The Globalisation of Ego and Alter. An essay in Cultural Semiotics

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Globalisation, as it is known to the common man (as opposed to 'global semiotics' which is not my concern here) is certainly a meeting of cultures, and as such it is comparable to a number of other enterprises of human history, from imperialism to charter trips. Unlike the latter, however, is undoubtedly first and foremost a stereotype — or, to express it in terms of cultural semiotics, it is a model the members of a culture make of other cultures as it relates to their own. Thus it is, in a sense, an expression of 'false consciousness' — but is *does* mean something, only not that which it seems.

Starting out from the rather different views on Ego and Alter formulated by Peirce and Bakhtin, I have attempted to characterise the position of these familiar philosophical personages within the framework of cultural semiotics, as it has been adapted in Lund from the models of the Prague and Tartu schools. The resulting model has earlier been tried out in a confrontation of well-know and thoroughly studied cultural-historical example, such as the conquest of America (cf. Sonesson 2000b). More recently, I have been interested in using the model to understand another kind of meetings of cultures which is more difficult to circumscribe, because we are in the middle of it, and it may not be much more than an ideological position, i.e. globalised society (cf. Sonesson 2002). The study of the conquest of America may be of some help in this enterprise, however, because, from the present point of view, it could be considered a globalisation on a smaller scale: but it at once strikes us a being asymmetric, while we would like to think of globalisation as being the opposite.

Two lessons from the Tartu school

In my earlier work on cultural semiotics, I have retained two lessons from the Tartu school, on which its followers have certainly insisted less: that it is not about Culture

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per se, but about the model members of a Culture make of their Culture; and that this model itself is more involved with relationships *between* cultures (as well as subcultures, cultural spheres, and so on) than with a Culture in its singularity.[1] This is not to deny that a model of Culture easily becomes a factor *in* Culture; thus, for instance, those who insist that contemporary Culture is a society of information and/or a global village certainly contribute to transforming it into just that. As to the second limitation, relations between cultures may be seen as partly defining what cultures are, if it is not all too unfashionable to retain some aspects of the structuralist lesson.

When I first started working on the Tartu school models, I had a didactic purpose: I wanted to explain the conception of the Tartu school to my students. However, as I continued my work, trying to account for differences not taken into account by the school, correcting contradictions, and integrating new historical-cultural examples, I have come to realise that this is a new variant of the semiotics of culture — one which is, however, heavily indebted to the work initiated by Lotman, Uspenskij, Ivanov and many others first formulating the theses for the study of cultural texts during the celebrated summer schools at Tartu university. But I now want to make it clear from the start that in the process what seems like marginal remarks to the Tartu conceptions has become essential to my approach: it is the business of this brand of cultural semiotics to account for the models cultures build of themselves *as they relate to other cultures*.

Globalisation, if it exists, must be understood as the process that renders society more and more 'global' every day. But 'global society', before being anything else, is a model (or, as we are going to see, several models which are rather different) that we who live in a society create, with the purpose of describing our own society. This model of global society (just as all other cultural models) implies an opposition to other societies, which are all more or less, or perhaps not at all, global, and which can be differently distributed in space and/or time, or even only from an ideological point of view. In the case of the model of global society there is obviously an opposition in

time: we tend to think that previous societies were less 'global' than ours (as the Middle Ages surely were, but also industrial society). In the most glorious variant of our model, however, there is no opposition in space: global society includes everything. Perhaps others can admit that societies still exist that are less global, at least for the moment. Finally, there can be groups which, living in the same space and at the same time as we do, also do not participate in the model: in our case, for example, poor people and (paradoxically) the immigrants.

A model is of course a sign (and, more exactly, a relatively iconic sign). So, does this mean that global society does not exist? In a way I think this is the right conclusion to draw. However, there are a number of phenomena and processes which *do* exist that more or less justify the model, which cannot, however, be described simply using the term 'globalisation'. In terms of the Tartu school, 'globalisation' does not exist for 'the other view' — if we are able to find a view outside of (the ideology of) globalisation.

The model, therefore, is a *real effect* of life in society. But it is also an *effective cause* in society: to some extent, we act in certain ways because we think that we live in global society. From that point of view, the model of global society is comparable to many other models that we have developed lately: the models of post-industrial and postmodernist society, of the society of information, and of the society of images. It is comparable also to models created by members of other societies, as the 'Renaissance', a model that has had its effects until recent times, but which, as we now know, corresponded to very few changes in the real life of most people at the time (cf. Burke 1997; 1998; Nordberg 1993; 1996).

Modelling Culture: the Canonical Model

What I will henceforth call the *canonical model* is constructed around a opposition between Nature and Culture by means of which both terms are constituted, in the classical sense of linguistic structuralism, i.e. by mutually defining each other (Fig. 1.). Yet, as we have seen, a fundamental asymmetry is built into the model: Nature is defined from the point of view of Culture, not the opposite. According to the

canonical model, every Culture conceives of itself as Order, opposed to something on the outside, which is seen as Chaos, Disorder, and Barbarism, in other words, as Culture opposed to Nature. In this sense, Nature will include other cultures, not recognised as such by the Cultural mode.[2]

Nature not only includes nature in the everyday sense of the term: the latter must be thought of as the best, or prototypical, instance. Indeed, it is hard to find a better exponent for this model than Colombo, who, when exposed to the unknown cultures of the 'New World', simply treats them on a par with natural phenomena. When he talks about people, it is only as part of the landscape : in long lists of things observed, he will often mention the Indians in-between birds and trees. The first time Colombo meets the Indians, he describes them as being 'naked' ; and he turns out to have the same view on them also in several metaphorical senses. He sees no interest in mentioning the artefacts the Indians use : he believes they lack everything, including language, culture, religion, customs. Therefore, he also fails to discover any differences between the tribes he encounters : they are all alike, as are their languages.

The Inversion of the Canonical Model

This scheme is of course too simple even to do justice to some of the examples given in the writings of the Tartu semioticians. In some cases, a Culture may construe itself as being on the outside, representing Nature and Chaos, while another society plays the role of Culture. To pick the example developed in most of the Tartu articles, Peter the Great and other Russians trying to modernise Russia held this latter view, while the slavophiles, more classically, conceived of Russia as Culture and the Occidental countries as being the Barbaric outsiders. For the last few decades young people all over the world have construed the United States, in this peculiar sense, as being *the* Culture.

If the cultural model is intrinsically egocentric, then Culture will always be where the Ego, the subject having the model, is, just as in proxemics (cf. Sonesson in press b); but we can imagine that this same Ego is projected to another sphere, so that

there is an imaginary Culture which is built up around the projected Ego. In all those cases in which there is non-coincidence between the real and imaginary cultures (and the corresponding egos), we will talk about the *inverted canonical model* (Figure 2). In fact, there are reasons to believe that it is not only spatially (in terms of causal history, i.e. the trajectory from birth, in the sense of time geography) that the subject having the model cannot really move from inside his original Culture. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Sonesson 1998), a close reading of the Tartu school texts shows there to be several conflicting criteria for defining what a text is, and hence what Culture is (since Textuality is that which is inside Culture), and these do not always go together. The non-text is that which is not possible to understand. But, at least, it is also that which we do not care to understand because it is not familiar and/or because we do not ascribe any value to it. Culture may well have been outside Russia for Peter the Great, in terms of attributed value, but in the sense of ease of understanding, it is a good guess that Russia remained more cultural.

This suggests another way in which the *canonical model* is too simple: the limits between texts and non-texts (extra-texts, centro-texts, etc.) will often be different according as different criteria are used, which means that the limits between Culture and Non-culture (Extra-culture, Centre, etc) will also be different: the canonical model is simply the case in which all these different oppositions will map out the same border (cf. Sonesson 1998). In fact, the divide between Nature and Culture in the canonical model, in which all criteria give the same result, is comparable to the limits between dialects, which results from a statistical cumulation of the distribution patterns for different linguistic forms.

Even in this sense, the inverted canonical level, as we have described it above, also remains rather simple, because it only supposes the dissociation of two criteria: that of maximum familiarity (the classical criterion of the Lifeworld) and that of the highest value. To the extent that we define more criteria, more dissociations become possible. However, we will next consider a case which also ordinarily involves the
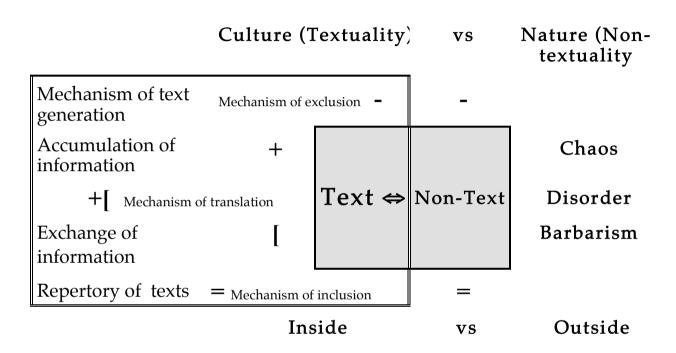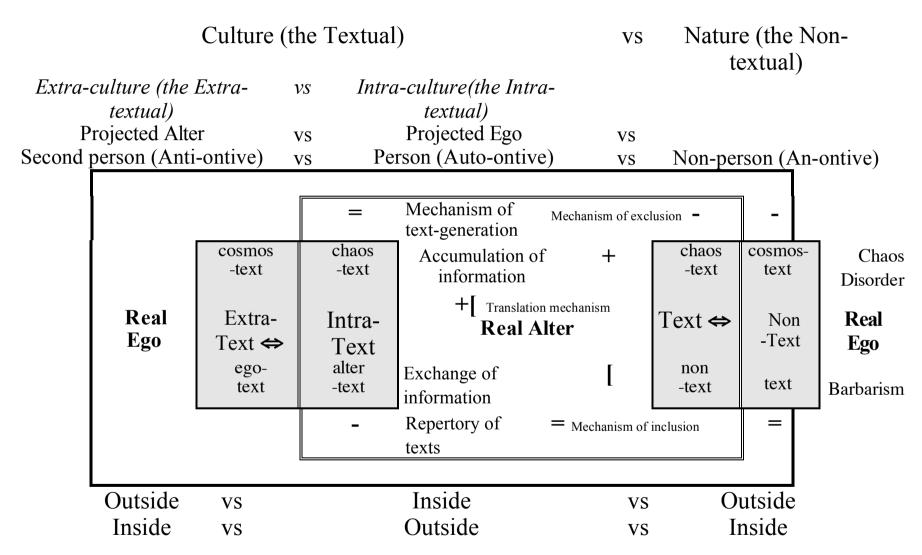
	Culture (Textuality)	vs	Nature (Non-textuality
Mechanism of text generation	Mechanism of exclusion **-**	**-**	
Accumulation of information	**+**		Chaos
	+[Mechanism of translation	Text ⇔ Non-Text	Disorder
Exchange of information	**[**		Barbarism
Repertory of texts	**=** Mechanism of inclusion	**=**	
	Inside	vs	Outside

Fig.1. Canonical Model of Cultural Semiotics

Culture (the Textual)   vs   Nature (the Non-textual)

Extra-culture (the Extra-textual)   *vs*   *Intra-culture(the Intra-textual)*

Projected Alter   vs   Projected Ego   vs

Second person (Anti-ontive)   vs   Person (Auto-ontive)   vs   Non-person (An-ontive)

	cosmos-text	chaos-text	= Mechanism of text-generation	Mechanism of exclusion -		chaos-text	cosmos-text	Chaos Disorder
Real Ego	Extra-Text ⇔ ego-text	Intra-Text alter-text	Accumulation of information + +[Translation mechanism **Real Alter** Exchange of information [			Text ⇔ non-text	Non-Text text	**Real Ego** Barbarism
	-		Repertory of texts	= Mechanism of inclusion			=	

Outside   vs   Inside   vs   Outside

Inside   vs   Outside   vs   Inside

Fig. 2. Projected Ego extension of the Canonical Model

dissociation of the (sets of) criteria, but where they are not simply inverted, but made to delimit smaller or greater territories (in real or only ideological space or time).

The Extended Model as reference and conversation

It certainly seems to be possible for a subject in one Culture to conceive of some other society, cultural sphere or whatever as being *a* Culture, without being part of *his or her* Culture. We may therefore imagine a model in which Culture is opposed not only to Non-Culture (or Nature), but also to Extra-Culture (cf. Fig. 2.). While other have already suggested this, they have given no clear criteria for such a segmentation.[3]

In a famous analysis, Benveniste (1966) has suggested that what is ordinarily termed the pronouns of the first, second, and third persons, should really be considered the result of combining two different dimensions, the *correlation of personality,* which opposes the person to the non-person, and, within the former pole, the *correlation of subjectivity,* which opposes the subject to the non-subject.[4] The traditional third person, in this sense, is no person at all, and it is opposed to two kinds of persons, the one identified with the speaker, and the one identified with the listener. It could be said, then, that Culture is the domain of the subject, or autoontive, while Extra-culture is the domain of the non-subject, or antiontive; Non-culture, finally, is the residence of the Non-person, or anontive. It seems particular proper to describe Non-culture as that which does not properly exist.

For the purpose of cultural semiotics, it seems to me more enlightening to talk about the *axis of conversation* or *dialogue,* joining Ego and Alter, as opposed to the *axis of reference* or *nomination,* which connects the former to the thing meant, or Aliquid. Extra-culture is the one with whom Culture is 'on speaking terms'; Non-culture is the one Culture may at the most be speaking about. In this sense, cultural semiotics becomes, in Milton Singer's (1984) phrase, a real 'conversation of cultures'; but, at the same time, it is a conversation conducted out of reach of other cultures.

In his fascinating study of the conquest of America, Todorov (1984) makes a lot of the differences in the attitude taken by the two cultural heroes of the enterprise, Colombo, on one hand, and Cortez , on the other: while both find themselves faced with a hermeneutical task, the former applies it to things, the latter to people and their society. As we have seen, the attitude of the former is of the kind epitomised by the canonical model. Yet, Todorov is wrong, I think, to say that Colombo takes a totally *asemiotic* attitude. Contrary to Todorov's opinion, the reported facts cannot be taken to indicate a lack of interest in semiotic operations. We also learn from Todorov's book that Colombo is very anxious to give names to all places he encounters, although he obviously knows that they have names already, which testifies to his interest in rewriting the foreign Culture as a text of his own Culture. Segmentation, it should be remembered, is the primordial semiotic operation. But Colombo treats everything, from islands and animals to people, as Non-persons. This is semiosis as reference or nomination, not as conversation.

As he is described by Todorov, Cortez takes a very different attitude from that witnessed in Colombo: first of all he wants to understand the other culture, although he is of course not interested in understanding for understandings' sake. He interprets the world in order to change it. So his first priority when arriving to the New World is to find an interpreter. He is conscious of the symbolic importance of weapons, beyond their value as brute force. He even uses the knowledge about the other culture which he acquires for his own purposes. The most notable example of the latter is the way he takes advantage of the myth about the return of Quatzelcoatl. In order to realise purposes undoubtedly defined by his own culture, he allows his own behaviour to be rewritten as a text of the other Culture. There can be no doubt that to him, Aztec society is an Extra-culture. But this does not mean, as can be seen, that his behaviour is necessarily more ethical than that of Colombo. The 'conversation of cultures' is here not for mutual benefit, but serves to subtly overpower the other. Cortez makes used of the *extended canonical model.*

Nothing of this should be taken to imply that only segmentation applies to the canonical model — it obviously applies to all variants of the cultural model, in all its aspects. But it precedes conversation. For instance, when Edward Said (1979) says that 'the Orient' was invented by the Occident, he is of course quite right: that which is so designated has no unity (segmentation), nor any name (nomination), unless seen from the vantage point of the Occident. Said is not necessarily right about the rest, however: it does not follow that the Orient must be seen as Non-culture rather than Extra-culture. Segmentation and nomination precedes, and is presupposed by, conversation; it is not excluded by it.[5]

Following more or less the same itinerary as Eco's (2000) fictive character Bardolino, many real Europeans travellers sought for a land route to 'Cathay', after Marco Polo has told the story of his travels by the see: for instance, the Castilian ambassador to Timor Lenk, Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo (1403-1406), the German soldier Johann Schildberger who was taken prisoner and lived for many years as a slave in the Orient (1396-1427), the English businessman and ambassador Anthony Jenkinson (1546-1572), and the Portuguese missionary Bento de Goes (1594-1607; cf. Harrison 1999). Something seems to have happened between the first two trips and the second pair. Conzales de Clavijo and Schildberger express their fascination for that which is unknown, and although they find many things to be strange or 'wrong', they do not condemn the other culture. For Jenkinson and de Goes, however, all foreigners are stupid, despicable and dangerous. Of course, de Goes, like all other good Jesuits beginning with his master Mateo Ricci, tried to adapt and assimilate himself externally to the surrounding culture, somewhat like Cortez. So he really entertained a canonical model, while appearing to conform to an extended model. On the whole, however, it seems that the Orient started out as Extra-culture, but ended up being Non-Culture.

The symmetrical other and the asymmetrical one

Both Bakhtin and Peirce has developed a parallel between cultures and persons,

which is reminiscent of the models of cultural semiotics, and Peirce has even expressed it in terms of pronouns. There is no space to discuss these parallels here, expect for noting one essential difference: for Peirce the other is another self, and the self is another other. For Bakhtin they seem irreducible.

Bakhtin (1990; 1993) over and over again points out that it is only the other which may be (and must be) seen from the outside, and thus is perceived as a complete and finished whole; the self, on the other hand, is an unlimited process which can never be grasped in its entirety, indeed it is some kind of stream of consciousness, which only comes to a stand-still at death. Only the other's body can be seen completely: there is an 'excess of seeing' (1990: 22ff). In the case of ourselves, some part of the body is always lacking, even as reflected in a mirror. This difference translates to the mind. In this sense, the other, contrary to the self, has the property of *outsideness,* or *transgredience* (1990:27ff).

Both Bakhtin and Peirce see the self as something which is not and cannot be concluded, something which exists only as developing in time. But while to Bakhtin the other is something static, essentially closed off, he is for Peirce of the same kind as the self, a stream of consciousness which cannot be halted — before the moment of death. So from this point of view, the other is just another self to Peirce. On the other hand, Peirce claims there is no direct access to knowledge about the self, just as there is none about the other: both are only indirectly known through signs. As far as access to knowledge is concerned, then, the self is merely another other to Peirce. The outsideness, or transgredience, which Bakhtin attributes to the other is also a property of the Peircean self.

What seems to be lacking in Peirce's thought is the second person as a real Alter, someone who is basically different. It could be said, then, that while Peirce is preoccupied with the *symmetrical other* (the one which may take my place so that I may be the other), Bakhtin talks about the *asymmetrical* one, which is for ever defined as different. It is the latter which is the subject of cultural semiotics. Mead,

Cooley, and their followers within 'symbolic interactionism' naturally aplly the Peircean conception. Todorov, who is his America book was clearly concerned with the asymmetrical other, curiously joins the company of the 'interactionists', in a later book (1995: 34ff, 15f, 31ff) in which he takes Hegel and Sartre to task for interpreting the dialectic between Ego and Alter as a combat where one of the participants must always lose — or, indeed, both. In this reading of Hegel, Ego can only be recognised as a person by subduing the other; but once the latter has been subdued he is a Non-person, and his recognition of the other as a person has lost its value. Like Peirce, Todorov points out that we are always *with* the other. There is, so to speak, no moment in time in which the other is not already there with us. Todorov (1990: 39ff) goes on to quote evidence from developmental psychology, which naturally shows us that the first other is not a man met in combat but the mother taking care of her child. And there is no problem in being recognised as a person: in fact, already after a few weeks the child tries to catch its mother gaze and is rewarded by the mother's attention. Conflicts emerge later and suppose a third party who determines who the winner is.

In his earlier book, Todorov (1984: 251) claimed the other had to be discovered. Human existence was said to take place between two extremes, where the Ego invades the world, or the world absorbs the Ego. Now, however, Alter appears as a given. But this is not the same Alter as the one which emerges from the study of the Conquest, or from the book on French attitudes to foreigners, although Todorov nowhere comments on the difference. In the first two books, Todorov is concerned with radical otherness, a property attributed to somebody coming from another culture. Such radical otherness may of course by attributed to somebody who does no longer occupy another space: it may be an *inner other,* like the moors in Spain, women in the men's world, or, to take a more topical example, the immigrants in contemporary Europe. Here otherness is dissociated from space, though it may have a real or fictive origin in another space. This otherness is not only characterised by

'outsideness', in Bakhtin's sense, but by some more definitive kind of foreignness. It is not reversible.[6]

In contrast, the kind of otherness which Todorov now discusses is the otherness of just about everybody. In this version, as well as in the work of Peirce, Mead, Cooley, etc., everybody is the other for another, i.e., the other is the Ego viewed from another point of view; and the point of view changes as it changes with the use of the first person pronoun. This relationship is certainly constitutive of life in society (that is, life en general), but it is the other kind of relationship between self and other which is constitutive of relations between cultures.

There is no way — or at least no easy one — from asymmetrical otherness back to the symmetrical kind. Robinson and Friday, in Michel Tournier's (1972) version of the story, certainly start out as asymmetrical others, as master and slave; and when they later end up being simply symmetrical others, that only happens after a major crisis, and perhaps only in Robinson's imagination. After all, Friday chooses to leave.

The internal other and territoriality

Inner otherness is an important factor in history, or rather, in the models which have contributed to form history. History would have been different without the moors in Spain, the gypsies in much of Western Culture, and, more obviously, woman in what has through most of history been the man's world. Some such kinds of inner otherness is part of the *anthropological universals* present in all societies: women as opposed to men, children as opposed to adults (cf. Sonesson 1997b). Other divisions are characteristic of particular societies: slaves as opposed to free men in Ancient Greece, servants and their masters until the beginning of the century in Sweden (as in Bergman's 'Fanny and Alexander') and still, for instance, in Mexico, rational persons and fools through much of Western history, the 'gay' as opposed to the 'straight' in contemporary society, and the 'first- to third-generations immigrants' as opposed to 'real Swedes' in contemporary Sweden. More clearly than the separation of cultures which is distributed between territories, these divisions between persons occupying (more or less) the same space seems to implement some kinds of 'mechanisms of

exclusion' (cf. Foucault 1971).

This does not mean that we can identify the two kinds of relationship between self and other which have been mentioned above, the reciprocal and the non-reciprocal one, and that of the other which is external or internal to the Culture. Both the internal and the external other is necessarily a non-reciprocal other. There is no point in subdividing the reciprocal other, for he is not defined as other: he is just the other of some Ego which is his other.

It follows that the kind of otherness which interests us here is always non-reciprocal. Thus, it is not only the relation of Culture to Non-Culture which is asymmetrical, but also that to Extra-Culture. The asymmetry concerns the relationship to the other Culture as non-subject, not only as non-person. There is a possibility to communicate, but the relationship is not reversible. Only within Culture, and outside its domain of inner otherness, is outsideness exchanged between peers.

Everything said so far tends to connects Culture with spatial extension: the visual layout of the model itself, the comparison to proxemics (behind which lurks territoriality as found in different animal species), the very idea of Culture as identical to the nation state, etc. But how are we then to understand the notion of the internal other? I would suggest that the connection between Culture and territory *is* fundamental, yet it is apt to be dissociated, becoming merely metaphorical.

In a fascinating study of a working class community in England, Elias & Scotson (1994) describe how newcomers are frozen out, although they are not different from the point of view of social class, profession, interests, etc. In the end, the authors are forced to conclude that they only difference between 'the established and the newcomers' is that they latter have not been there as long as the former – that is, they are not 'owners of the territory' (Cf. Hammad 1989) The notion of 'inner other' supposes someone to be present in a territory without being defined as an owner of it – either because he or she come from the outside (immigrants) or because

he or she is socially subordinated (women through most of human history, lower classes, children, etc.). Both criteria often apply to slaves.

Three scenarios for globalisation

In the following, I will consider three scenarios for globalisation. I will have very little to say about 'economic globalisation', strictly speaking, even though it certainly has its cultural consequences. All scenarios can be said to involve the circulation of 'texts', in the wide sense in which this term is used in cultural semiotics: that which circulates in such a way that it tends to transgress the borders between Culture, Non-culture, and Extra-culture. The three scenarios we will investigate have to do with the circulation of *individuals*, of cultural *artefacts*, and, more simply, of *messages*.

It is my contention that globalisation can only be experience locally, so I will start from my own experience. More exactly, it is only from a local point of view that globalisation appears as global. My own local point of view is not only Swedish, but it pertains to a particular part of Sweden, the southernmost tip of the peninsula, spanning Malmö and Lund. So this is exactly where I will begin my journey into global society.

In seventies, when it went to Paris to start my studies of semiotics, I was fascinated by the mixture of peoples and cultures that could be found there. In the streets, on the great boulevards, and at the courses and seminaries that I frequented, you could meet people from all parts of the world (or so it seemed to me). Every casual stroll along the boulevards seemed an adventure, a passage through the entire world. In Paris restaurants could also be found that served all kinds of cooking, as well as stores that sold products from all countries all over the world. However, in Malmö and Lund where I lived before, not only there were no restaurants serving food from other countries (with the exception of some Chinese restaurants and some pizzerias), but on the main all the people in the streets looked more or less alike: all boringly blond and white-skinned. Now Malmö (and, to a lesser extent, Lund) have changed totally: it looks like Paris did before.

One third part of the inhabitants of Malmö are immigrants or children of immigrants, from Latin America, from Africa and Asia, and from Eastern Europe. The city is full of restaurants and stores whose offerings stem from all imaginable cultures. Just like in the Paris in the seventies, there is even on numerous corners the shop owned by an Arab which, against the local customs, never seems to close. But it would be naive to imagine that these cultures are mixed in any fundamental way: rather, each one constitutes a ghetto of its own. They all occupy (partly) the same space and time, but they are located on different ideological planes.

My experience of Paris in seventies depended on that development of the system of the boulevards and the big stores which made the great French city (according to the expression of Walter Benjamin) into 'the capital of XIXth century'. But the capital of XXth century (or at least of its last part) was situated somewhere else: perhaps it was New York. During the last decades of the last century, it was from there, and from United States in general, that a series of fashions arrived which very fast became customs *à la mode* (for however short a time) of all countries, at least within the Western orbit, in the wide sense of the word (including for instance the middle-classes of Latin America, of Asia, etc.).

Art students are surely going to believe that I am thinking to the fact that movements within the visual arts no longer take their origin in Paris but in New York; but I am really referring to culture in the vast, anthropological sense, of the term. The case of food is, from this point of view, most instructive, because very often recent fashions have involved traditional plates removed from the context of a particular culture that suddenly, and sometimes for very limited periods, are spread to all parts of the world, after having been reviewed and corrected in the United States. The French always have eaten their croissants; but suddenly there were special shops in which to buy croissants, or 'croissanteries' (not a French concept) all over the entire world, of course with fillings and other complements which where unimaginable in the traditional French culinary culture, and in the end those shops even appeared all over Paris. Soon came the next fashion which were supposed to be Mexican food, this

time reviewed and corrected several times over before it arrived to us: first by the 'Chicanos' of California and Texas, then by the producers of tinware, and finally by the 'chefs' (who were Yugoslavs, North Americans, Peruvians, but never Mexicans) of the 'Mexican' restaurants that were opened everywhere, and who often were content to open the tin can coming from California and to mix the content with any product they could invent. The latest culinary fashion is the *café express,* traditionally drunk in the Mediterranean countries, which now is served throughout the world, in special coffee houses. In all these cases we really received messages of a kind from other countries: but only one country, the United States, has at the moment the power to put those messages into circulation, and it does not do it without deforming them by means of its own code.

As far as we can estimate now, the capital of XXIth century is not found on the Earth: it is located on the Internet. Certain parts of the Internet have advantages as far as their interaction potential is concerned which is not found on the boulevard or in its complement, the café with a view on the street: the latter ones, considered as communication systems (as I have said in another article, see Sonesson 1995), are *permeable to sight,* but to very few other senses (partly to the sense of smell, which is not necessarily an advantage, and partly to hearing, but not to touch) and at very rare moments do they give access to an interchange of words. Internet, of course, is very much open to dialogue, but it gives very little access for the other senses: even though it is quite often permeable to sight, what we get to see is very rarely the person communicating, at least not in the *hic et nunc* (with the exception of 'girl-cam', that last avatar of exhibitionism which earlier on could be satisfied on the boulevards).

Still it would be wrong to think that the Internet is a culturally neutral and authentically multicultural territory. The predominant language of the Internet is English; its origin is in the North American Arpanet.

First model of globalisation: cultures without a territory

One of the scenarios of globalisation that we have considered above involves a

difference of ideological location within the Culture: Swedes and immigrants share the same space and the same time, but they are in different ideological spheres. Although they meet in the street (but more rarely in their homes), there remains a difference between the behaviours and artefacts that for these different groups are 'texts', 'non-texts' and perhaps 'extra-texts'. The same applies to the case of the Internet: we are within the same (virtual) space and at the same moment (as measured in 'beats', the unit of atomic time that serves to co-ordinate computers located in different spaces and times), but we do not go there with the same definitions of Textuality; however, as the Internet constitutes a more restricted and specific scene of interactions involving a permeability of very few properties (which is what explains the possibility, in a MUD-MOO, to appear as an individual of the opposite sex or even as a chair), it may turn out to be easier to share the criteria that define what a text is. But the cases also differ on the axis of the conversation: they are different from the point of view of power and solidarity.

Globalisation, then, is, among other things, the hypertrophy of the inner Other. In the model applied, in a more or less conscious way, by contemporary Swedes, the internal Other is called 'the immigrants'. The model does not observe (at this level) the differences between immigrants coming from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and East Europe, etc. Also it confuses immigrants of 'the first', 'the second' and unto 'the third generation', that is, to relieve ourselves of this absurd bureaucratic language, real immigrants and persons having been born in Sweden whose parents or grandparents (or just one of them) were immigrants. I call this a hypertrophy of the internal Other because this group now constitutes a third part of the population (in Malmö, but the percentage is quite big also in other parts of Sweden). This implies that, in this model, a significant part of the population lives in a territory that others define for them as being not-textual.

That the Other is asymmetric does not mean that the internal Other cannot define his/her Other as being radically Other. But being immigrant from the point of view of a Swede is not the same relation as being a Swede from the point of view of

an immigrant. The immigrants, or at least certain groups among them, can attribute an equally radical Alterity to the Swedes as the Swedes do to the immigrants. But the Swedes never can become internal Others in Sweden, not even in the model of the immigrants; because also in that model the territory belongs to the Swedes. Or else the meaning of being a Swede must change first.

Now the question is if, in the prevailing model, the immigrants appear as being members of a Non-culture or an Extra-culture, deprived, in both cases, of their own territory. Both cases may exist, but I fear that the most common is the one in which the immigrants are ascribed to a Non-culture. There are exceptions for certain 'texts': certain artefacts and behaviours, such a particular dishes, dances and pieces of music, have been absorbed, and therefore deformed, by the Swedish culture. Many Swedes now eat falafels or empanadas prepared and sold by persons coming from countries where those are traditional plates. Nevertheless, they are textualised in a deformed way, because the use to which Swedes put these dishes is not integrated into the culture of those peoples as a whole.

Some elements of the culture of the 'immigrants' become extra-texts for the Swedes; therefore, there is a certain measure of dialogue which is added to the axis of reference which relates Swedish culture to the cultures of the immigrants. I believe that one could say that, for this to become really a model of global culture, there must be a greater part of interaction between the two cultures. In this sense, it is possible that the mixture of cultures that I came to know in Paris in seventies was a little 'more global' than the present Swedish model.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account that, even on the axis of conversation, a distinction must be made between two ways of conceiving the relation: in terms of power, or in terms of solidarity. We have seen that, even in the relation of interaction, there is asymmetry, because Extra-culture is not Culture. Within the asymmetry of the interaction, solidarity introduces a certain symmetry, whereas power renders the relation asymmetric from another point of view. The relation to the internal Other is always a relation of power, not of solidarity, because it

occurs in the territory of his Other. Power always belongs to the one who controls the territory.

Second model of globalisation: the Sender Culture

The case of the Internet is not so different from the model of the immigrants in Sweden, although the relations of domination are less obvious: we are all the asymmetric Other of the North Americans. I am not only thinking about the predominance of the English language: the British also are asymmetric Others on the Internet, because they must adapt to other than verbal codes of the Internet defined by the North Americans. There are, of course, portions of the Internet where another languages (and perhaps also other semiotic systems) predominate: I know, for example, an electronic mailing list where anyone who is not a native speaker of Spanish is the one playing the part of the asymmetric internal Other. I am only speaking about a general tendency. And probably the North American domination of the Internet turns out to be less limiting than the power that the Swedes have over the immigrants. After all, the Internet is not a world in which it is possible to live, in the complete sense of the term: it is not a Lifeworld, a *Lebenswelt* (cf. Sonesson 1995; 1997c; 2000a, b).

Cultures without a territory involve the circulation of individuals; the Internet, in contrast, concerns the circulation of messages. However, we have seen that, from the point of view of cultural semiotics, they appear to pertain to the same model of globalisation. The circulation of ethnically characterised dishes and the like, however, must perhaps be described as being something more than just messages (although they are also that), as artefacts. More obviously than to individuals, we can apply to these artefacts the rules of Textuality. 'Non-texts' that are assimilated firstly must be 'translated', which often leads to deformations, since they are read with the codes of Culture. Nevertheless, in due time a new code can be constituted which also includes those imported 'texts'. Very obvious cases of such 'deformations' are the croissants, the tacos and the café express outside of their culture of origin. It is too early to say if,

in our culture, we will ever manage to set up our own code for interpreting those 'texts' (although in the case of the croissants we already know that it did not happen).

During the last half century or more, young people in almost the whole world have interpreted the United States, in this peculiar sense, as being *the* Culture. We know this phenomenon, normally, as Americanisation; but globalisation is not exactly the same as Americanisation, although they are surely related. The culinary fashions that we have mentioned above have an element of Americanisation: but they are something more, because what the North Americans distribute are 'deformed texts' extracted from other cultures. The important observation is that none of these dishes got spread over the whole world, until they had become a fashion in the United States. Nor does this 'croissant paradigm' apply only to food stuff: pseudo-intellectual movements such a 'postmodernism' and 'deconstruction' did not become known outside of France, until they had been adopted (and adapted) in the United States. Once again, I can refer to my personal experience: when I lived in Paris in the seventies I followed Derrida's seminar. At the time, nobody had heard about him in Sweden. But shortly afterwards his fame – and that of his followers – came back to us from the United States.

In this sense, United States is a sender culture in the contemporary world,, it may even be the only sender culture, on a global scale. This concept of sender culture is different from what the Tartu school call sender- vs. receiver-orientation: a culture having the former is one in which the sender adapts to the level of understanding and knowledge of the receiver, while in the latter kind of culture it is the receiver which has to adapt. A sender culture, rather, is a culture which, in the global circulation of messages, tends to take the part of the sender, however indirectly. Correspondingly, a receiver culture is one which is more commonly found on the receiving end. This is particularly significant when, as in globalisation, as opposed to Americanisation, one culture has the power to decide which texts to put into circulation, even though is does not create them, but deform them after extracting them from the repertories of other cultures. I am of course not concerned here to criticise the Unites States for

playing this part in the contemporary world. It is simply a fact of world history. In other historical circumstances, other cultures have been the ultimate sender cultures, although of course on a smaller scale, or in a more limited range (Rome in Antiquity, Byzance during the early Middle Ages, France in 17th century Europe, etc.)

Third model of globalisation: change of centre

In this last section, I will go on to consider the third scenario which concerns, at the primary level, economic globalisation but which also has consequences at the cultural level. Again I will take a local point of view (but comparable examples can be found in many other countries of the world). In the long history of Capitalism, from the Medici to Rockefeller and further on, even big companies always have been companies of certain countries, although they have had activities and even branches in several parts of the world. In spite of often having considerable power and influence, the industrialists have until recently felt the need to identify themselves with a particular country. In recent times, some companies do not only have economic resources greater than many countries, but they do not even experience national divisions as pertinent limits.

During these recent years, many of the great Swedish companies that sometimes have hundreds of years of existence have been united to companies from other countries and have transferred their headquarters to the other country. Even Ericsson, that continues having a majority of Swedish owners, is considering the possibility of changing its main office to London. The most interesting case concerns the Swedish car-makers. Swedish cars supposedly have a reputation in Europe as well as in the United States for being safer than others. But Saab has now, for several years, been a section of the great North American company General Motors, and its division of buses and trucks ended up being sold to Volkswagen. Volvo sold its division of personal cars to Ford about two years ago, and the division that makes trucks and buses has now united with Renault in a collaboration that seems to give all the real influence to the last company. Therefore, the label 'Swedish cars' no longer seems to

be anything more than an effect of meaning that can be used in the publicity of companies that do not have anything Swedish about them.

One of the models of globalisation that we considered earlier admitted the possibility of dissociating the state-nation from its territory. Now we are confronted with a case in which a culture does not relate to the state-nation at all. That is what happens in the third scenario of globalisation, where companies cease completely to be parts of a state-nation. In the long run, this may turn out to be the most dramatic model of globalisation: when what defines the Culture, within the dialectics of cultural semiotics, no longer it is a state-nation with its territory, but something else, such as a company.

It is an illusion to think that this is an impossible situation: at other moments in history, the identification of the Culture with the state-nation has been far from obvious. During the European Middle Age, for example, the model according to which the nation was identical to Culture already existed, but it was a very weak model, indeed. The king, as the maximal representative of that model, tried to impose it, but for a long time he was not very successful: the true identification that predominated, was the identification of the Culture with the county or the duchy, which could be made up of feudal possessions in diverse parts of Europe, scattered between different countries. In that model, the king was just one among the dukes, and quite often he was not even the most powerful one (cf. Duby 1990a, b; Elias 1978; Nordberg 1993; 1996). At the other extreme, Culture could be identified with Christendom (or perhaps Western Christendom as opposed to the Eastern variety). It can be said that the model that identified Culture with the state-nation already existed; but that it was subordinated to the model that identified it with a set of scattered feudal possessions, as well as another model which comprised the whole of the domain dominated by Christian believers.

In a parallel fashion, it is conceivable that we are now living in a phase of history, in which the Nation model of Culture continues to exist, but a new model that already identifies it with the Big Company begins to prevail. Also in the present case

globalisation is easily confused with Americanisation: many of the most powerful companies in the contemporary world are North American companies, and it is also possible that most companies today operate according to codes first invented in the United States. On the other hand, United States is perhaps the only country that is still sufficiently powerful to do hem in big companies. In this sense, the national model there continues being relatively strong. The Secretary of Justice at least tried to stop Microsoft from taking over Culture altogether. In this sense, they were defending the national model of culture against the global model.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have considered a few scenarios for globalisation, and I have proposed some corresponding models for them, within the framework of cultural semiotics. Contrary to what could be expected, from a naïve point of view, all these models, like those of the conquest, turned out to be asymmetrical, often both on the axis of reference or conversation, and on the sub-axis of power. This is not to say that there may not be other scenarios, and their corresponding models, which yield a more positive account of globalisation. At present, it is impossible to tell which of these models will come to be identified with globalisation in the future.

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[1] The Tartu school model has been variously described in a number of texts, some of which were written together by Jurij Lotman and Boris Uspenskij, and some involving several other authors. The version which is used here was developed in Sonesson 1987;.1992; 1993; 1994a,b; 1995; 1996; 1997a,b,c; 1998, 1999, 2000b, c; 2002; in press a, b). These articles also contain an abundant bibliography of Tartu school texts.

[2] See, in particular, Sonesson 2000b and also (for some of the examples) Todorov 1982 :81f

[3] Posner (1989), for exemple, proposes a scale of semiotisation — but a continuous scale cannot explain the existence of discrete states. Cf. Sonesson 2000b

[4] For a more complete discussion, see Sonesson 1997e,f: 2000b

[5] It is of course also true that, for a more detailed scrutiny, nomination presupposes but is not presupposed by segmentation. It just so happens that, in human beings, these two operations tend to go together (if we admit that nomination is not necessarily expressed in verbal form, but may also be conveyed by means of other semiotic means)

[6] Or rather, it cannot be reversed without changing its meaning: the otherness of Cortez to Moctezuma is not the same otherness at that of Moctezuma to Cortez.