example, the wonderful sequence in Kon Ichikawa's film, *The Burmese Harp* (1956), is enemy soldiers lost in the tropical forest of Thailand begin to sing in choir instead of engaging into a battle. But this is cinema again, of course.

John Boorman, also a clever, witty filmmaker (*Hope and Glory* [1987], *Excalibur* [1981], *Delivrance* [1972], etc.), also "reawakens" in *Hell in the Pacific* (1968) (his original and ironical contribution to the construction of a cinematographic collective narration of the War in the Pacific). There are classical Western figures or narratives: De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*, again, but, as well, Hegel's (1977 [1807]) "must"—the struggle "to death" of the master and the servant. In his very simplified reconstruction of the war in the Pacific, he imagines that two soldiers from the conflicting camps, an American Marine Corps soldier and a Japanese officer, are stranded on a desert island in the middle of the Pacific. It begins, of course, with a fight to death: the Japanese who has set foot first on the island and taken measures for his survival sees the unexpected intrusion of the American into his "kingdom" as a mortal threat: he refuses to give water to the thirsty castaway. They have nothing in common, no common language; each one's goal is to keep at a distance with the other, and then try to get the better of the other by making the other his servant or slave. This is the way they become each other's slave by turns as the days and weeks go by and reversals of the situation occur (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Film poster of *Hell in the Pacific*

But it is not Boorman's intention to depict the conditions of total war at the scale of this microcosm and of the confrontation between these two soldiers on that improbable lost island. What his imagination inclines to sketch out is a philosophical tale or fable, in the same spirit as Huston's film: in the dialectic process of their relations, the two survivors have to pass (in order to survive or at least try to) from open hostility and mutual violence to some sort of companionship based not only on mutual interest, but also on a very singular friendship—one speaks his own language while the other doesn't really understand but still gets something from it (situations, body language, etc.). And, by dint of patience and stamina, they manage to build a raft and sail to a bigger island where a bloody battle between Japanese and Americans has just taken place.

Boorman's tale is both utopian and cynical—the ending of the film is sarcastic and dark. The island is the ideal location for an anti-war narrative, a counter-narrative of the war and the Pacific as a collective outfit of barbarity: the American doesn't cut his dead enemy's ears as a war trophy (as Marine Corps soldiers usually did during the big battles in the Pacific—see this in John Dower's [1986] book as reference), the Japanese officer doesn't bayonet or behead

wildly his prisoner as it often happened. On the opposite, they stand and face together their very destitute condition; they set up some kind of elementary community in the same way exactly as *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison.*

This is the political horizon of Boorman's film which, we have to remember it at this place, had been shot in *1968*. It is the time of the war in Vietnam, a time when broad sections of the youth in the United States opposed their "dreams" and wielded the power of imagination against the barbarity of this new American war in South-Eastern Asia. It is a time when people from my generation, in the West, used to tag on the walls of our universities slogans like "L'imagination au pouvoir!" or "Imagination to power!"—a very ambiguous claim on second thought, actually, but at that time inseparable from our hostility to any kind of imperialist wars, inseparable from our fighting spirit against any form of neo-colonialism or Western imperial ambitions—a feeling which Boorman's film is perfectly in accordance and in harmony with. It is a "fraternization" film, not only between enemies, but also between "races," that is, human species that are not supposed to be on the same footing according to the Western-centric vision of "civilization." It is a basic and popular version of what inspired us at that time—internationalism, cosmopolitanism.

Industrial art and critique

Imagination is here again, as in John Huston's film, to make an artist *reinvents* war, "falsifies" or "adulterates" it so that a person can turn a war film into an anti-war manifesto. This narrative or discursive operation needs a support, a topographic support here—*the island again.* The island is something both tangible, *material* (sand, palm trees, springs, rocks, etc.), and purely imaginary—these film's islands have no names, they don't exist on any map, they are just "images" without any ontological density, but by contrast, rich in expressive density. They are very "Deleuzian," from this angle—images tending to "concepts." For this reason, "the island" in these films is—I insist on this paradox that challenges a bit the way Foucault contrasts utopia and heterotopia—both utopia ("nowhere-island") and heterotopia (a visible location, the "real" island where the film was shot—un *espace-autre*).

Of course, there always can be other interpretations. What we are talking about here is how the critical function of art seeps into a work that has to comply with the constraints and requisites

of film industry, it is about how an artist, in that sense, succeeds in "infecting" a commercial good with the bacillus of "the critique."[1] It is the way that a film molded by the standards of film industry is put under some sort of strain, by the ability of its maker and by instilling in the "poison" of the critique, to divert from its purely commercial goal.

But, of course, one always can object to this kind of approach and say that "industry always wins" at the end and that this kind of interpretation I suggest always relies on some sort of intellectual projection on a wishful thinking by focusing on the imaginative "power" (*puissances*) of such films. One can perfectly say, as well: *Hell in the Pacific* is an opportunistic movie which praises the new friendly relation established between the United States and Japan at that time when the U.S. military bases in Okinawa made it possible for the B52 to bomb North Vietnam. It puts together two giants, one from Hollywood and one from Japanese cinema industry, Lee Marvin and Toshiro Mifune, to make the public swallow the bitter pill of its subliminal political message.

This less empathic interpretation (than mine) is perfectly acceptable. Concerning *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison*, one could object that this film appears to be, all things considered, a plea for sexual repression and social conformism, a puritan, almost neo-Victorian, version of the island's utopia.

This "reading" of John Huston's film is quite plausible too—but it is not really what matters, for what I'm trying to show is how a movie-maker can, by giving free rein to the imaginative powers of his art, make an image emerge from the core of a world at war, which openly challenges the stereotypes usually associated with war. Cinema, as an art based on constantly more sophisticated technical devices and as a "total" art, has a special and unique capacity to boost and capture human imagination, as Edgar Morin (1978 [1956]) stresses it in his referential book *Cinema or the Imaginary Man*. In these two films, cinema doesn't present itself as a "dream-machine" intended for entertainment only or a manufacture for pleasant and frivolous dreams. It makes *other possible worlds* appear from the background of the most depressing and dark reality—total war. It makes a virtual world surge up, whose otherness is distinct: its horizon is not destruction, fight to death, victory, conquest (etc.), but equality,

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[1] I refer to various texts by Michel Foucault where he deals with what he calls "l'attitude critique," notably in relation with Kant's texts on history; these texts by Foucault are: "What is Critique? Critique and Aufklärung" (1978) and "What is Enlightenment?" (1984)

community and fraternity.

From the moment on this other world has been sketched out by a film which has met its audience, it (this other world) already has become more than a "dream," a pure vision, or an unsubstantial fantasy. It has already begun to make its way into the gestures, the behaviors, and the convictions of the spectators who, as well, are citizens, workers, people from below, and people who think about the present and "people" it with their conducts and actions. People as society or part of it have the real (actual) capacity to sketch out another world (or, why not, other worlds) by stamping their marks on this present. For this reason, the imaginary power of cinema has to be taken into consideration not so much in the dimension of the evasion from reality (as it is supposed to be dull or grim), but in that of invention and *becoming* (*le devenir*). From this point of view, movies like those I'm discussing here are not first of all "entertainment" intended to help us accept the present conditions as something inescapable and insuperable (in a *static* a perspective). They are "intensifiers" of our capacity and desire to become the other (*devenir-autre*) of what we are, as well to differ from the present "as it is"—heavy, sticky and imperious—in a *dynamic* perspective.

Let me mention it in passing, these films show that the conventional distinction we are used to make between "commercial films" and "art films" or "auteur films" is not something we should accept without any reservation or discussion. It often happens that captivating figures emerge from commercial films or standard genre films like western films, sword and sandal films, thrillers, road movies, etc.—figures or features which are both like a design or a motif on/in a Persian rug and a concept "in practical form" (Althusser 1968). This is what both Huston's and Boorman's films do, in their soft and somehow sarcastic way, without teaching us anything, just diverting the charms of exoticism and "adventure."

Imaginaire and imagination

French language has two different words for imagination: *imaginaire* and *imagination*. Regarding the relation to cinema, the distinction between these two terms can be of great value: "*imaginaire*" is the whole "set" of images and fantasies which the audiences, as a heterogeneous and compact human "mass," have in common. "*Imaginaire*," in that sense is collective, it is social, it is a milieu made of images and pictures in the most extensive sense of

the term. The "imaginary man" Morin (1978 [1956]) alludes to in the book I have already mentioned points at a social subject who shares an indefinite number of images with other social subjects.

For this reason, movie-making, as it is an industry and a business, constantly draws on this inexhaustible "reserve" of images—social imagination, or "*les imaginaires sociaux*," (Baczko 1978) it borrows all kinds of narratives and plots from the collective feelings, sensations and emotions which are associated, in the general public's mind, with these images. Cinema, as an industry (blockbusters, soap operas, catastrophe films, thrillers, etc.), relies to a great extent on the intensification effects of these shared feelings, all of them are related to sub-conscious collective images.

What the audience "consumes" here, so far as these products of cultural industry are concerned, is nothing but its own fears, desires, phobias, and hopes boosted by the cinematographic manufacture of pictures—cinematic pictures intensify and maximize the images the social subjects have in common.

Imagination, in the sense of its French equivalent "*l'imagination*," has a completely different meaning: it designs the share of *the virtual* in images, that is, as Jean-Paul Sartre (1940) notices, the creative dimension of what he calls "the imaginative" or "picturing consciousness" (*la conscience imageante*). As I stressed it, *l'imagination* is what makes it possible for us to get an intuition of something which, as "possible" or "different" would not purely and simply derive from the present conditions, cannot be reduced or taken back to these conditions, such as a premise, a potential, etc.—the classical example of the latter, in Hegel's dialectic, is the flower's bud as premise for the flower itself.

L'imagination is what makes it possible to have the intuition of a possible change of direction, a breach, a differentiation process—something which would be placed under the sign of difference, otherness, not self-development. As this issue appears suddenly in a film, it is the sign that cinema as an art has not yet been wiped out by industry and business.

None but the Braves (1965) is, if I'm not mistaken, the only film shot by the famous crooner cultural businessman and soft progressive Frank Sinatra. It's a rather anticipative film: the screenplay has been written jointly by an American and a Japanese scenarist—John Twist and Katsuya Susaki. The production is American and Japanese (Figure 3).
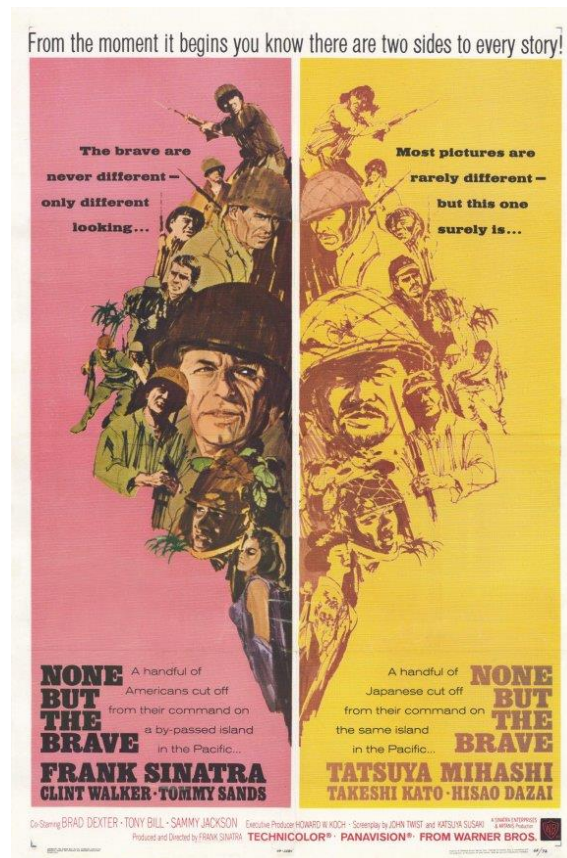
Figure 3 Film poster of *None but the Braves*

It's a story about two small groups of soldiers, one American and the other Japanese, who has been stranded on a lost island during the war in the Pacific and who are more or less both abandoned to their fate by the army corps they belong to. My impression is that *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006) by Clint Eastwood has been more or less distinctly inspired by this film, it appears to borrow many things from it.

The narrative device is about the same. In Sinatra's film, the narrator is a Japanese lieutenant who command the Imperial Army unit on the island. He keeps a journal for his young wife— they married just before he joined up, they had not even time to consummate the marriage. This professional soldier who, of course, speaks an excellent English (for the sake of the film's plot), is descended from an ancient aristocratic family, warriors (*samouraï*), but his belonging to this distinguished caste conflicts with his pacifist feelings and with his opinion on this war which he considers as an absurdity and is doomed to be, at the end, a disaster for Japan. But, as a soldier, he feels that he has to do his duty to the bitter end.

His American counterpart is a captain who, as well, is in trouble with his conscience: he blames

himself for having refused to marry his fiancée as the war broke out—she was then killed in Manila on the occasion of a Japanese bombardment, the day before he went to mission. He too is a professional soldier, a trainer for elite troops who has been transferred to the Navy. The respective fates of these young men from the opposite camps are very similar: both of them have been thrown into the turmoil of war at the moment when their lives as adults and their sentimental education are at their initial stage.

Like Clint Eastwood's film, these two noble and thoughtful characters contrast violently with the fanatics and warmongers who, in each camp, are always ready for a bloody scuffle with the enemy.

The island is again a world apart, a place of complete isolation. The communications lines of both groups are cut. Their radio transmitters are out of use. The Japanese try to build a boat, but the Americans sink it. An American destroyer appears in the open sea, but it turns and goes back as the captain sees a Japanese flag hang on a palm-tree. As a result, the enemies have to talk together, they have to learn how to coexist on this small expanse of land and for this to thwart and contradict the logic of war. Each faction (camp) has to rely on the other: the Americans cannot survive without having access to the water spring the Japanese control; one of the wounded Japanese soldiers needs a medical assistance only the Americans can provide. Some sort of lasting truce is set up, individual contacts develop between soldiers from both camps, and with them fair trade (fresh fish for cigarettes, etc.)—and with all that, inconceivable forms of mutual esteem, comradeship, and friendship between yesterday's "mortal enemies."

Frank Sinatra's message in a bottle

But this is a Hollywood film and Frank Sinatra is not an anarchist agitator, an ideological defector. As a consequence, a *narrative compromise* has to be worked out. The film eulogizes the fraternization with the enemy, but, strangely enough, this move, this gesture has a distinct limit: the soldiers from each camp keep being absolutely loyal to the army, to their country, to their flag. An "impossible" compromise and, for this reason, no happy ending can be expected. The army, as a "total" institution (Goffman 1961), demands from its members total devotion and sacrifice. This conflicts violently with the experience the soldiers from both camps have on the island—they have discovered the fragile humanity of "the other," very similar to their

own.

At the end, the militarist ideology takes its revenge for the fraternal breakaway or parenthesis the film depicts—return, backlash of "the reality of war."

At the time this film was released, this kind of narration of war, this war in particular, was something rather new and bold, risky maybe. Sinatras's film was slammed in *New York Times*; another newspaper *The Herald* from Washington called it an *anti-war* film. But one could say as well: it is an opportunist film that celebrates the premises of the postwar alliance between the United States and Japan. The message, at the end of the film, is rather vague: "Nobody ever wins"—the kind of logo one can expect to have on his/her next T-shirt bought in a sophisticated "alternative" shop.

What matters for a reflection on "the island" as an imaginary topography is the relation that is established here between the island as "world apart" and experimentation of counter-behaviors in the context of war: not only talking with the enemy, trading with him, helping him, but *deconstructing* hostility, making the very notion of the enemy become volatile and indistinct, and undermining the vision of a world divided into friends and enemies.

In the same way as Huston's and Boorman's films, the island appears to be the most propitious *topos* (place) for reconstructing human community torn apart by war conditions. In *None but the Braves* too, the ambition of the filmmaker is to restore humanity of yesterday's enemy (it is an insistently *humanist* film, a bit suave and smooth, in Sinatra's crooner style) by displaying his moral qualities. But, before all, what matters is to display a "good image" of him by making use of the very elementary (but most efficient, in the realm of movie-making) device which simply consists in *making him look nice and kind*—as is the Japanese lieutenant, by contrast with his subordinate, a fanatic militarist whose face and manners are those of rude and wild "Asians" (in Western terms). The good intention of the humanist filmmaker is, of course, to re-design the portrait of yesterday's enemy—not a quasi-animal, but a handsome Oriental gentleman.

Let's remember at this place that in the realm of movie-making or according to filmic language, moral qualities always have to be *embodied*, that is, become visible for the spectator by being incarnated by or incorporated in a body. This is the reason why characters who convey, display, and embody strong moral qualities, in Hollywood (color) films, usually have *blue* eyes, as does

Sinatra (and for this reason, the characters were rarely played by Asians).

Let's remember too that this sort of well-intentioned film perfectly shows what the *palimpsest effect* of film-making can be: the pleasant appearance of the Japanese officer makes other less gracious features and silhouettes disappear—those of the grimacing Japanese henchmen and torturers in uniforms who have peopled dozens of propaganda films such as *Behind the Rising Sun* (1943), *The Purple Heart* (1944) or *Objective Burma* (1945). (Figure 4)
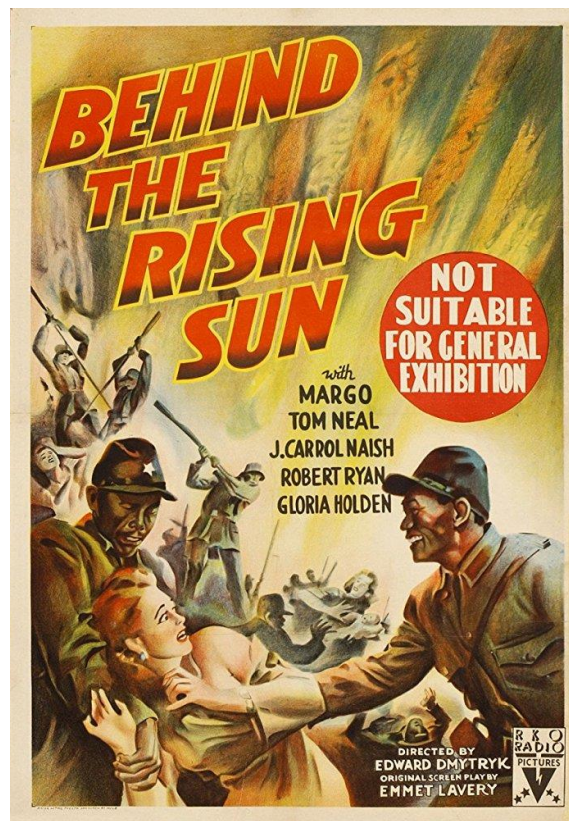
Figure 4 Film poster of *Behind the Rising Sun*

Of course, the island this film deals with, the plot, the characters—all is imaginary. But *None but the Braves* was shot in Hawaii, that is, on an island which is part of the United States and where many inhabitants are from the Japanese origin. Furthermore, this film is a well-balanced co-production: a part of the crew came from Japan; the Japanese crew was in charge of the special effects; the actors who played the Japanese soldiers were Japanese nationals, etc. The message or the spirit of the film manifests itself in the conditions of its shooting. It is this intertwining of the "fable" of the film with the material conditions of its making which is here interesting—the direct encounter of "utopia" as a moral, political and philosophical issue with

the very tangible world of business and industry.

I would certainly not assume that all the films having the island as their main *topos* when they reenact the war in the Pacific are more or less inspired by the utopian feelings or inclinations. It's just the opposite: it is blatant that most of them have "the island" as their field or background because this war consisted, for a great part of it, in conquering islands or reconquering them, either big islands or small islands, some out of strategic importance and some just on the way of a protagonist of this war. In most of these films, "the island" is just a tactical matter—how to stage a landing on a beach, how to depict bitter fights on a mountainous island, etc. Many of these films even expose the motto "island" in their title—*Wake Island* (1942), one of the first Hollywood films on the Pacific war, and *No Man is an Island* (1962) —and still keep at a great distance from any utopian inspiration. They just reenact the war in the Pacific in the spirit of a patriotic/heroic narration, they don't *step aside* from the cinematic "grand récit" of this war as the *just war* par excellence.

I focused in this paper exclusively on Western films, Hollywood films actually, for the good reason that I don't know if utopia is a notion that can travel so easily and be transferred to other cultural areas. In the West, utopia has not appeared suddenly out of the blue, it is related to historical and cultural conditions and this is why, in particular, the critical function of utopia (starting from Thomas More) has to be "mapped." It's inseparable from various contexts and *topoi* and nobody can take for granted that similar configurations exist in East Asian cultures and, consequently, in East Asian films. Heterotopias in the Foucaultian sense of *espaces autres* certainly can be spotted or located in East Asian societies, according to my own experience, but this is another story. What I find fascinating in the Hollywood films I have mentioned is the way they return to the sources of utopia, as René Schérer does. That is a resort to the power of imagination in order to challenge the violence of the present—total war in that case. The recourse to utopia is at this place a conduct of resistance, a soft but insistent music that conveys the affect of endurance in the face of the disaster—an affect which the Jewish-German poet Heinrich Heine (2006 [1844]) gave an allegoric form and expression to in his famous poem "*Trotz alledem*," or "In Spite of All," "Nevertheless."

Utopian images or splinters can be spotted in other films that focus on the *topos* "island" in the general configuration of the war in the Pacific. This is in very different directions. In *South Pacific* (1958), for example, that is a rather hilarious operetta in the post-Offenbach Broadway

style, the Pacific War is just an improbable backdrop for variations on kitsch exotic and gay motives, some sort of sophisticated and ironical Orientalism—"the island" as the enchanted and mysterious topography where the clash of arms and the horrors of war miraculously vanish. In *The Thin Red Line* (1998), one of the greatest films on the war in the Pacific, utopian images suddenly appear in the landscape after a bloody battle—a peaceful aboriginal village, a dream beach, a child playing with a puppy, etc. Utopia is here just an evanescent sign of life in a heavenly landscape devastated by war—life goes on, or rather, life works hard at regenerating itself patiently, *nevertheless*.

Notes on contributor

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