**Encounters**

The discovery of the unknown

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**Chapter Ten**

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David Dunér & Göran Sonesson

The history of exploration has mostly concerned what travellers actually saw, who they met, where they travelled, which islands and geographic locations they visited. The stories of the historians tell about logistical problems, how the explorers managed to travel from one place to another, about navigation at sea and how they penetrated trackless terrains, followed coastlines, rivers and mountain ranges, and walked through valleys and forests. Not least the political and sociological dimensions of travelling have caught many researchers' interest, for example in various studies of networks, power relations, contacts, collaborations, careers, and how cultural encounters have led to political and economic change (Campbell 1988; Porter 1991; Pratt 1992; Pagden 1993; Elsner and Rubiés 1999; Bridges 2002; Sell 2006; Abulafia 2008). There is, however, another aspect of travelling to foreign locations that has hardly been touched upon in scholarly studies, but which is the one that will concern us here.

Encounters with new worlds and foreign cultures have also led to cultural and – what we will outline here – cognitive and semiotic change. Cultural encounters have changed people's thinking, their categories, and belief systems. They have altered the ways in which human beings interpret the world, their own culture, and that which is outside of it. To get a grip of what happened in the minds of travellers, and how their thinking changed due to the encounter with the unknown requires us to study the history of exploration from a new angle, in a cognitive and semiotic perspective. The cognitive-semiotic history of exploration also pays attention to the lacunae of human thinking, i.e. what the travellers *did not see*, what the selective consciousness sifted away. Among cognitive phenomena that occurred while encountering the unknown, we find, for example:

- that the travellers' perception of space changed (*spatiality*);
- that their minds tried to understand and interpret what the senses conveyed (*perception*);
- that their preconceived notions and previous experiences guided them towards

certain conclusions about what they saw (*experience*);

• that encounters with the Other changed the travellers themselves (*intersubjectivity*);

• that they often found it difficult to convey the impressions of the unknown (*communication*).

This chapter concerns human encounters with unknown environments and how the human mind tries to understand the unfamiliar phenomena by using certain cognitive and semiotic resources. We argue that human encounters with unfamiliar things, landscapes, and living beings cannot simply be explained by social, political, or economic circumstances, nor just by extrapolating given biological grounds. Instead, we defend the idea that human encounters must be seen as instances of the bio-cultural coevolution of human cognition, the incessant interaction between the human mind and its environment. In the first section of this chapter, we discuss some cognitive phenomena arising when human beings encounter unknown environments. In the second section, we go deeper into cultural semiotics and explain the specific semiotics of cultural encounters, how human beings, in a certain culture, the *Ego*-culture, get to grips with the unknown, foreign culture, the Alien-culture. In this second part, we will also be particularly concerned with encounters within a long time-span, when one of the cultures has come to occupy what was formerly the space of the other.

## 10.1. The Cognitive History of the Unknown

Human explorers, merchants, soldiers, refugees, and other travellers in the past, as well as in the present, encountered things, natural phenomena, living organisms, peoples, customs, behaviours, cultures that had to be interpreted, that were not immediately and intuitively understandable. These unknown and unfamiliar things forced them to use all their former knowledge, experiences, and cognitive abilities in order to understand what they saw and encountered (Dunér 2011). In the end, these encounters changed their view of spatiality, perception, experience, cultural encounters, and communication.

### 10.1.1. Spatiality of the Traveller

Journeys investigating the geography of the Earth lead to a wider spatial understanding and awareness of distances and spatial relationships. They were explorations of space,

extensions of the spatial experience of the surface of the Earth, the topography, and the distance between near and far (Lefebvre 1974; Crang and Thrift 2000; Schlögel 2003). The logbook of the Finnish cadet Israel Reinius from a voyage to Canton (Guangzhou) with the ship "Adolph Friedrich" of the Swedish East India Company gives the impression of a symbolic, repetitive mood of movement through the coordinates of space and time:

> Tuesday, March 3, 1747, between Mauritius and Java, between 1 and 4 pm, heading southeast. Wind from northeast. Beautiful weather with strong gale. Saw a group whales and flying fishes. 4 pm: heavy rain. Nota bene: the Swedish peas ended. Distance: 146 miles (Reinius 1939, p. 128).

Between long stretches of nautical and meteorological data, the logbook sometimes gives glimpses of observations of frigate birds, albatrosses, and gannets that are sailing by, and dolphins swimming along the keel.

Not only texts, ideas, traditions, and cultures lead to historical change, but also the body and its interaction with the environment, space, and the things around us, such as dimensions, terrains, logistics, buildings, and communication routes. We relate to home and away, inside and out, existing and non-existing, define territories and set out limits. Journeys into uncharted geographies alter our spatial perception and understanding, and adjust the relationship between the mental space and real space. The mental image of the geography of Earth became clearer and more detailed due to physical travels around the world. The discovery of the tropical forests, the deserts of Arabia, the Pacific islands, the ice shields of Antarctica, the vast Siberian steppes led to an expanded spatial awareness of the topography of our planet. The medieval charts were endowed with imaginary islands and creatures, but during the early modern period these white spots of human geographical experience began to be filled with existing life and real physical landmarks.

## 10.1.2. Perception as Interpretation

We see certain things with ease, while other things can require more effort to perceive. Pehr Löfling, a young disciple of the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus who travelled across the Atlantic in the 1750s, through the forests of South America, and along the

Orinoco River, was more attentive to certain things and phenomena than other members of the Spanish border expedition to Venezuela, La Expedición de Límites 1754–1761, led by José de Iturriaga. Not because he had a better vision, but he had a specific system for interpreting what he saw. The Linnaean systematics and taxonomy gave him a tool to give meaning to what the senses conveyed, and to incorporate these observations into his and others' prior knowledge of natural things. He noticed the small details of the sexual organs of the plants and the slight colour shifts of the birds' plumage. At the same time Löfling's perception was part of a larger perceptual and observational enterprise. By using Löfling's and other disciples' observations, Linnaeus strengthened his own powers of observation. Through them, Linnaeus could see more of the world, discover more details, identify more species in the realm of nature (see Section 9.3.6).

Seeing is an activity by which the perceiving mind can find an order in the chaotic material world. It is also conditioned by the viewer's emotions, practical interests, and associations. Needless to say, there are hardly any neutral observations that do not demand an interpretation: what we see requires exegesis based on past experience, concepts, and knowledge. Plants and animals are certainly two of the primary domains in which human beings (as well as some other animals) have been adept at assembling knowledge, already at the hunter-gatherer stage, if not before. Only such knowledge could have allowed our forefathers to pass to the stage of domesticating plants and animals (cf. Atran 1990; Diamond 2005 [1997]). Based on the theories Löfling had already incorporated into his thinking, such as Linnaean systematics, he could recognise certain shapes and patterns in nature. Although the shapes and patterns distinguished may be distinct, the process as such is not really different from the way indigenous people make use of their folk knowledge. Visual perception involves a process in which a person that perceives something goes beyond the given information by organising and interpreting the sensual impression, by adding and filling in an ambiguous impression in order to create an unambiguous perception (Reisberg 1997). The observer has to divide the sensory impressions into parts and organise them into background and foreground. These interpretations are not definite or determined just by the impressions themselves, but to a large extent by the mind in interaction with the world around it. Perception of space is characterised by topological and spatial relationships such as containment and proximity. It is also selective, i.e. attention is focused on certain traits,

and it is part of an organising process (Stafford 2009). Similarly to the way that the observer's visual perception of an object is changed by the position, also the concepts, knowledge, wishes, needs, values, and interests are dependent on the biological as well as cultural sensory equipment, while also changing these sensory experiences. Löfling's prior knowledge, cultural background, life experiences, and position in time and space constituted the perspectives from which he viewed the world. As modern beings living in a different space and time, it is difficult for us to grasp how he experienced his environment, even though we basically have identical sensory abilities. People in history saw, literally, the world in a somewhat different way. The conceptual vision, i.e. how our perception and interpretation of the impressions are changed by our previous knowledge, reveals that they actually had other sensory experiences than what we would have had facing the same object, or perhaps more accurately, they made other interpretations of what they saw. The interpretations of the sensory impressions rest on cognitive abilities, such as memory, categorisation and perception of patterns. Culture and cognition influence and schematise certain patterns in the sensory impressions. The challenge for a cognitive history of exploration is to learn how people in history perceived and interpreted the light in their eyes, the soundscapes around them, how the food tasted, how it smelled in the streets, how it ached in the body after a day walking through uncharted territory.

But there are two further things to note here: as a traveller, Löfling only had a limited use for the kind of folk knowledge of plants he may have derived from his own life in a different environment and a different culture. This knowledge may have served him when explaining his experience to others at home, as we will see below, and it may have also been an encumbrance when trying to attend to particularities of the plants at hand, as will also be suggested (cf. Section 10.1.3). Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that Löfling was also something fairly new, namely a scientific traveller. Linnaean systematics and taxonomy were not only based on thorough studies of plants familiar in Sweden, but already incorporated other floras of the world; it was also organised, not only for particular purposes such as agriculture or medicine, but with a wider, theoretical scope; and finally it was embodied into books and collections, as well as distributed among a whole class of world travellers with their attention put to plants (see Chapter 9: Science in this volume).

### 10.1.3. Experience of Things Unknown

Löfling's new experiences were incorporated into his prior experiences and were compared to them. This is true both of his home-grown experience as a participant in the peculiarly Swedish home world, but also of his training as a Linnaean explorer. For his parents he explained that manioc was rasped in Guyana like horseradish back home in Sweden. In this case, the comparison may really have served as a bridge between worldviews. The Linnaean systematisation of things was a way of categorising the unknown in order to incorporate it into the known. The consciously and unconsciously acquired prior knowledge induced Löfling to interpret what he saw in one way or another. The travellers made use of their prior knowledge, the knowledge that was a part of their culture, kept in stories, myths and religious beliefs, by means of which they could create meaning in what they encountered. The result could also be confusing – and lead to confusions that subsisted for centuries. When Christopher Columbus came to America, he did not see a new continent, and he did not meet a new nation. He came to "India" and met "Indians" as they were already modelled in European culture. This did not impede him from asking these "Indians" to show him to the Chinese emperor, mixing, as might have been the normal case at the time, another well-known, but equally erroneous, address into the discovery.

Travel stories always refer back, homewards, to the familiar and known. In the descriptions of new, unknown things, the travel author used familiar things in order to explain and understand what he encountered. When the American colonists saw a red-breasted bird around their houses, *Turdus migratorius*, it reminded them of the European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), and they named it American robin, although it is biologically more closely related to the blackbird (*Turdus merula*). Such instances are common in folk taxonomy. As so often, the colonists saw the known in the unknown. Such identification resulted less from a lack of attention to details than from a desire on the part of the colonists to recreate a well-known environment around themselves. Both the early Spanish colonists and those that came later to what was going to become the United States gave names to their newly created towns and to geographical features which were generally derived form their home country. This is why there is a Mérida in Mexico as well as in Spain, and a Paris in Texas.

Marco Polo may exemplify the passage from the fairly naïve world traveller armed with the folk knowledge of his own culture to the scientific traveller taking a broader view. As Umberto Eco (1999) tells us, Polo starts by saying that he had indeed seen the famous unicorn – but then he goes on to describe it rather like what we would nowadays call a rhinoceros:

> They are scarcely smaller than elephants. They have the hair of a buffalo and feet like an elephant's. They have a single large black horn in the middle of the forehead […]. They have a head like a wild boar's [---]. They spend their time by preference wallowing in mud and slime. They are very ugly brutes to look at. They are not at all such as we describe them when we relate that they let themselves be captured by virgins, but clean contrary to our notions.

Some centuries later, Albrecht Dürer made a famous woodcut of a rhinoceros, which was based on a written account of an animal on show in Lisbon. Although much more accurate than any earlier depictions made in the West, Dürer's woodcut shows an animal with hard plates that cover its body like sheets of armour, with a gorget at the throat, a solid-looking breastplate, and rivets along the seams. He also places a small twisted horn on its back, and gives it scaly legs and saw-like rear quarters. But Dürer never had a close encounter with a rhinoceros.

### 10.1.4. Encounters with the Other Culture

Travellers struggle with adaptation and mistrust, prejudice that is contradicted, confluence of cultures, religious beliefs, and worldviews that go apart. In the meeting with foreign cultures in geography, but also in history, the traveller faces difficulties in understanding the complexity, to recognise the differences between the different cultures and ethnic groups. Commonly this manifests itself as a "dehumanisation" of the other, or the failure to see the complexity of cultures and instead label them as "primitive" cultures. This reaction is often interpreted as an instance of an intentional and political power ambition. But this is not the whole truth. These encounters depend essentially of the cognitive challenges human thought faces concerning empathy, intersubjectivity, and coordination of the inner worlds (see Chapter 1, 2 and Section 10.2 in this volume).

One way of dealing with the incomprehensible – that one can find many instances of

in the travel literature – is to try to live as the others do, to adapt to local customs and life conditions, "go native" so to speak. In modern anthropology "participant observation" is a well-tested and popular method to explore cultural and social phenomena, but it has happened, at least once in a while, that an anthropologist using this method ended up identifying completely with the foreign culture, and giving up his work as an anthropologist – the epitomised case being the nineteenth century anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing first described as "going native" (cf. Hinsley 1981). Partly similar things seem to have happened to our travellers. Löfling writes, after several months in Madrid, that he now counts himself as a Spaniard. He is "polymorphous," adapts to the situation, takes different roles, dresses himself in Spanish fashion, participates in Catholic Church services, and finally converts to the Catholic faith. The German explorer Carsten Niebuhr, who in the 1760s travelled through the Middle East and "Arabia Felix" (present-day Yemen) together with Linnaeus' disciple Peter Forsskål, tried to adapt himself to the Arabic culture by making use of his cognitive abilities, such as memory and imitation, in an attempt to learn their language and customs (Niebuhr 1774–1837). Niebuhr let his beard grow, dressed in Oriental clothes, and adopted an Arabic name, Kawâdja Abdallah. In Persia he called himself Abdallah Aqa, i.e. Mr Abdallah, and in Syria Muᶜallim. In Anatolia, he got the nickname *gâvur* (the unfaithful). But there were limits even to his personal adaptation to the other culture. He refused to convert to Islam and be circumcised. He is empathic, however, he does not judge: "We Europeans often come to an verdict too early about the customs of foreign nations before we have got to know them correctly" (Niebuhr 1772). It is equally incomprehensible to the Europeans, Niebuhr says, that the Arabs eat locusts, as it is incredible for the Arabs that Christians eat oysters, crabs, and crayfish. People are still quite similar. The natural historian and physician Clas Fredrik Hornstedt who wandered through many countries and climates, and met the most different peoples, regarded himself as a citizen of the world, someone who by no means becomes annoyed that not everything is like it is in our country. "The difference consists merely in modifications" (Hornstedt, UUB, fol. 149v; Granroth 2008, p. 73).

When interpreting the other culture the traveller uses concepts and experiences drawn from his own well-known culture, that are then imposed on the different, unfamiliar culture. The traveller projects himself on the unknown others. We see the

other in a mirror image of ourselves. Our "ego-culture" deforms texts from other cultures and times, the "alien-culture", in line with our own needs (Sonesson 2000, 2003; Cabak Rédei 2007). We draw boundaries between inside and outside, where our culture, being safe and harmoniously organised, contrasts the outlying other culture, the dangerous, chaotic, challenging, and disordered culture (Lotman 1990). The vast majority of Western travel diaries from the eighteenth century appoint its own culture as the "ego" and the visited culture as "the other." In some rare cases one finds the opposite perspective – a non-European culture is the ego and the European culture the other – as in a depiction of eighteenth-century Russia, *Hokusa Bunryaku* (1793), by the Japanese physician Katsuragawa Hoshū (Katsuragawa 1978). Or in other cases, such as the example of Yuri Lotman, Peter the Great seemed to have adopted another culture than his own culture as the ego-culture (Lotman 1990; Sonesson 2000).

The term "discovery" actually reveals an egocentric perspective on the understanding of cultures (Todorov 1982). Discoveries and cultural encounters are always seen from a local, individual angle, not from a global perspective, and we can hardly do anything else (Bayly 2004). We need the other in order to create an image of ourselves, not only in a collective sense, but also from the individual person's own perspective. In this way, the Orient only exists from an outsider's perspective (Said 1978), but the same can be said concerning the Occident (cf. Buruma and Margalit 2004). The ego-perspective of human thought emphasises subjective views. In other words, travelogues and descriptions of the seen often say more about the person who moves through the world than about the current "objective" world. What remains, from a cognitive-semiotic perspective, is foremost the individual person's understanding of his or her inner world, not a clear reflection of the real, objective, external world.

### 10.1.5. Communication Abroad and at Home

To a large extent, the challenges of travelling involve communication problems. Misunderstandings are common in cultural encounters, not only because of a lack of language skills, but also because we have different Lifeworlds, cultural backgrounds, and experiences. Concepts are formed by culture and the needs of the social and physical environment. Signs and categories differ from each other and make communication difficult. The communicative difficulties arise not only in relation to the

other, but also in relation to members of our own culture.

Descriptions of unknown environments, in travel accounts and letters to friends back home, are huge challenges to both parts. The traveller has to transfer and convey his new experiences; he has to describe something he has never seen before, even though he lacks words or concepts for it. These descriptions, moreover, should also provoke images in the mind of the other person. Thus, Löfling describes the Agave (*Agave americana*) that he saw in Spain as being similar to the pine trees that can be seen on swampy bogs in Sweden. Using analogy is a way of translating impressions from unknown cases to more well-known and familiar experiences. Columbus expresses the idea that it is not possible for any person to understand something that he has not seen himself. In his letter from 1493, Columbus tells about the newly discovered islands on the other side of the Atlantic, about how he saw high and beautiful mountains, vast fields and forests, fertile plains, which "surpass one's perceptions, if you have not seen them" (Columbus 1493). The new and unknown is impossible to imagine and fully describe to someone else – you have to see it with your own eyes.

A dialogue in Denis Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1772) concerns how precarious, almost impossible, is the communication between different cultures (Diderot 1772; Fastrup and Eliassen 2010). A Tahitian does not have the same sounds in his language as in French. He will therefore, Diderot concludes, never be able to learn French. And since he does not know this language, he cannot designate and acquire that which he experiences in France. When he comes home, he would not have anything to tell. He would not have experienced anything and would not be able to convey anything, because he has no words to describe what he experienced. His old friends would not believe him. Everything he is saying would seem strange and alien to them. Today we may find this identification between what can be pronounced and what can be understood too simplistic; yet, it is certainly difficult to learn to pronounce the sounds of foreign languages, if you are not a child anymore, and it remains difficult to understand the contents and referents of foreign languages, whether you are an adult or not. Today, when the majority of Tahitians are bilingual in Tahitian and (some dialect of) French, it is not certain that this has bred a greater understanding between the two cultures. The fact that many people born in France now live in Tahiti may certainly have led to some intermingling of cultures, but not, as one would expect, as great as in

the case of many former French colonies, as for instance Algeria, whose citizens have a larger presence in France. To shift to an example that is at least somewhat more clear-cut, Mexico in relation to Spain, understanding the other culture still remains very demanding, even if you speak the same language, as Spaniards and Mexicans largely do today – even though somewhat easier than at the time of Hernán Cortés.

What happens when cultures meet is that human cognitive abilities face difficult challenges in interpreting and understanding what the senses convey, in order to provide guidance for behaviour in specific situations. In cultural encounters cultural-semiotic processes occur where the home culture, the *Ego*-culture, is transformed by the meeting with *Alter* and *Alius*, leading to a new self-understanding. To be far away from home often stirs in the travel accounts an undertone of nostalgia and isolation, the painful longing to return home. In the end of his life Linnaeus caught this feeling of longing for something lost. "NOSTALGIA – Stenbrohult" he recorded on a piece of paper and dreamed himself back to his childhood home in Småland in southern Sweden (Linnaeus 1732). The feeling and the fear that there is no way back, that you have forever lost touch with relatives and close friends, is growing during the mind's journey through the territories separated from the familiar and known back home. Unknown environments and creatures are daunting. The anxiety is caused by disorientation, when the cognitive tools to manage the known environment are challenged.

## 10.2. Semiotics of Cultural Encounters

When you have been on a trip, you have something to tell coming home, as the saying goes. So far, we have considered the plights and predicaments of the traveller, as well as the knowledge he has acquired. But sometimes you go to another country, or you immerse yourself into another culture, not only for the relatively short time of a journey (which may not have been very short, from our point of view, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century), but with the intention to stay in that country or culture for an appreciable time in the future, perhaps until you die. There are three main scenarios here. The first is that of *conquest*, when you install yourself, normally with a whole group coming from your Homeworld, in what was until now the Homeworld of other people, and, for all practical purposes, attempt to transform it into your own Homeworld (leaving perhaps a residue Homeworld for the population that was there

before). The second one is that of *immigration*. In that case, you are normally forced by outer circumstances to give up your own Homeworld, and must try, at least to some extent, to integrate yourself into what was earlier the Homeworld of other populations, without being able to take over the governance of that Homeworld. The third scenario could be characterised as involving the *exchange of mates*, because, originally, you often had to leave your Homeworld at a certain moment of your life to find a marrying partner (or you may have chosen to do so), but today, this scenario could very well apply just as much to those who leave one culture for another for the sake of finding employment. In any case, without being at all easy living, this scenario is the one that has, in the historical experience of humanity, turned out to hold the best chance of occasioning a real meeting of cultures, in the sense of not necessarily prejudging one part or another.

### 10.2.1. Three Scenarios and Three Globalisations

Projecting these three scenarios onto deep history, we could also talk about the three big globalisations – without denying that there have been many smaller ones, or that these three may only appear to be the important ones (particularly in the case of the third one) in our present day perspective. The term "deep history" should be understood here in the sense of Daniel L. Smail (2008), Andrew Shryock and Smail (2011), and Claude Gamble (2013): as the idea of there being no limits between evolution, at least from anatomically modern humans onwards (prehistory), and history (which is thus not simply defined by writing). At least for the sake of considering these globalisations, we will go along with this idea. As for the notion of globalisation itself, it may not have received any positive definition, but, from the relevant literature (the items of which are too numerous to be mentioned), it is clear that it involves, not only the dispersal of different individuals and groups around the world, but that of their pools of knowledge, as well as something more than the mere coalescence of these pools of knowledge, such as some form of their interaction.

The three scenarios do not project neatly onto the three globalisations. We will consider these globalisations in chronological order, although the third one is no doubt more well-known to the contemporary reader. The first globalisation, which brought human beings out Africa and, in the end, to all habitable continents, may have started

out as immigration but it certain ended up basically as conquest. As far as we know, it first involved *Homo erectus* (1.8 mya) and then *Homo sapiens* (200 tya). We will not have much to say about this globalisation here, because it is not clear whether *Homo sapiens* ever had any encounter with his predecessor *Homo erectus*, and while we can be sure that *Home sapiens* met the Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*), at least now that we know that Europeans still possess some Neanderthal genes, we do not know to what extent, if any, their encounter produced any mixture of their respective pools of knowledge (cf. Gamble 2013; Pääbo 2014). In our context, the first globalisation is important as a presupposition for the second one. As a result of this first globalisation, human beings came to be the only animal species present all around the world (even in America, at least from 13,000 BCE). This may account for the feeling, noted by Gamble, that there were human beings anywhere you went.

The second globalisation (from the fifteenth century CE) may nevertheless be epitomised by the conquest of America, although it involved some essential preludes taking place on the islands outside of the western cost of Africa, beyond Gibraltar, once known as the pillars or Hercules, the end of the Antique world (Fernandez-Armesto 1987). Its scenario was essentially one of conquest, from the African islands onwards. It is precisely at the level of knowledge and cognition that the discovery of America can be labelled a globalisation, in a sense in which this is not true of the connections with the Middle East, North Africa, India, and China, which have been present in the Occident as far back as we can go in written history, from Herodotus and beyond, even if often at a low level of acquaintance. Nor is it comparable to the case of what was at the time known as The Holy Land, where some conquests were undertaken and then lost during several centuries of the Middle Ages, because, armed with the Bible and the writings of the Church fathers, the protagonists clearly experienced this as returning to familiar ground.[1] As referred to above, Gamble (1995) takes note of the feeling shared by the conquerors that there would be people everywhere. If they had known about the first globalisation, they would have been justified in this belief. This is perhaps not

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[1] It may be more difficult to exclude the invasion of Europe and India by the first Indo-Europeans, or the Austronesian expansion going as far as Madagascar (cf. Diamond 2002 [1991]; 2005 [1997]) from the notion of globalisation, except by taking an explicitly Eurocentric standpoint, however provisional. From another point of view, we may also want to add a "steam age" globalisation from 1850 onwards (Burke 2012, pp. 211–212), when both ships and trains powered by steam made it easier for academics to meet, and spread their knowledge, at conferences, and invited courses.

surprising, given the kind of creation myths found, not only in the Christian Bible, but also in most other mythic narratives. But, perhaps, more than anything, this was simply an expectancy that the world of common sense would continue to be as commonsensical as it had so far proved to be.

Still, if human beings expected the common sense world to go on beyond the horizon, they believed it to continue with a twist. We know from many historical sources, from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and beyond, that these human beings were thought of as members of "the monstrous races," also known, from one of the first chronists, as the "Plinian races" (cf. Friedman 1981). These were beings that were half human and half some other animal, or whose human anatomy was deviant to an extent of which nature is innocent. To the first group may be counted the *Cynocephali*, or dog-heads, *Hopopodes*, who have horses' hooves instead of feet, and the harpies, in the Greek sense of a woman with a bird's body. The second type comprises, among others, the *Amycturae*, whose lower lip protrudes so much that it can be used as an umbrella, the *Blemmyae*, with their face on their chest, the one-eyed *Cyclopes*, and the *Sciopods*, who have only one leg but are extremely skilled using it, although they spend most of the day protecting themselves from the sun with their foot. In the same group are in fact counted those who have strange customs, such as the cannibals, those who walk on all fours, those who imitate the language of any foreigner they happen upon, those who live in caves, and so on. As late as in Theodor de Bry's *Grand Voyages*, published between 1590 and 1634, and describing real voyages of discovery to Virginia, Florida, Brazil, and so on, the engravings showing the customs of the natives include several *Blemmyae* and *Sciopods* (cf. Bucher 1977; Sonesson 1989). Whatever prejudices contemporary people may have had about foreigners, the feeling of alienness was certainly more graphically embodied at those times.

Beside the Plinean races, comprising human beings of a monstrous kind, Antiquity and the Middle Ages also recognised a number of "fabulous beasts," combining parts of several known animals into new entities, such as unicorns, griffins, ant-lions, and the like (cf. Nigg 1999). The question then becomes whether we can trace any such embodiments of alienness into deep history. Klaus Schmidt (2013, pp. 200 ff.) tells us that in archaeology, "beings which, like animals, walk on four legs, are called monsters, those walking upright like humans are called demons." Thus our fabulous beasts would

be monsters, and our Plinian races would be demons (though one of the deviant types of human beings is in fact characterised by walking on all fours; cf. Friedman 1981). Schmidt goes on to claim that the "Ice Age lacks the four-legged 'monsters,' but doubtless we are confronted with 'demons.'"

Whether at this time, such "demons" were manifestations of alienness, in the negative sense, as in later times, or whether instead they represented gods or shamans according to a more common interpretation, is really at present impossible to know. In fact, if Jesus himself at times could be presented as a monster (cf. Bildhauer and Mills 2003, pp. 28 ff.), perhaps alienness itself is primary, and the positive and negative evaluation only occurs at a second stage. Indeed, Heinz Mode (2005) may be right to disregard the positive or negative evaluation of such beings, concentrating instead on the different combinations of animal and human parts, where either the first or the second dominate ("Tiermensch" and "Menschentier," respectively), adding to this a category of beings made up only of human parts, which are however combined in an anomalous way. Pursuing these types back to Assyria, Babylon, and Ancient Egypt, Mode as often discovers figures corresponding to divine being as the more demonical kind.[2]

The third globalisation, which is the one we tend to talk about today, obviously involves the rapid access of new facts and things through the intermediary of the Internet, but it may much more importantly have to do with the enormous displacements of populations which have taken place in recent decades, for instance from Arab countries and Africa and to Europe, which is to say that it mainly follows the scenario of immigration. The third scenario (also mentioned above in the introduction to Section 10.2) has not been accounted for so far. This is because it does not really form part of any of the big globalisations. It is rather business as usual. In traditional societies, exchange of mates between cultures must have been a very everyday kind of affair, though concerning more or less always the same two societies. Today they are much rarer: most people, according to statistics, still marry a person born on the same

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[2] Whether or not this means, as Mode clearly takes for granted, that some figures were developed in these countries and then were imported to other cultures, seems to us vain speculation. Since it all amounts to the recombining of a fairly small set of bodily parts, these figures might very well have been reinvented several times. It is interesting, however, that the earliest way of humanising animals seems to have been simply to depict them upright, that is, standing on their back feet.

street as themselves (cf. Burney 1973). On the other hand, exchange of mates may now take place between any cultures, also those at opposite ends of the earth. Although it is not part and parcel of any of the big globalisations, the exchange of mates is still a very formidable agent of globalisation.

### 10.2.2. Cultural Encounter as Communication

Semiotics of culture was first conceived by Yuri Lotman, Boris Uspensky, and a number of other scholars in the so-called Moscow-Tartu school in the sixties of the last century (Lotman et al. 1975). In the original version, it concerned the opposition of Culture to Non-culture, construed as a difference between order and disorder, and between many other binary terms.[3] Semiotics of culture constructs models of models of cultures – meta-models of auto-models (i.e. models of the own culture) – as they are created by members of a culture (or are implied by their behaviour). These models mainly involve relations that obtain (according to a particular model) between the own culture and other cultures (subcultures, etc.) – that is, the models are egocentrically defined, in the literal sense of being defined from the point of view of who ever says "I." The mutual models of different cultures may at least in part determine the way these cultures communicate with each other.

The Tartu school model is, as noted above, about relations between cultures, and it is also more specifically about communication taking place between cultures. As most clearly recognised by Jennie Mazur (2012), this makes semiotics of culture a model of (the difficulties of) communication. This should actually have been clear already from the contradictory description made by the two protagonists of the encounter between Mme de Staël and Rahel Levin, as analysed by Anna Cabak Rédei (2007, pp. 105 ff.). If so, we have to begin by understanding what communication at the interface between two cultures can be – which means we have to take our point of departure in communication as such. The first task will therefore be to liberate communication in the sense of presenting signs from the abusive spatial metaphor deriving from the sense in which it involves cars, trains, and the like, which change their position in space.

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[3] We here follow the original model, as later elaborated in Sonesson (2000, 2004, 2007a, 2012, 2013a). The notion of "semiosphere" was later used in part for the same purpose as "culture," but it was made to do several other duties at the same time, which left the notion rather fuzzy.

Starting out from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl – or, more exactly, from that of his follower Roman Ingarden – in order to describe communication, in particular as instantiated in a work of art, Jan Mukařovský, the main figure of the Prague school of semiotics in the 1930s, then added to this a social dimension. Contrary to other models of communication (in the sense of conveying information), the Prague school model is not about transportation or encoding, but involves the presentation of an artefact by somebody to somebody else, giving rise to the task of making sense of this artefact. An artefact is produced by somebody, and it has to be transformed by another person into a work of art going through a process of concretisation. The term concretisation is used here, not only in the sense of Ingarden (1965 [1931]), to refer to the set of "places of indeterminacy" present in a work, many of which are filled in by an individual interpretation of the work, but more specifically in the sense of Mukařovský (1970) and the Prague school generally, to emphasise the active, but still regulated, contribution of the receiver or audience to the work, which, moreover, takes place in a social context. Mukařovský, like Ingarden, formulated this notion of concretisation with reference to the work of art, but, as shown by Sonesson (1999), this conception can be generalised to all kinds of communication processes in which information is shared or perhaps, better, jointly created. Since, to Mukařovský (1970), this is a social act, the process of creating the artefact, as well as that of perceiving it, is determined by a set of norms, which may be aesthetic (and in works of art they would be predominantly so), but they can also be social, psychological, and so on. The work of art is that which transgresses these rules. Mukařovský points out, however, that these norms may be of any kind, going from simple regularities to written laws. We could conclude that there is a continuum from normalcy to normativity, without qualitative divisions being left out.

Since this model builds on the phenomenological conception of perception, it can easily be generalised to the everyday case of communication. All kinds of communication consist in presenting an artefact to another subject and assigning him or her the task of transforming it by means of concretisation into a percept. As should be clear from what was said above, the term concretisation, instead of simply perception, is used here to emphasise that when information is shared between subjects, all subjects are present at the creation. Simply put, what happens in communication, in the relevant

sense, is that some subject creates an artefact, and another subject is faced with the task of furnishing an interpretation to this artefact (cf. Sonesson 1999). As for recoding, it is sometimes needed, but most of the time, the same (or at least overlapping repertories of) signs may be used at both ends of the communication chain.
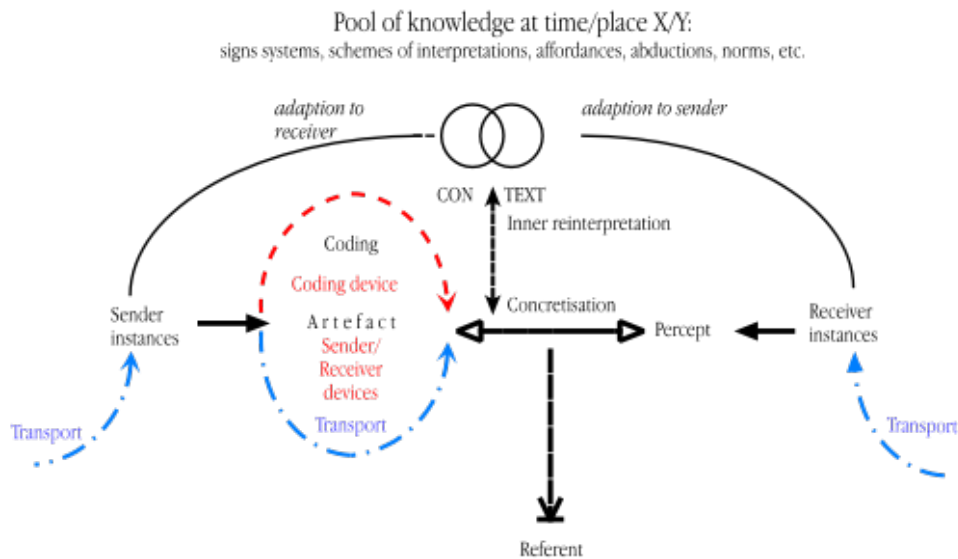


Figure 10.1. Model of communication integrating the Prague and the Tartu model, as proposed by Sonesson 1999.

According to the Prague school model all interpretation also takes places in accordance with a pool of knowledge, more or less shared between the sender and the receiver, which has two main incarnations: the set of exemplary works of arts and the canon, in the sense of the rules for how art works are to be made. Again, this double aspect of the pool of knowledge may be generalised from the special case of art to any artefact offered up for communication. On the one hand, there are certain exemplary artefacts, and, on the other hand, there are the *schemas of interpretation*, which can be applied to many different artefacts.

In the following, we will desist from using the Tartu school notions of "text" and "non-text," since these terms suggest analogies with linguistic constructs which are

clearly misleading, except in the case in which language is really involved. Instead we will talk about artefacts and non-artefacts (and indeed about *Ego*-artefacts, *Alter*-artefacts, and *Alius*-artefacts, as will be explained below). The change of terminology is only meant to avoid confusion. However, a little more will have to be said about our use of the term schema of interpretation

The notion of schema has a history in phenomenology, particularly that of Alfred Schütz, as well as in cognitive psychology, from the original work on memory by Frederick Bartlett (1932) and the genetic psychology of Jean Piaget to some more recent contributions to cognitive science, where they are sometimes known as scripts, by the likes of David Rumelhart and Roger Schank (see Chapter 6: Narrativity in this volume). Summarising this long and variegated tradition, Sonesson (1988, p. 17) describes a schema or script as being "an overarching structure endowed with a particular meaning (more or less readily expressible as a label), which serves to bracket a set of in other respects independent units of meaning, and to relate the members of the set to each other."

Bartlett talked mainly about memory schemas, that is, what the schema was used for, and Schank notably mentions the restaurant schema, thus referring to the domain of validity of the schema. You may of course use the restaurant schema to remember what happened during a certain visit to a restaurant, simply filling in the parts which are not specified in the schema, and modifying those which deviate from it. The same schema may be used to help you know how to behave when you go to a restaurant. The restaurant schema (or script) entails knowing more or less what you are expected to do while you are in a restaurant, which may also, no doubt, be different from one culture to another. Indeed, there may be cultures that have no restaurant schema, although they have a more general schema for eating together. Another schema, which has interested Rumelhart, but also a lot of French narratologists, is the story schema, which would seem to be of a higher generality. Still, any retelling of a story will depend on a lot of other interpretation schemas as well. Indeed, Bartlett, whose first book was about "primitive cultures" (Bartlett 1923), in his later memory research made use of a story, "The War of Ghosts" (Bartlett 1967 [1932]), which originated in an American Indian culture, and then presented it, at repeated intervals, to his British subjects. Not only was the story simplified with each further retelling, and with greater lapses of time, which is

of course the main function of schemas, but it was also made to conform to the expectations of a British audience at Bartlett's time, eliminating parts that seemed redundant or contradictory from such a point of view. This neatly illustrates the role of schemas at the meshing of cultures.

According to the original Tartu school model, each culture possesses "mechanisms of translation," permitting some "texts" (i.e. artefacts) to be imported into their own culture, often in a deformed state, while others are entirely rejected into the domain of "non-texts" (i.e. as non-artefacts to the culture in question), by means of specific "mechanisms of exclusion." As an example, with the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico, the old gods either had to be excluded from the Mesoamerican culture, or they had to be combined in some way with the new gods and saints promulgated by the new religion of Christianity. Numerous examples are given in the books of Serge Gruzinski (1988, 1990, 1999). Such "cultural translation" would seem to entail substituting the habits of one culture for that of another, and this substitution does not necessarily include using one language instead of another, but more generally adopting other behaviour patterns.[4] Thus, for instance, without even changing the language, substituting correct Mexican behaviour patterns for Spanish ones may mean determining an equivalence at the level of correctness as referred to the whole of culture, i.e. a translation, in the sense of the semiotics of culture, while making use of sequences of action that are at the same time quite different, and even opposed, in their direct meaning. The general restaurant schema may not be very different (but there are notable differences between that of the *taquería* and the *tapas* bar), but there are vast differences in other schemas into which this schema is often embedded, or which are embedded into it, such as those of politeness and courtesy. One may find some examples of this in the works of Octavio Paz (1986), who, when he sets out to describe what is particular to a Mexican, implicitly seems to be contrasting him with a Spaniard.

The clash of cultures thus basically seems to be a clash of schemas of interpretation. Quite the opposite function, positive from the point of view of integration, is suggested by an example given by Gruzinski (1999). How, he wonders, is it possible for native artists to be given the opportunity to integrate the representation of Pre-Columbian gods with that of Christianity, particularly in such a specifically Christian space as church

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[4] On this problematic use of the term "translation," see Sonesson 2014.

frescoes, as can be observed in several places in Colonial Mexico? It may be significant, according to his interpretation, that this happened at the same time that, with an appreciable time lag, the European fashion for Grotesque art came to be introduced into Mexico. Grotesque art should here be understood in the sense of the late Renaissance and Mannerism, as the filling up of all empty picture space with a proliferation of figures. If such an example can at all be generalised, it may mean that there may be schemas the function of which is to mediate between other schemas, and thus, allow the transference of values from one culture to another. In this case, Ingarden's description of the "filling up of empty spaces" could be taken quite literally: since Grotesque art, as understood here, precisely consists in having slots for figures everywhere, Pre-Columbian themes may be introduced, together with themes of any other origin, without particularly becoming salient – at least not to part of the public. If there are meta- or mediational schemas, however, it is not certain that they all work in this precise way.

### 10.2.3. The Second Globalisation: Conquering the World

Husserl's notion of the Lifeworld, "the world taken for granted," has by now become so familiar, that it is used by many who might not even know who first conceived this notion. In his later work, however, Husserl made a distinction between *homeworlds* and *alienworlds* (as referred in Steinbock 1995), which may be understood as a specification of the Lifeworld, that is, the world taken for granted by us, and the world we think is taken for granted by others. In this sense, the *Homeworld* (Heimwelt) is not one place among others, but a normatively special geo-historical place which is constituted with a certain asymmetrical privilege (Steinbock 1995, pp. 222–223), and which can be identified with a family or with a whole culture. In each case, what is outside of it is the *Alienworld* (Fremdwelt). This seems to be the same conception, clearly without there being any influence, as that formulated by the Tartu school. In this model, Culture is opposed to Nature or Non-culture, as inside is to outside, order to disorder, civilisation to Barbarism, and so on. Elsewhere, this has been called the *canonical model*, because of being defined from the point of view of culture, while implicitly placing the *Ego* inside it, and looking out on Non-culture (Sonesson 2000; and Chapter 1 in this volume). Like the Tartu school, Husserl only makes a binary

distinction here, but, as we shall see, it might be necessary to go beyond the canonical model.

By definition, there is only one *Homeworld*, but, according to what Sonesson (2000, 2004, 2007, and Chapter 1 in this volume) has called the *extended model*, there really are two kinds of *alienworlds*. There are those you treat as different but equal, with whom you are on speaking terms, those others that are really other egos to you. These represent the second person of grammar, or, in other words, the *Alter*. And there are those you treat as things, as the third person of grammar, or, in other terms, as *Alius*. The first is the kind of other that *Ego* recognises as being to himself another *Ego* (in the sense of Peirce's "tuism"), the symmetrical or, to coin a term, *Peircean other*. It constitutes the *axis of conversation*. The second is the asymmetrical or *Bakhtinean other*, which is not an other which can be a self. An extreme case might be the Sartrean/Hegelian other: the slave who failed to become master (but this supposes an earlier symmetrical phase, not of dialogue, but of combat). It is the other of *reference* or *nomination*.
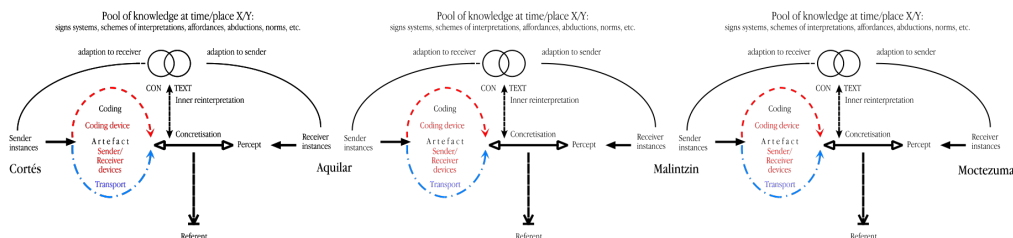


Figure 10.2. The translation chain from Cortés over Aquilar and Malintzin to Moctezuma.

Among the classical *discoverers* of the *New world*, Columbus, making lists of all kinds of resources and including human beings among precious metals, animals, and plants, is a good example of somebody conceiving the American continent as an *Alius*, while Cortés, employing an interpreter and using the myths of the Aztecs to integrate himself into their world, adopts the attitude one has to an *Alter* (cf. Todorov 1982). In our context, it is interesting to note that, while Columbus took with him an interpreter who understood Hebrew and Arabic, apparently expecting to find the natives speaking some kind of generic foreign language, Cortés managed to set up a chain of translators,

Aquilar interpreting from Spanish to Maya, and vice-versa, and Malintzin interpreting from Maya to Nahuatl, and vice versa (cf. Figure 10.2; and Miralles 2004). Given these definitions, it might be better, following a suggestion by Anna Cabak Rédei (2007), to adopt the terms *Ego*-culture, *Alter*-culture, and *Alius*-culture. In this context, the distinction is interesting to us, because sender and/or receiver may be situated in an *Alter*-culture or an *Alius*-culture. This again pinpoints the fact that semiotics of culture is really about communicative events. You may find yourself within the canonical model at one moment of communication, and within the extended model at another, and these different models may be distributed among different participants in the same encounter. Cabak Rédei (2007, pp. 105 ff.) discusses the quite opposite ways the same meeting between Mme de Staël and Rahel Levin is understood by the two persons involved, each of them bringing their culture with them for the occasion. Thus, Cortés, who in his initial encounter with the natives seems to have treated them as *Alter*, later on shifted to an *Alius* treatment, when he ordered their "idols" destroyed (cf. Gruzinski 1990). Thus, some of the events involving Cortés and his culture, on one hand, and the Aztecs and their culture, on the other, are *Alius*-encounters, and some are *Alter*-encounters.
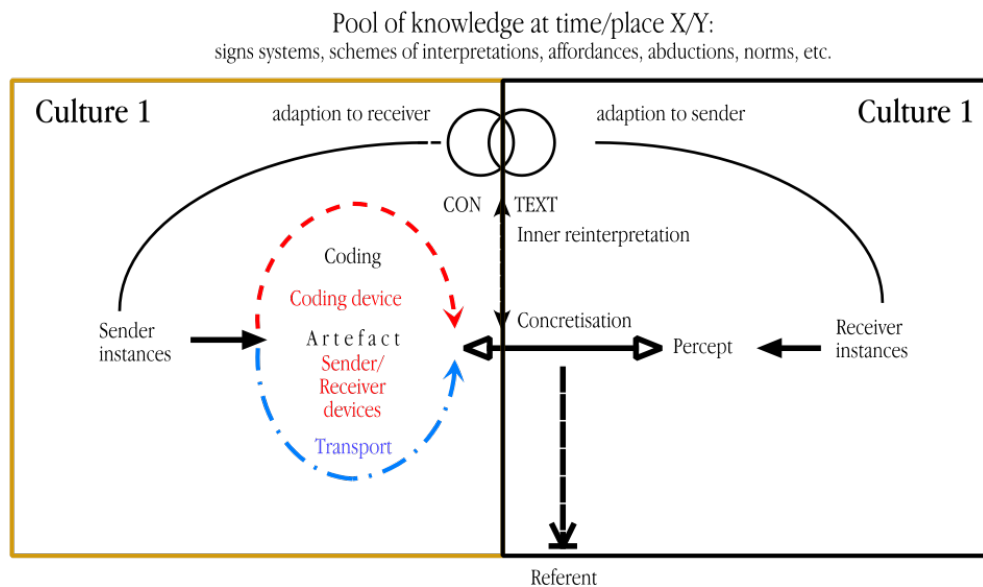
Figure 10.3. Any combination in a communicative situation of *Ego*-, *Alius*- and *Alter*-culture may occur at different moments, even between the same cultures.

Semiotics of culture is really about communicative events, in which cultures are confronted. Of course, a number of such events (perhaps the normal or normative ones) may then be abstracted to a more general level, presenting how encounters between these particular cultures normally play out. Cortés meeting the first natives and Cortés ordering the destruction of all the idols in Tenochtitlán is not living the same encounter between cultures. It is a question of projecting the communication model *within* the model of the semiotics of culture (cf. Figure 10.3). In this model, any couple of the three possible kinds of culture may be brought into communication with each other, occupying one or the other of the two positions.

This brings us to the question whether any translation, in anything like the proper sense, is really involved in the "mechanism of translation," as conceived by the Tartu school (cf. Lotman et al. 1975). Indeed, the mechanism of translation is said to deform the "texts" (artefacts) it helps importing, if it does not send them further to the very mechanism of exclusion. Thus, in post-Columbian Mexico, old gods like Tonantzin will

either be rejected entirely or, more probably, disguised as ("translated" into) the Virgin Mary. Rather than a translation, we here are met with a disguise: similar to the scarecrow, which is meant to fool the birds, but not human beings, this disguise should fool the invaders, but not the original settlers. Whatever piece of truth there may be in the idea expressed in the saying "traduttore, traditore," such is certainly not the point of the act of translation. The *telos* or goal of the act of translation is to preserve the meaning of what is translated as much as possible (cf. Sonesson 2014). At some later point, the Tartu school recognises that *Ego*-culture may set up its mechanism for engendering such "texts" (artefacts) as it has earlier on imported. It is not clear, however, whether this amounts to setting up a mechanism simulating the corresponding mechanism in the other culture, or constructing its very own way of producing these "texts" (artefacts).

But now consider what use the mechanism of "translation" could be in the case of importing "texts" (artefacts) from *Alter*-culture, or importing them to it. Cortés, we said above, wanted himself to be perceived as Quetzalcóatl, which is certainly an artefact of Aztec culture. Later on, many natives of Mesoamerica wanted their depictions of Tonantzin or Coatlicue to be perceived as representing the Virgin Mary (cf. Gruzinski 1999). This is not a sign being exchanged for another sign, as in translation, for, in this case, the sign substituted has to be recognised as being a sign; it appears to be more like camouflage, which, quite contrary to the sign, can only function as camouflage when it is not recognised for what it is (cf. Sonesson 2010). This at least seems to describe the kind of cognitive act accomplished by Cortés in identifying himself with Quetzalcóatl. There is not really any translation. But, in both cases, an equivalence of sorts is certainly created, and at some later stage, no doubt, the Virgin Mary really merged with Tonantzin rather than being simply a camouflage for her. This would then correspond to a stage in which the culture involved had set up its proper mechanism for engendering artefacts, which were originally partly foreign, and partly homely.

In one way or another, both cases involve the cognitive act of understanding (and/or misunderstanding), which has been the subject of much discussion in hermeneutics (see Ferraris 1996) which is not necessarily to say that it has been thoroughly elucidated. As it is pointed out elsewhere (Sonesson 2000, 2004), there are at least two different criteria for something being a "text" of a culture, which should not be confused: being interpretable, and being highly valued. Sacred language is an obvious case where these

criteria do not coincide. The analysis of this fundamental act, which should not simply be identified with translation, must be left aside here, although it is an urgent task for cognitive semiotics.

### 10.2.4. The Third Globalisation: The Speeding up of Communication

The third globalisation, and perhaps also the two other ones mentioned above, may very well be such merely from the point of view of our *Ego*-culture, which is egocentric in time as well as in space. The emphasis, thus far, has no doubt mostly been on the meeting of cultures, and the merger of their values, being possible without the traveller going out into alien space, without conquest or immigration, even without the exchange of mates between cultures, which might have been the original force of integration and globalisation. Although we physically are located at opposite corners of the world, we can meet in cyberspace. This computer-assisted utopia that we are presumably living in today sounds very much like a prolongation of Marshall McLuhan's (1962) "electronic age," inaugurated by what now seems a very old device, the television, and perhaps going even further than at the time in the creation of a "global village," complete with gossip, mass homogenisation, and all. This was certainly how the old television age was already interpreted by Neil Postman (1986), who believed that the dominance of visual media would do away with speaking and writing, and thus with thinking, although, somewhat paradoxically, he saw some hope in the then emerging computer culture. But this was a time when computers were still mainly used for computing, and the Internet was some time away. Since then, the Internet has no doubt, among many other things, accentuated both the old village culture of gossip and Postman's "show business culture" – the latter, notably, in the form of Facebook and Youtube.

Whether it has been mediated by the Internet or if it has mainly followed the old trajectories of influence from country to country, it is true that knowledge of other cultures has, in some sense, become much more widespread in recent decades, leading even to the adoption of some "foreign" habits, echeloned in succeeding decades, each one entering the middle of the scene, later to fade out lodging itself at the margin or disappearing completely. There was a time when we were all supposed to live on *croissants*, delivered, not from a *boulangerie*, but bought from the specialist shops called *croissanterie*, which offered these rolls with fillings never heard of in France,

and yet ended up invading also the French capital. Next came the coffee shops serving *espresso*, again presenting it in combinations never dreamt of in Italy, or in other countries, like France and Spain, which were early adopters of this brew, before it became a fashion (during a much earlier spread of such a fashion). Then there was so-called Mexican food, which in fact, in the best case, was really Tex-Mex, offering again ingredients, and combinations thereof, which would make any Mexican cry of chagrin. It should be clear that cultural values have here been transformed into market values, and that they have a sender which is not identical with the culture epitomised: The United States, which happens to be the main sender culture of our time, which is the place where these culinary habits first became a fashion, and where they were deformed, in the sense of the Tartu school, before they were sent around the world. In the future, of course, the main sender culture of our world may well become another one, for instance, India or China, but that will of course not change the essential logic of these cultural deformations (cf. Sonesson 2002, 2003).

All this should not make us forget a feature of the communicative situation which, for better or for worse, is rather original to the Internet: that we are able to communicate from one context of communication, or culture, to another, without the disparity of presuppositions being immediately obvious. In a way, this is already true of radio and television (though not from the original receiver back to the sender), and even more so about the telephone and the telegraph, though the latter has of course always been linked to another type of sender situation, the telegraph (in many countries identical to the post) office. One peculiarity of the cellular phone, in fact, is that it makes the contexts of sending and reception totally undefined. And yet, not only the old telephonic device, but also the cell phone, has a limitation which the Internet does not have: you can only communicate to one (or several) specific person(s), because you have to know his or her number to establish the connection, but on the Internet, there is no necessity of knowing an IP-address to be able to intervene in the communicative world of the other.[5] On the Internet, as most clearly epitomised by "chat:" (i) you can be contacted by a person you do not know, and who does not know you; (ii) it might be

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[5] Both on the traditional phone, and the cell phone, you may of course receive a chance call, whether made by children playing, or by some commercial enterprise using a list of prospective clients, but once you answer (or even before) you become aware of this and can choose to discontinue the connection. Something similar is true of spam mail.

impossible to discover who this person is, even after having entered into the contact; (iii) not only do you not need to have any overlapping presuppositions for the act of communication to take place (cf. Figure 10.1), but you may be unable to discover this fact. Without denying that this situation could be conducive to some positive encounters (a kind of digital boulevard, see Chapter 8: Urbanity in this volume), it is certainly also that which allows the kind of exploitation of children by adults posing as children themselves which has in recent years been on the front page of all news reels.

## 10.2.4. The Third Globalisation: The Hypertrophy of the Inner Other

And yet, the most salient effect, at least in the long run, of the third globalisation may really be the displacement of whole populations which is going on at present, and which has had the effect of moving, for instance, to Europe inhabitants of some Arabic countries whose cultural values could be seen as rather different from the European ones, causing cultural contacts which may give rise to frictions, hostility, and misunderstandings – to rejection and deformation, not only of cultural artefacts but, more importantly, of the very producers of these artefacts. This is clearly an issue for cultural semiotics. One obvious negative result of this situation is of course the increased attraction that right-wing parties have gained among those who resided beforehand in the areas where these populations have installed themselves. What is even more serious, however, is that it becomes ever clearer each day that mainstream politicians do not have any real solution to this problem either. In this context, we can only try to understand in what way this is something which has always been part and parcel of cultural encounters, and why it has now grown into an issue for which nobody seems to have any cure.

All cultures have had their inner others, that is, groups of people who possess no territory proper, but occupy that of another cultures (as interpreted from within the *Ego*-culture), although their cultural values are quite distinct from that of the bigger group. Such radical otherness can by attributed to somebody who does not (or does no longer) occupy another space: it may be an *inner other*, like the Moors in Spain, the Jews, and the Romani in much of the last two millennia of European culture, and may even be the servants from the point of the middle classes in contemporary Mexico, but also in Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century (as seen in some of Ingmar Bergman's

films) – or women in a world largely defined by men, even though then the inner other is not any longer identical to a minority (cf. Sonesson 2000, 2013). To take a more topical case, another example of our inner others are the immigrants (and their children) in contemporary Europe, in Sweden officially known as "first-to-third generation immigrants."

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 Mikhail Bakhtin's (1990, 1993; also see Section 1.4.2) sense, but by some more definitive kind of foreignness. It is not reversible. This is a non-reciprocal other, that is, an *Alius*, but it is also something more specific: an *Alius* without its own territory, i.e. an *Alius* that can be nicknamed *Lackland* (for a similar distinction, made, however, in quite a distinct context, see Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). The idea of the inner other lacking its own territory should not be taken too strictly. The ghetto is an example of a specific territory being assigned to an *Alius*, though the territory itself is, at least in part, under the control of the circumambient space. The first Jewish Ghetto, created in Venice in 1516, as Richard Sennett (2011) recounts, was built on an island, permitting the bridges to be regularly lifted at night-time, to impede the Jews from mixing with Venetians, but they could also be lifted to prevent Christian persecution of the Jews. Interestingly, this seclusion was not something that was only applied to the Jews, but to all foreigners who, because of their trade, lived in Venice, such as, notably, Germans, Greeks, Turks, and Dalmatians. As Sennett (2011, p. 4) observes, "They were permanent immigrants." Some such kinds of inner otherness are part of the *anthropological universals* present in all societies: women as opposed to men, children as opposed to adults. Other divisions are characteristic of particular societies: slaves as opposed to free men in Ancient Greece, Black and White people, and lately "Hispanics," in the United States, servants and their masters in many historical societies and still in some contemporary ones, 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 – which all manifest the mechanisms of exclusion as described by Michel Foucault (1971). We are not here concerned with economical differences, or even the positions occupied in the process of commodity production, as was Marx: clearly, all present-day existing societies are class

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societies, but that does not necessarily mean that there is an *Ego*-culture of the middle classes for which the working classes are perceived as "not like us," as embracing quite different cultural values, and even at not being quite human. This is no doubt how servants were considered in Europe until the beginning of the twentieth century, and as they are still seen today in large parts of, for instance, Latin America. And there are certainly groups in contemporary society who look upon immigrants, whether first, second, or third generation and beyond, as being of this kind – or at least this is suggested by the growing support for right wing political parties. In this sense, not much has changed, it seems, from Renaissance Venice.

Even if all societies may have had their inner other, or rather, a series of differently defined inner others, something seems to be different today. We can try to understand this here in a rather speculative mode, but no doubt empirical studies will be necessary to gain a full understanding. Jews and Romani have always been small groups in the societies in which they are present, having no necessity of confronting their cultural values with those of the bigger culture, the Jews because they were in other respects very well integrated, and the Romani because they were not integrated at all, but always in principle on the move. This also applies to the kind of immigration existing in Europe for most of the twentieth century, which was largely work-related, and involved people at least initially planning to go back to their own country. An exception to this is no doubt those Chileans and other Latin Americans who fled right-wing overthrows of their legitimate governments, for whom the clash of cultures, at least in Sweden, was very notable. Still, they remained minority groups. As for inner others which are not minorities, such as slaves, servants, and women, their opposition was apparently for a long time contained by social structures the values of which they shared in some recondite sense, even though this was contrary to their own interest – which means that they were effectively unable to put these structures in process.

The present situation is different from both these cases, because, first, it involves the displacement of large parts of populations from their country of origin, and, second, the displacement affects several different countries, many of which nevertheless share a traditional Muslim culture, which come together in the host country, and, third, the values of this culture appear, from the horizon of the European *Ego*-culture (and no doubt also from that of the Muslim *Ego*-culture) to be radically different from that of

the host countries, bringing these countries into spatial contiguity with societies whose world views, from the point of view of the European *Ego*-culture, appear to be temporally very distant, similar to that of the European Middle Ages (which was literally the term used by the present Swedish foreign minister Margot Wallström to describe one Muslim country, Saudi Arabia), or even unheard of in recorded European tradition.[6] This difference of cultural values concern many different features, some of which can more easily be historically recovered than others from earlier stages of the European *Ego*-culture: the strict observation of religious rituals as a part of everyday life; the isolation of women from public life, keeping them within the confines of the homestead, and obliging them to cover themselves in some kind of "veil" when allowed out of the house; the determination of marriage partners by the parents, from which boys seem to have more possibility of liberating themselves than girls; the murder of daughters or their freely chosen *beaux* to protect the honour of the family; and so on. Several considerations seem relevant here, from the point of view of cultural semiotics, as we have defined it:

(1) As we have seen above (in Section 10.2.3), a *meta-schema of interpretation*, allowing the free flow of interpretational schemas from one culture to another, solved, in colonial Mexico, the issue of integration between Christian Spaniards and Mesoamerican natives. Why have our politicians not been able to figure out some kind of meta-schema for integrating immigrant, and in particular, Muslim, cultural values with those of the host culture? To tell the truth, nothing indicates that the meta-schema, which worked in colonial Mexico, was, in any way, intentionally set up by any of the participants in the encounter. In the second place, the integration resulting from this meta-schema was not even partial, but concerned a single feature, and the consequences of this very limited integration are still part of everyday life in Mexico today.

(2) It may seem that the arrival of the Europeans in pre-Columbian America should provide a ground of comparison to what has happened in recent time in Europe. There are several reasons why pre-Columbian cultures succumbed so easily to a small rag-tag troop of Spanish *conquistadores*, some of which are well-known, and others which

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[6] From many points of view, there is certainly no homogeneous Muslim *Ego*-culture, nor is there, in a similar sense, a European one. However, it will be remembered that culture, in cultural semiotics, is defined from the horizon of a given *Ego*-culture, and from this point of view, the distinction is valid in the present context.

have been laid bare by Jared Diamond (2005 [1997]), in terms of "guns, germs and steel," as already the title of his book reads. According to such criteria, however, one would have expected Muslim cultures to be readily absorbed, or at least dominated, by the mainstream culture. No doubt they are, in actual fact, dominated by the host culture in many senses of the term, but not, it appears, from the point of view of cultural values. There is a difference, of course, in that, at the start, the Spaniards were those who were without a territory (at least in that part of the world), and who took up their position in that of the others, while the opposite is the case in present-day Europe. But this only serves to darken the mystery. Why are Muslims so good at holding on to their own culture, even in the face of a massively dominating culture that is keeper of the territory? Perhaps there is a connection here to the other aspect of the third globalisation, the speeding up of communications. Unlike the natives of America, the Muslims were, when living in their own country, already accustomed to some of the aspects of modern culture, and were thus able to negotiate them in relation to their own traditional values. When installed in their host country, they still keep contact with their culture of origin, not only because they receive news on television from their old country, thanks to their parabola antenna, but also because trips, in one or the other direction, between the host country and the country of origin is now much easier in practical and economic terms, though often politically hazardous. The Spanish conquerors of America did not have those facilities, nor did Karl-Oskar and Kristina, the protagonists in Vilhelm Moberg's book series on Swedish immigrants in North America. Nor did, of course, the native people of the America have any such advantage, because their own culture, present in the same space, was already being continuously eroded. It is however hardly possible at present to say if this is the difference which makes a difference.

## 10.3. "Traveller, Bring this Message Back to the Homeworld!"

Much of that which is specifically human, separating us from other animals, may be due to our repeated encounters with other people, as it first became widely possible in cities, for those living close together, and identifying more or less with the same *Ego*-culture (see Chapter 8: Urbanity in this volume), and as such encounters were later extended by voyages to territories associated with other cultures, and by means of information

reaching us thanks to other means of communication from these places. In the first part of this chapter, we were particularly concerned with the lonely traveller, who followed a path in a foreign culture, and reported back to his Homeworld, and then described his experience in terms of the accumulated knowledge which he or she conveyed, but also applied it in his own progress through the foreign culture. The Spartan warriors, to whose epitaph the title of this section refers, were of course unable to report much information back to their Homeworld (cf. Herodotus 1954, Book 7, p. 494). In the second part of the chapter, we added a wider perspective derived from the semiotics of culture, which includes the idea of gathering knowledge and using it for the interpretation of the other and his or her habits, at the same time contributing a dimension of identity negotiation, epitomised in the models joining *Ego*, *Alius*, and *Alter*, and specifying a particular part for *Alius* Lackland. Since the negotiations of identity may require a longer exposure to the foreign culture than is possible during a trip through the land, we concentrated on cases in which populations have been moved from one territory to another, which happens in rather different ways in cases we call conquest and immigration. We also took a "deep history" perspective, suggesting three waves of globalisation, the first one beginning with the path out of Africa of our forefathers, the second one corresponding to the age of conquests, and the third one, which conforms to what is commonly given this name today, involving virtual migrations, as on the Internet, as well as real ones on the ground – the ground which is the Lifeworld of humankind.