THE TOKYO TRIAL: REFLECTIONS ON VISUALITY, TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUE AND MONUMENTALITY

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The Tokyo Trial (Dōngjīng Shěnpàn, Gao Qunshu, 2006) is a Chinese film made in the context of the commemorations for the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Second Sino-Japanese War. Along with other archives and publications related to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, this film has become what Pierre Nora (2008: 21) calls a *lieu de mémoire*. While on the one hand it conforms to and reinforces the official historiography of the Second World War, on the other it explores possible ways of transcending the national or ethnographic narrative frameworks of Chinese cinema.

The film's examination of the ambivalence between monumentality and dialogue offers a much-needed perspective for analysing Chinese films about the Second World War, with a view to better understanding the country's post-war memory and nation-building project. The aim of this article is to explore the dilemmas faced by post-colonial subjects caught between "'first world' imperialism and 'third world' nationalism"[1] (Chow, 1995: 23) in the narration of historical traumas, and to establish a dialogue and possible resonances between Rey Chow's notion of cinema as cultural translation (1995) and other theoretical frameworks in cultural, visual and memory studies.

VISUALISED MODERNITY AND SPLIT SUBJECTIVITY

While a student in Japan in the early 20th century, the Chinese intellectual Lu Xun (1881-1936) attended the projection of propaganda slides taken by Japanese forces, including one showing the execution of a Chinese prisoner suspected of spying during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). The shocking nature of this image inspired Lu Xun to launch a project of national salvation through literature, while the event itself became part of China's national cultural memory[2] (Assmann, 1992:

5). Throughout the 20th century, its symbolic quality was reinforced through its repeated use in different cultural products, so that it acquired a kind of monumentality through its association with the awakening of the modern Chinese intellectual consciousness.

The relationship between visual violence and the production of a post-colonial subjectivity revealed by this event also caught the attention of Rey Chow. In her analysis of Lu Xun, Chow (1995: 6) argues that the moment when the young Chinese student in a Japanese classroom sees his compatriots observing an execution signifies the forcible exposure the post-colonial subject's nascent self-awareness to a violence that splits it between the "viewing subject" and the "object viewed". According to Chow (1995: 10), although they harboured doubts about the capacity of literature to operate as a self-sufficient system of meaning or to tackle the huge transformations being brought about by modernity, representative figures of modern Chinese literature such as Lu Xun turned to literary expression. It could even be argued that the decision to turn back to literature constituted a symbolic attempt to heal the split between the "viewing subject" and the "viewed object". Underlying this idea is the hypothesis that the visual violence caused by the division within the post-colonial subject is not limited to that particular moment but becomes an ongoing structural trauma. Depictions of the violence of war and colonialism, along with the construction of the memories and post-memories (Hirsch, 2012: 4) associated with them, often have to expose or transcend the structural trauma of a split subject.

The recurring evocation and artistic recreation of Lu Xun's experience by different groups reveals the importance of cultural memory associated with trauma for nation building in the Third World. The trauma and victory chosen for remembrance have taken on an important legitimising role in the construction of national identity (Wang, 2012: 21), to which audiovisual media have also made significant contributions. Indeed, images of war violence are particularly effective for reinforcing identities based on collective historical traumas. This means that filmmakers committed to exploring alternative narratives (although always contingent on the immediacy of the image) need to decide how they will expose or transcend the inherent violence, while reflecting on the possibility of disconnecting the trauma from nationalist narratives. In China specifically, the tension between personal memory and official memory is even more complex: researchers such as Kirk Denton argue that both tend to be totalised or co-opted in a nationalised framework, with the result that each individual's relationship with the past runs the risk of being repressed (Denton, 2014: 11). This makes negotiating with the dominant discourse and exploring different narrative strategies a very difficult task.

In this sense, *The Tokyo Trial* (2006) is a valuable object of study, as it offers a highly original exploration of the narration of historical traumas, although it also suffers from certain limitations. The film, directed by Gao Qunshu, recounts the experience of the judge Mei Ju-ao and the Chinese delegation to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, while at the same time depicting the spiritual crisis afflicting post-war Japan, as witnessed by the Chinese judge. The director has chosen not to depict the atrocities directly, opting instead to show fragments of a fictional Japanese family's life in order to show the wounds left by the war—an approach that is quite novel for Chinese cinema. To some extent, Gao Qunshu makes an effort to establish new power dynamics in relation to the act of viewing, developing strategies that differentiate his film from most Chinese war narratives, which have generally adopted a national or ethnographic framework that positions the victims as spectacles.

The effort to reconstruct the power dynamics in relation to the gaze is expressed in at least two

significant ways: by avoiding direct depictions of the atrocities of the war; and by eschewing the use of autoethnographic strategies. In her description of the strategies commonly employed by China's Fifth Generation filmmakers (such as Zhang Yimou or Chen Kaige), Chow (1995: 38) uses the term autoethnography[3] to argue that their practice of exhibiting what is (constructed as) natural, primitive and third-world destabilises the distinction between "us" and "them". In this way, the visual power relation in an autoethnographic framework is defined as a situation where "'viewed object' is now looking at 'viewing subject' looking" (Chow, 1995: 180-181). The autoethnographic strategy would prove at once seductive and deceptive: although it has earned these filmmakers recognition at international festivals, there is no doubt that autoethnography runs the risk of portraying China's internal *Other* (i.e. women and children) as embodiments of the "primitive", as Chow points out (1995: 21). This means that such a strategy to a large extent involves a reproduction of existing power dynamics.

Gao Qunshu's rejection of autoethnography in *The Tokyo Trial* reflects both his refusal to represent the Chinese as primitive and an ambivalence towards the identification of China as a national entity in the position of victim. There are no stimulating visuals in the form of either direct depictions of atrocities or primitive folk culture symbols, and the narrative is located in the chambers of the Tribunal, presenting a civilising trial to judge war crimes. In other words, instead of depictions of the primitive, the filmmaker has consciously chosen to go in the opposite direction, to present the Chinese as emissaries of civilisation vested with judicial authority. In one significant scene, where a few members of the delegation are talking to the owner of a local tavern, a Japanese woman who speaks fluent Chinese, they mention China's military expansion during its pre-modern imperial period. Such a reference to China's imperial past is unusual in Chinese films, as it represents a kind of abandonment of the cinematic fascination with the myth of an authentic, primitive Chinese culture. Although this scene is not directly related to the trial, it offers an insight into the director's creative objective to maintain a sceptical attitude towards the fascination with nationalist glory.

The character of Mei is essential to the accomplishment of the director's creative intentions. Not only does he embody China's role as a national entity in the post-war international political order, but he also provides personal testimony related to post-war Japan. In light of Chow's analysis of Lu Xun, it is apparent that the split described by Chow between viewing subject and viewed object is fleetingly and symbolically resolved through Mei's perspective. The transformation of the violent gaze into a retrospective view charged with redemptive potential constitutes a paradigm shift that is both promising and necessary for post-colonial subjects. In this context, Mei's power to look and his ability to represent justice for the victims are briefly combined. The Chinese portrayed on screen are neither passive victims of imperialist violence nor apathetic spectators watching an execution; instead, they are witnesses casting a compassionate retrospective gaze over the ruins of war. This gives the character certain qualities typical of an external observer, whose view of the war's aftermath is similar to the kind of retrospective contemplation that contemporary spectators might have of the judicial proceedings and the historical period.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE VIOLENT GAZE INTO A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW CHARGED WITH REDEMPTIVE POTENTIAL CONSTITUTES A PARADIGM SHIFT THAT IS BOTH PROMISING AND NECESSARY FOR POST-COLONIAL SUBJECTS

Power dynamics in relation to the gaze are subverted in this film by merging the contemporary spectator's view with Mei's to establish a perspective that is both embodied and retrospective, an heir to the historical trauma but with moral authority. For Chinese viewers who possess this post-memory, the scenes establishing the beginning of the war, the criminal guilt of the defendants, etc., reveal how the official historiography was constructed. In addition to acting as a participant in an important historical event, Mei's character is also vested with *extrahistorical* and *metahistorical* attributes: what really matters is his compassionate retrospective view and his location at the crucial points of the historiography.

There is a clear effort to turn this historical event into a quintessential *lieu de mémoire* that the audience can return to; a space constructed by films, publications and commemorations that also contribute to revitalising the official historiography of the war. By transforming commemorative activities into everyday practices, national historical narratives have come to constitute an important element of transgenerational cultural memory. These everyday practices offer a micro-level view of the symbiosis between nation, memory and history described by Pierre Nora (2008: 23).

According to Nora (2008: 172), commemorations transpose violent memories into ink-written history, while proclaiming their future orientation and regulating the impact of traumatic memories of the past. In third-world nation-building, commemorations not only provide the community with a centripetal force, but also offer contingent and hybrid identities a temporary, symbolic stability. According to Li Xiaoping (2000: 201), nation-building in the Third World involves shifting from the conception of the nation as a temporally coherent entity towards a spatial understanding of the nation, i.e. as an entity adapted to a global time-space organised on the basis of the nation-state. The debates in the film about the seating arrangements in the tribunal clearly reflect this issue, while also revealing that China's national identity depends not only on shared traumatic memories and past glories, but also on its participation in the post-war international order as one of the powerful nations on the winning side. This achieves a momentary reconciliation between the past and the future, between the temporal and spatial conceptions of the nation, while establishing a coherence in modern Chinese historiography.

Li Xiaoping (2000: 194) argues that the paradox of Chinese nationalism lies in the fact that the quest for a coherent, autonomous and authentic nation is founded on incoherent, relational and hybrid articulations. In other words, both the split experienced by the post-colonial subject and that subject's ambivalence towards a historical awareness marked by discontinuity or a national identity based on hybrid and unstable elements, even within what at least appears to be a coherent narrative, can only be reconciled symbolically.

A SYMBOLIC SUTURE AND NEW FRACTURES

When the split is symbolically sutured, two new fractures emerge: on the one hand, from the significant divergences between different Asian countries, and between these countries and the West, in the "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2005: 15) in relation to the Second World War, posing serious obstacles to dialogue and cultural translation; and on the other, from the fact that by accepting the historiography established by the Tokyo Trial, the film simultaneously adopts the deficiencies inherent in the judicial process itself.

The historical event on which *The Tokyo Trial* is based, the Military Tribunal for the Far East (1946-1948), continued the paradigm established by the Nuremberg Trials of holding specific individuals accountable for the war crimes commit-

ted, while at the same time it made more obvious compromises based on post-war geopolitical considerations[4] and the marked divisions on the panel of judges itself. Critics who question the impartiality of the Nuremberg Trials argue that they were determined by the power of the victors over the vanquished, rather than on any inherent superiority of the Allies. Such criticisms have also been applied to the Tokyo Trial, heightened by the added consideration of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States (Ōnuma, 2009: 4). In this regard, the Japanese intellectual Takeuchi Yoshimi (1959) suggested that Japan should not be held accountable to the victorious Western powers, but instead should answer to the Asian countries that suffered from Japanese colonialism and its imperialist war, such as China. Ōnuma Yasuaki (2009: 21), a specialist in international law, categorically asserts that the Tokyo Trial effectively overlooked Asia and that the inclusion on the judicial panel of colonial powers such as Britain, France and the Netherlands, all of which had participated in colonial domination on the Asian continent, reflected a "civilising arrogance". According to Ōnuma (2009: 22), the court "selected the defendants in accordance with the historical perspective of the Pacific War," leading the United States to focus the charges almost exclusively on Tōjō's cabinet, in the context of the attack on Pearl Harbor, while allowing Kwantung Army officers such as Ishiwara Kanji to evade prosecution (Ōnuma, 2009: 26). China and the other Asian nations that had suffered the horrors of war and colonisation therefore had a legitimate basis for demanding justice, yet that legitimacy had been undermined by the fact that the proceedings were controlled by Western powers such as the United States.

In light of the above, the cinematic depiction of this trial requires a particularly cautious approach. China's legitimate right to hold the enemy accountable for the war may be unquestionable, but the same cannot be said of the West, and especially not of the United States. The shadow of the atomic bomb looms over the Western post-memory of the Second World War, an unmistakeable image evoking a potent symbolic violence. In fact, the humanitarian disaster resulting from that moment is to some extent overshadowed by the visual sign of the explosion itself. In general terms, it could be argued that the West has turned a hypervisible and highly symbolic mushroom cloud into a metaphor for apocalyptic horror, without necessarily grasping the unfathomable humanitarian disaster it represents. Meanwhile, the Chinese feel that their own suffering in the war has never been sufficiently acknowledged or reflected on. For example, victims of wartime sexual exploitation faced huge difficulties in their struggle to demand accountability and obtain reparations. Other Asian countries experienced the replacement of the former Western invaders with the new Japanese colonisers, yet this experience lacked the visibility that it warranted in narratives about the war, and the Military Tribunal's trials of Japanese atrocities committed in the Philippines has also received scant attention. As for Japan itself, although Ōnuma (2009: 4) recognises a similar delimitation of culpability for war crimes as the one established by Takeuchi, he points out that the Tokyo Trial has been consolidated as a cultural memory that functions both as a psychological altar at which all the blame was placed on villains such as Tōjō and as a reflection of the hypocrisy of the Allies. For this reason, there is necessarily a vast difference in the distribution of the sensible between Asian nations and the Western world, which to some extent also results in big differences between the two regions in terms of the mechanisms used to construct the post-memory of the Second World War in the media. Assuming that cultural translation needs to be geared towards mutual understanding and not merely towards reinforcing the idea of spectacle normally assigned to non-Western cultures, such differences in the distribution

of the sensible will obviously pose huge obstacles to the effectiveness of this translation process.

At the same time, the film fails to effectively express its questioning of this colonial notion of civilisation, and consequently it also fails to distinguish civilisation clearly from the power exercised by the victorious Western powers. Although it avoids the obsession with the primitive and the primal that characterises the autoethnographic paradigm, the film nevertheless exhibits a fascination with the *civilised*. Given that autoethnography reproduces existing power dynamics by depicting *internal Others* as more primitive, the acceptance of this historiography, including its "disregard for Asia" and its "selection of defendants according to the historical perspective of the Pacific War" (Ōnuma, 2009: 21, 22, 26), itself constitutes a reproduction of existing power dynamics to some extent. This acceptance of the colonialist notion of civilisation also seems to fall into the trap of universalism.

This clearly reflects the tension identified by Rey Chow between "'first world' imperialism and 'third world' nationalism" (1995: 23), as the narrative strategies required for a film to find success at home often differ from those necessary for a successful cultural translation within existing knowledge-power structures.[5] In addition to contributing to the construction of China's national memory of the Second World War, *The Tokyo Trial* attempts to engage in a cultural dialogue or translation that is almost inevitably fraught or incomplete. This dialogue clearly targets not only an imagined West, but also what Maruyama Masao referred to as the Japanese "community of repentance"[6] (1977).

Given that, as Chow argues (1995: 180), spectacle constitutes the main element in the intercultural representation of non-Western subjects, the split described above cannot be completely erased by the establishment of new power dynamics in relation to the gaze. Chow (1995: 37, 42) argues that primitive passions not only reflect a fascination with nature and primitivism, but also include myths about the future and progress, associated both with nostalgia and retrospection, and with the certainty of China's centrality and uniqueness. While this film cannot be said to convey a completely linear historical view of progress, its fascination with civilisation clearly explains what Chow (1995: 37) identifies as the other facet of primitive passions: the enchantment with the radically new. The film effectively affirms a new international order and a new way of conceptualising the nation, whereby history is artificially divided into old and new chapters. What Chow calls primitive passions can therefore also be interpreted as the ambivalence experienced by the post-colonial subject when faced with a visualised modernity. When the split subjectivity is symbolically sutured, new fractures emerge.

ALTHOUGH IT AVOIDS THE OBSESSION WITH THE PRIMITIVE AND THE PRIMAL THAT CHARACTERISES THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PARADIGM, THE FILM NEVERTHELESS EXHIBITS A FASCINATION WITH THE *CIVILISED*

EMOTIONAL COMMUNITY AND IMAGINED HOMOGENEITY

A significant strategy proposed in this film to overcome the huge difficulty of articulating a transnational dialogue is to posit the possibility of intersubjectivity on the basis of a morality intuited through a sense of emotional community and on the idea of universal affective reactions. Specifically, the film establishes this emotional community in a narrative that represents civilians in both China and Japan as victims of the violence of war. In this sense, compassion for the victims and outrage at the war crimes constitute the intuited morality and the emotional response

that the filmmaker aims to elicit. This emotional community is a kind of prerequisite for the circulation of symbols or memories across national boundaries.

Although the characters of the various members of the fictional Japanese family portrayed in the film are highly stereotypical and insufficiently developed, they convey each individual's spiritual dilemma and the difficulties associated with psychological reconstruction in the post-war period: the young man who fervently believed in extreme nationalism, whose inner world collapses with the Japanese defeat; the soldier returning from the Chinese front who is tormented by remorse and trauma over the atrocities he has witnessed; and the woman who was tricked by war propaganda into becoming a victim of sexual exploitation. By avoiding a homogeneous depiction of an entire community as criminals, as cogs in a deranged war machine, or as ludicrous villains in a heroic narrative, the film eschews the old narrative framework for films of this kind.

Most of the scenes depicting daily life after the war take place in indoor settings with warm lighting, creating a soft, nostalgic visual effect that contrasts with the tribunal scenes, which are dominated by a palette of cold grey tones, and with the traumatised and chaotic psychological worlds of the characters, marked by trauma and chaos.

While the film cannot be described as explicitly nostalgic, the approach taken seems to subtly evoke a longing for a lost world, for an idealised past: the harmonious life this family might have had in a time free of the material harm of war and the spiritual malaise of fascism. It could even be argued that although the film does not reflect an obsession with the myth of Chinese authenticity, it does seem to suggest a veiled kind of Japanese authenticity. As paradoxical as it may seem, this approach is reminiscent of the emphasis on everyday life that characterised Ozu Yasujirō's films after his return to Japan from the war against China.[7]

This *lost world of yesterday* is not exclusive to Japan but also belongs to other countries that suffered the horrors of war. This shared longing for the same idealised past may create an emotional community that transcends national identity, offering greater openness and fluidity, and thus encouraging a "reparative reading" (Sedgwick, 2002: 123).[8] However, it is important to acknowledge that this community is unstable (as a narrative potentially favourable to a "reparative reading" could still become bogged down in nationalist interpretative frameworks), and its foundation on the idea of universal affective responses also risks ignoring internal diversity, leading to an imagined homogeneity with the Other. This, in turn, could obscure the effectiveness of the dialogue.

This imagined homogeneity can be examined by means of an analysis of the singing scenes in the film. The Japanese film critic Inuhiko Yomota (2022) points out that Ōshima's films also contain

Image I. The scenes depicting post-war life are mostly interior shots with warm lighting





Image 2. Different colour schemes used for the scenes of the trial and of post-war life



Image 3. Different colour schemes used for the scenes of the trial and of post-war life

numerous singing scenes, and he classifies the singers into four categories: (1) those who join the choir in the midst of a crowd; (2) those who sing at a gathering; (3) those who sing to themselves; and (4) those who, for whatever reason, are unable to join the choir. Yomota believes that the act of singing—especially choral singing—may be used to convey a shared sense of nostalgia, an ideology or a community identity. Consequently, there are always people who are excluded from the shared experience or the community and cannot join the choir, in which case their inability to sing is expressed as a form of either voluntary or enforced silence.

In *The Tokyo Trial*, the singing scene occurs when the members of the Chinese delegation and diners at a tavern sing together. However, this moment of harmony is violently cut short when the owner of the tavern—the Japanese woman mentioned above who speaks Chinese fluently—is shot dead by an unidentified attacker. Although not made explicit, it is suggested that the killer is a radical Japanese nationalist, no doubt driven to frustration by his country's defeat. The metaphor is clear: China and Japan might have progressed together towards reconciliation and friendship, but fascism is the common enemy lurking in the shadows, intent on destroying any chance of such a future. It would be rash to claim that this perception is wrong, or that vigilance against a possible fascist resurgence is entirely unnecessary. However, the treatment of this scene seems to be founded once again on a vague, poorly defined notion of public sentiment, rather than an exploration of the internal mechanisms that make fascism appealing to some. In reality, the absence of more thoughtful discussion is not unique to this film. This absence has been pointed out by left-wing Japanese thinkers such as Takeuchi Yoshimi (1959) and Maruyama Masao (1977) in their reflections on pre-war Japan and the role of intellectuals; the culturalist approach of the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946) also had a profound influence on this question, and the Dutch scholar Ian Buruma (1994) highlighted the incomplete nature of the post-war Japanese political transition. However, the whitewashing of Japan's war crimes has driven researchers such as Takahashi Tetsuya (1999) and Ōnuma Yasuaki (2009) to devote considerable attention to clarifying culpability for the acts committed during the war. Most debates about Japanese fascism have adopted the frameworks established by Takeuchi and Maruyama, resulting in a simplistic understanding of the roots of fascism and extreme nationalism that ignores the complexity of Japanese society. As Yomota notes in his analysis of Ōshima, it is important to rec-

ognise that Japan's post-war spiritual crisis was complex, marked by ruptures and gaps, and by intense confrontations between different ideologies, suggesting that the imagined homogeneity may simply never have existed.

The question of how to evaluate this historical event and its legacy is not easily answered. Many scholars studying the Tokyo Trial point out that the victorious Western powers' own war crimes led many in Japan to view the proceedings as a case of "the wolf reproaching the lion" (Ōnuma, 2009: 16), undermining serious reflection on the crimes Japan had committed in East and Southeast Asia. Buruma notes that in 1953 a petition "demanding the release of all Japanese war criminals", on the basis that the trial "had the character of revenge" on the part of the victors, received more than 15 million signatures (1994: 179). Recounting his meeting with the granddaughter of Doihara Kenji, the key conspirator in the Mukden incident and a "Class A" war criminal at the Tokyo Trial, Buruma comments that although she claimed not to be proud of her lineage, her son often mentioned with pride that he was Doihara's great-grandson.

As a result, in subsequent cultural products depicting the event, reconciling a recognition of the trial's inherent problems with a call for a clearer understanding of both the process and the culpability for war crimes is a long and arduous task. It is to be hoped that in time the events will be judged more fully and equitably, and that the truth will not be consigned to oblivion. From this perspective, the monumentality of the film can be considered a response to the memory crisis arising out of what Nora refers to as the "acceleration of history" (2008). While such a response is necessary, post-memory, as a process constantly under construction, should be conducive to a consideration of individuals and their real experiences in history, rather than to a continuous reinforcement of the existing hegemonic discourse.

INTERTEXTUALITY WITH *JUDGMENT AT NUREMBURG* (STANLEY KRAMER, 1961) AND A REFLECTION ON CULPABILITY AND RESPONSE

As noted above, *The Tokyo Trial* reflects an aim to engage in a dialogue that also targets a potential imagined Western spectator familiar with the hegemonic narratives of the war. This section examines the nature of this dialogue and why it could be described as incomplete, representing a starting point rather than a destination.

The first question analysed in this respect is the intertextual relationship the film establishes with Stanley Kramer's *Judgment at Nuremburg* (1961), based on the Nuremberg Trials, in order to identify parallels between the historical events of the Tokyo and Nuremberg tribunals. The influence of classical Hollywood cinema on *The Tokyo Trial* is obvious, as both films begin with the judge-protagonist driving through the ruins of the city where the trial takes place (Nuremberg, Tokyo), expressing regret over the devastation he sees; then, in both cases, the judicial proceedings are juxtaposed with fragments of local life witnessed by the delegation.

Before conducting a comparative analysis of the two films, it is important to consider why the director of *The Tokyo Trial* tries to establish this parallel. Both this film and various publication projects[9] in China related to the Tokyo Trial have sought to establish a connection with the Nuremberg Trials. Ian Buruma's study offers a partial explanation for this tendency. It is a widespread view in both Japan and the West that Nazi Germany was a product of modernity, while atrocities such as the Nanjing massacre and others committed in the context of Japanese imperialist expansion were collateral consequences of military operations rather than systematic actions based on a modern bureaucracy and instrumental rationality, and therefore the two cases not comparable. While recognising the validity of Maruyama



Image 4. Comparison of the opening scenes of the two films, both showing the ruins of war from the perspective of the protagonists

Masao's theory of the "system of irresponsibility" (1963), Buruma argues that no clearly defined totalitarian regime existed in wartime Japan. In other words, there was no figure analogous to Hitler; most of the Japanese war criminals were "autocratic bureaucrats and conservative politicians", while the Emperor himself was exempted from prosecution. This, of course, raised huge obstacles to determinations of culpability. However, the theory of racial superiority prevalent in the dominant Asian nation, along with a cult of the Emperor that vested the imperialist project with the quality of a "holy war", provided the ideological basis for the Japanese war crimes across Asia (Buruma, 1994: 170, 63, 172, 173). The "system of irresponsibility" undoubtedly contributed to what Hannah Arendt (1963) describes as the banality of evil, but it also made it extremely difficult to identify and analyse that evil.

The parallel established in Gao Qunshu's film between the Tokyo and Nuremberg Trials constitutes an implicit refutation of the perspective described above. It is a strategy that enables a wider audience to view the war crimes committed by Japanese forces in a familiar context. In other words, it is necessary not only to translate memory written in blood into history written in ink, but also to transform that history into what would supposedly be a universally intelligible narrative.

The comparative analysis of the two films conducted for this study found that *Judgment at Nuremberg* addresses the issue of war crimes more clearly. It does not skirt around important legal issues, such as the fact that the defendants, from the perspective of the Nazi regime, were not only law-abiding citizens but also celebrated legal experts who never violated any of the laws of their country. Nor does it shy away from the potential ethical problem of who had the right to judge the war crimes committed by the countries that won the war. Moreover, the film reproduces the crucial moment at the Nuremberg Trials when film taken of the liberation of the concentration camps was screened as evidence, and even uses original archival footage of the event. The Nuremberg tribunal's original decision to show these images is undoubtedly a monumental event in visual history, and the direct use of the original footage in Kramer's film further confirms the power of visuality. While the film's treatment of its topic could be questioned on ethical grounds today, it may simply reflect a particular historical conception in 1961, at a time when the end of the war was much more recent, when the mass media was amplifying the power of visuality: the idea that images can anchor an unimaginable horror to a visual reality, as evidence of an irrefutable historical truth and not merely the story written by the victors. Consequently, there should also be justice within our view that can be pursued collectively. Paradoxically, although the combination of the mass media and the hegemony of visuality contains extreme symbolic violence, and the mechanisms of power determining the selection and circulation of images raise ethical dilemmas, the Nuremberg paradigm demonstrates that recorded visual reality



Image 5. Preparations for the screening of the evidence filmed during the liberation of the concentration camps

became the most direct medium for international reflection on atrocities, and for the quest for universal justice. This is perhaps the great paradox of visual history.

The Tokyo Trial, on the other hand, makes no direct use of images to depict the atrocities. Beyond the creative intentions discussed above, this choice should be understood as the result of a historical fact: the Tokyo Trial, in contrast to Nuremberg, depended more on witnesses and documentary evidence than on filmed evidence. However, this approach prevents the film from achieving the logical coherence that characterises *Judgment at Nuremberg*, which on the one hand uses the polyphony of debates to invite the spectator to consider the ethical deficiencies of the proceedings, and on the other hand uses the potency of visuality to transcend the notion of a mere power struggle between winners and losers, preventing the film's message from being reduced to the idea that *there is no truth, only interpretation*. Conversely, although by omitting explicit images of the atrocities *The Tokyo Trial* manages to avoid running the risk of an overly symbolic representation of a humanitarian catastrophe, the absence of a rigorous ethical and legal debate results in a monumentality that partly overshadows the film's effectiveness as a dialogue. While the assumption that culpability for the atrocities is self-evident may be interpreted as a deliberate choice that respects the inevitable emotional reaction in China, it seems important to point out, as Takeuchi (1959) and Ōnuma (2009) have done, that Japan needed be held accountable primarily to Asian nations, and not to the victorious Western powers, for its war crimes and colonialism. This would necessitate avoiding an excessively monumental representation of the trial, which is essential to explore potential spaces for dialogue. As Ōnuma (2009) has suggested, the context of the trial may need to be reassessed from a decidedly decolonised and Asian-centred perspective.

Describing cinema as cultural translation, Chow (1995: 182) points out that the word "translation" itself is etymologically linked to both "tradition" and "betrayal". What emerges out of

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translation is therefore perhaps still difference, or in Chow's terms, an "ontological hierarchy of languages" (1995: 184). For *The Tokyo Trial*, the two poles that connect the word "translation" are dialogue and monumentality. Reconsidering the film from this perspective, what emerges from its incomplete dialogue is precisely the dilemma of the post-colonial subject and the difficulty of resisting the hegemony of universalism and national discourse. At the same time, the mechanism that distinguishes subjects according to whether or not they deserve to be mourned (Butler, 2006) becomes even more violent with the omnipresence of the mass media. This raises the question of the ethical perspective that should be adopted by filmmakers, as cultural translators, and spectators born in the post-war era.

In her theory of the civil contract of photography, Ariella Azoulay (2008) defines the responsibility of the viewer as a "response-ability". Indeed, this responsibility entails an ability to respond to the Other, which constitutes the starting point of the ethics explored by Derrida (2000) in his book *The Gift of Death*. However, Derrida points out that responding to one group of Others may often involve leaving another group in the shadows. The question of how to respond to the invisible Others, the forgotten, the ones screened out by the selection mechanisms of the collective memory, those not considered worthy of being remembered, constitutes a responsibility that must be taken on by both the recorder and the viewer of the images. When Takahashi Tetsuya discusses "post-war responsibility", he points precisely to this dimension: "As long as we forget our responsibility to the dead, no present-centred or future-oriented solution will suffice" (1999: 163). The post-war generation, which perhaps only possesses a mediated post-memory of the war, must not be limited to a passive acceptance of this post-memory: we can and must respond to the Other, to the dead, to the potential redeemer who was not given a presence in history.

A narrative about historical trauma should therefore not stop at merely establishing a dialogue, searching for an answer or erecting a monument. Rather, both creators and spectators need to recognise that a monument implies something completed, while our response to the Other should never have an endpoint. The construction of a multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009) of historical trauma should also have this ultimately ethical orientation. This is perhaps the most radical revelation and the most essential means of overcoming the structural trauma of a history in images.

CONCLUSIONS

As this article has shown, *The Tokyo Trial* expresses the ambiguous artistic approach of its creators, which swings between dialogue and monumentality, and reflects the reality that an intuited morality based on emotional community cannot replace more rigorous and articulated debates. However, the conclusion offered here is an exhortation rather than a criticism. If a film, in its capacity as a form of cultural translation, as has been suggested here, can transcend the pigeonholing of the non-Western as a viewed object, if it can initiate a transnational dialogue and produce intersubjectivity, Chinese filmmakers should actively explore new narrative strategies and pro-

vide their own answers to these questions. For now, cultural translation continues to display limitations in its endeavour to ensure mutual understanding between subjects conditioned by different hegemonic discourses and situated in different cultures. However, taking the response to the Other as an ethical orientation, it may be possible to go further than mere mutual tolerance.

NOTES

1 Although the categories of "first world" and "third world" may be excessively generic and outdated, as Aijaz Ahmad (1992) has pointed out, Rey Chow uses this binary opposition in her analysis of Chinese culture and cinema. For this study it has been decided that the use of "third world" to refer to non-Western countries subjected to imperialist wars and colonialism facilitates the subsequent development of this discussion. Therefore, in keeping with Chow's approach, these terms are employed here.

2 This article draws on three key concepts from memory studies: cultural memory (Assmann, 1992), referring to the collective memories established in a society through institutions and objects; post-memory (Hirsch, 2012), which describes the relationship of later generations to traumas inherited from their ancestors; and multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009), which proposes that collective memories interact and influence rather than compete with each other.

3 Chow (1995: 38) uses Mary Louise Pratt's term "autoethnography" (1992) to refer to how the colonised deliberately use the way the colonisers view them to represent themselves.

4 The most important of these was MacArthur's agreement to absolve Emperor Shōwa and the entire Japanese royal family of responsibility, limiting the blame to Tōjō Hideki's government.

5 Foucault first systematically defined the relationship between knowledge and power in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), arguing that knowledge cannot be discussed without reference to the subject who is immersed in networks of power.

6 Maruyama Masao (1977) reflects on the passivity of intellectuals in the pre-war period and discusses shared repentance within the intellectual community.

7 The relationship between Ozu's experience taking part in the war against China and his subsequent artistic career is explored by Yomota (2022) in his text on Ōshima Nagisa.

8 Reparative reading is a term coined by Eve Sedgwick (2003), who also uses the term "paranoid reading" to refer to the totalising tendency that subsumes phenomena in an oppressive metanarrative, which is dominant in critical theory. In contrast to this approach, Sedgwick proposes the possibility of a "reparative reading", a potentially more productive interpretation that focuses on assembling and repairing meanings based on fragments.

9 Shanghai Jiao Tong University organised a publishing project consisting of historical archives, testimonies by direct witnesses (including Mei Ju-ao and his descendants) and related research, in addition to establishing an online archive dedicated to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East: http://www.tokyotrial.cn

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THE TOKYO TRIAL: REFLECTIONS ON VISUALITY, TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUE AND MONUMENTALITY

Abstract

Taking the film *The Tokyo Trial* (2006) as a case study, this article explores the dilemmas faced by post-colonial subjects in the narration of historical trauma, as well as their efforts to transcend the structural trauma of visual history and establish new power dynamics related to the gaze. Drawing on Rey Chow's theory of cinema as a discourse of cultural translation (1995), it discusses whether transnational dialogues initiated by non-Western cultures are ultimately confined to showcasing their "to-be-looked-at-ness". At the same time, using cultural representations based on historical events such as the Tokyo and Nuremberg Trials as examples, it examines the responsibility of the post-war generation as an audience.

Key words

Autoethnography; Cultural Translation; Emotional Community; Post-war Responsibility; Monumentality.

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THE TOKYO TRIAL: REFLEXIONES SOBRE LO VISUAL, EL DIÁLOGO TRANSNACIONAL Y LA MONUMENTALIDAD

Resumen

Mediante un análisis de caso de la película *The Tokyo Trial* (2006), este artículo explora los dilemas a los que hacen frente los sujetos poscoloniales al narrar traumas históricos, así como los esfuerzos por trascender el trauma estructural de la historia visual y establecer nuevas relaciones de poder en torno a la mirada. Partiendo de la teoría de Rey Chow sobre el «cine como discurso de traducción cultural» (1995), se discute si los diálogos transnacionales impulsados por culturas no occidentales conducen inevitablemente a una intensificación de su posición espectacular. Asimismo, tomando como ejemplo las representaciones culturales basadas en eventos históricos como los juicios de Tokio y Nuremberg, se reflexiona sobre la responsabilidad de la generación de posguerra como audiencia.

Palabras clave

Autoetnografía; traducción cultural; comunidad emocional; responsabilidad de la posguerra; monumentalidad.

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