Great Traditions and Grand Narratives[1]

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Post-modernism and recent critical theory has sought to deconstruct the role of particular 'Great Traditions' and 'Grand Narratives' as privileged accounts of world affairs, contemporary and historical. In spite of this, such narratives, even if poorly understood, remain at the heart of much public debate and continue to shape national and global policies. These traditions, linked to elements of national identity, are often deployed to support a putative 'grand narrative', especially for civilizational complexes or rising powers. The viability, flexibility and reflective self-examination offered by such narratives, however, are not guaranteed by current patterns of knowledge production. It is the interaction between 'great' and alternative traditions that shapes a more inclusive 'grand narrative', refreshed to differing degrees in successive generations. Aspects of these grand narratives are mobilised in assessing or suggesting 'grand strategies' for ancient empires and modern states.

Traditions: Big, Little and Invented

Tradition is a nuance-laden word, even a dangerous word within English scholarship. It opens itself to the kind of irony found in popular movies, comedies and songs parodying the pompous social mores of the English aristocracy. It reeks of the elitism once associated with the mythical universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which in contemporary popular imagination seem to be a blending of Camelot and Sodom.[2] Tradition, however, is important both within organic societies and in self-conscious groups that re-invigorate, regenerate, or simply re-invent what they take to be the old in the name of new and contemporary needs.[3] Such traditions also form the basis for grand narratives of global and national history, shaping contemporary political debates, permissible actions, and future strategies.[4]

This linkage, however, rests on more than a set of ideas held up as norms. A tradition actively links past, present and future. Even when radically re-worked, major traditions usually extend beyond the three or four generations of informal oral memory and use specific mechanisms for the long term transmission of a craft, set of

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[1] The views in *The Culture Mandala* are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views, position or policies of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies. Bearing in mind the controversial debates now occurring in International Relations and East-West studies, the editors publish diverse, critical and dissenting views so long as these meet academic criteria.

[2] For which see the popular Inspector Morse, a series of books by Colin Dexter that became a famous British TV detective series. A more mundane but still interesting view will be found in FOX, Renee C. "Going Up to Oxford", *American Scholar*, *68 no. 4*, Autumn 1999, pp91-111. These views had already become standardised by 1967 in Joseph Losey's film *Accident*.

[3] HOBSBAWM, Eric "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in HOBSBAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp1-14.

[4] See for example MILLER, Paul D. "American Grand Strategy and Democratic Peace", *Survival, 54 no. 2*, April-May 2012, pp49-76; THAROOR, Shashi "The Land of the Better Story: India and Soft Power", *Global Asia, A Journal of the East Asia Foundation*, *2, no. 1*, Spring 2007 [http://globalasia.org/articles/issue2/iss2_9.html].

ideas, world-views, or politico-cultural goals. Written works, poetry, songs and ballads, rituals and social enactments can provide vehicles for this transmission of a given tradition. In this sense we can speak of hundreds of 'small' traditions that make up a living community, whether in its music, literature, schools of thought, or in simpler practices of activity ranging from the use of particular nursery rhymes through to patterns of everyday speech and daily life.[5]

Some of these traditions stand out by their 'exceptionalism'. Folk dances, the miming included in some Morris Dance performances, and the choice of May Day as a time of socialist parade and solidarity are based on now obscure origins that shaped local English custom into the 20th century.[6] Holidays, special festive meals and the weekend of non-work time are sacral remnants that persist even within modernised, irreligious communities, though now overlayed by a thick veneer of commercialisation. The dating system A.D. (merely adapted in its more neutral form as C.E. or Current Era) was an invented methodology formulated by the sixth-century monk Dionysius Exiguus that slowly gained dominance through the eighth to tenth centuries of the Middle Ages, a new tradition that is now used with little thought.[7] Many of these customs are so well embedded in daily life and dominant narratives used in exploring and understanding the world that they are hardly noticed. Although it is true that many of these 'strategies of everyday life' include elements of irony, satire, and adaptation, they are only exceptionally consciously worked-out stratagems, except, perhaps, during their period of origin.[8]

Traditions are born, change and die in part as their creators and audiences change. In turn, however, for a tradition to be fully developed it has to be recognised as something worthy of preservation, as having some significance to its society, or as having an intrinsic value that makes it worthy in its own right. Efforts are made to preserve customs and memories even if the audience changes. In these senses, even everyday practices, such as the different way the Chinese, English or Russians take their tea,[9] are more than received custom or meaningless routine. In some cases,

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[5] 'Everyday life' has become a key area of historical and sociological research, with an awareness that the patterns of everyday life involve both profound restrictions on behaviour, as well as an extension of what is possible in conjunction with global changes in economy and political organisation. See BRAUDEL, Fernand *The Structure of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, London, Phoenix, 2001.

[6] HILTON, R.H. "The Origins of Robin Hood", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p222; HOBSBAWM, Eric "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in HOBSBAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983, p8; HOBSBAWM, Eric "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914", in HOBSBAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp183-185.

[7] See BROOKE, Christopher *Europe in the Central Middle Ages 962-1154*, London, Longman, 1975, pp5-6; SMITH, Mark D. "Of Jesus and Quirinius", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 62 no. 2*, April 2000, p278. It would also generate a long-standing controversy over the actual date of Jesus' birth, which according to Christian, Jewish and Samaritan sources might be dated between 6 BCE and 7 CE, see MUSSIES, Gerard "The Date of Jesus's Birth in Jewish and Samaritan Sources", *Journal for the Study of Judaism, 29 no. 4*, 1998, pp416-437.

[8] Contra the emphasis on consciously worked-out strategies suggested in APPADURAI, Arjun *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p145.

[9] A huge and fascinating social and economic history has been established around the use of tea, coffee, and sugar, with strong political and commercial implications that have a global reach. See for example

traditions are consciously invented in order to claim the prestige or authority of the past: -

> 'Invented Tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.[10]

These 'little' traditions and 'invented traditions' often entwine themselves with greater narratives, creating a symbolically rich mix of values and emotive attachments. In this way they become part of the way the world and its history is understood, and are therefore integrated into the conduct of everyday life. Nationality, ethnicity, religion, and local culture become part of this mix, not in a neatly layered division of identities, but in turbulent and partly unconscious systems of affiliation, cultural rendition, and patterns of everyday thought.

This can be explored in the not-so-trivial popular images that used to be associated with English history. The 'British' yeoman was the humble but honest 'everyman' who in popular lore was held to be the backbone of the country.[11] In part, this tradition has been transformed via the symbolism of the yeoman's legendary weapon, the British longbow. The longbow, verses the crossbow, has an honoured place in English history that has now become mythologised, creating a symbolism that is a focusing theme even when it exaggerates the facts. It was viewed as the weapon par excellence of the poor, 'free' English peasant (a problematic terminology in itself).[12] It was a weapon that could be easily manufactured by small communities, though it takes great skill to do so and even more skill to use effectively on the battlefield. This places it in contrast to the crossbow, a weapon that in popular accounts takes less training and was favoured by professional soldiers (especially in French armies, and by Genoese archers and Swiss mercenaries in a slightly later period).[13] The longbow

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DU, Hongliang "AN Exploration into the Elegant Tastes of Chinese Tea Culture", *Asian Culture & History, 5 Issue 2*, pp44-47; HIGMAN, B.W. "The Sugar Revolution", *The Economic History Review*, 53 no. 2, May 2000, pp213-236.

[10] HOBSBAWM, Eric "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in HOBSBAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983, p1.

[11] For the early vagueness of this term, see HOLT, J.C. "The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp249-250. The term is used somewhat ahistorically in relation to the 12-14th centuries since the yeoman emerges more fully from around 1400 as richer peasants try to establish a free legal status and large landholdings, resulting in a relatively prosperous class in the 15th century, CANTOR, Norman F. *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made*, N.Y., Free Press, 2001, p71, pp202-203. In 1340, no more than 2% of English lands were owned by free peasants, Ibid., p123. By the 16th and 17th centuries a yeoman was a 'wealthy peasant farmer, an employer of labour, holding most of his land freehold', HILTON, R.H. "The Origins of Robin Hood", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p228.

[12] For the problems in defining the 'free man' in thirteenth century England, see HILTON, R. H. "Freedom and Villeinage in England", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp174-182.

[13] For the growing role of mercenaries and condottiere in Italy, France and England from 1300 onwards, see ALLMAND, Christopher *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300 - c. 1450*, Cambridge, CUP, 1988, pp73-76. In terms of chivalry and social order, their 'presence to people of the late Middle Ages meant destruction and disorder', Ibid., p73. The use of mercenaries had

was a long-range weapon, which, when properly used, was able to disrupt the massed charge of noble cavalry and at times penetrate a knight's armour.[14] It is therefore viewed as the great equaliser between the rich knight and the humble man. Its historical usage against the French knights at Crecy (1346), Poitiers (1356), and Agincourt (1415) has been lionised in Shakespeare and in modern cinema accounts of the Middle Ages.[15]

The reality of peasants and bowmen playing a growing role in medieval battles may have been rather more glum: fewer prisoners, more deaths of nobles, the slaughter of non-noble infantry, patterns of rebellion and resistance that prompted massacres on both sides of the class equation, but this impinges little on the popular imagination.[16]

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been extremely unpopular from the 12th century onwards, PRESTWICH, Michael *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, p152. For the negative attitude of the English towards the French in this period, and attitudes towards the cross-bow, see HIBBERT, Christopher *Agincourt*, London, Phoenix, 1995, p14, p25.

[14] CANTOR, Norman F. *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made*, N.Y., Free Press, 2001, p35. It also has an effective combat range of up to 200 metres, had a faster rate of fire than crossbows, was useful in sieges, and could be used by mounted soldiers, see ALLMAND, Christopher *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300 - c. 1450*, Cambridge, CUP, 1988, pp61-62. Arrows with special 'bodkin heads' were capable of piercing mail, STRICKLAND, Matthew *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy*, 1066-1217, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, p175; KEEN, Maurice "Robin Hood - Peasant or Gentlemen?", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p267; GORDON, Paul H. *The New Archery: Hobby, Sport and Craft*, N.Y., D. Appleton, 1939, pp21-22. For the making of yew long bows, Ibid., pp182-196. Replica bodkin head arrows are marketed today for archery enthusiasts, based on types preserved in the British museum [see http://www.saxonfox.com/book.htm]. These negative social views of the crossbow and their users are not to be accepted at face value, though the crossbow was viewed as a fearful weapon, e.g. it was banned in use against Christians by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1139, PRESTWICH, Michael *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, p129. The opposition of crossbowmen verses longbow archers is clearly represented in an image of the Battle of Crecy, Ibid., p140.

[15] CANTOR, Norman F. *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World It Made*, N.Y., Free Press, 2001, p34. For primary sources, see HIBBERT, Christopher *Agincourt*, London, Phoenix, 1995.

[16] See GIVEN-WILSON, Chris & BERIAC, F. "Edward III's Prisoners of War: The Battle of Poitiers and its Context", *English Historical Review*, September 2001, pp802-833; HIBBERT, Christopher *Agincourt*, London, Phoenix, 1995, p78, p99. For the ruthless treatment of non-noble infantry, see STRICKLAND, Matthew *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy*, 1066-1217, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, pp176-181. It is possible that the battle use of the longbow may have originated among the Welsh, SEWARD, Desmond *The Hundred Years War: The English in France 1337-1453*, London, Constable, 1978, pp52-53, though this view has been contested, PRESTWICH, Michael *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, p133; KEEN, Maurice "Robin Hood - Peasant or Gentlemen?", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p267. However, it seems that archery became a common social activity: "Since Edward I's reign every village in England had contributed to a national pool of archers, every yokel being commanded by law to practise at the butts on Sundays", SEWARD, Desmond *The Hundred Years War: The English in France 1337-1453*, London, Constable, 1978, p53; see also HIBBERT, Christopher *Agincourt*, London, Phoenix, 1995, p25. Legal records indicate that bows were 'common household' articles by the 13th century, KEEN, Maurice "Robin Hood - Peasant or Gentlemen?", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p267. Henry II's 'Assize of Arms of 1181' and following statutes by Edward I indicated that even poor men were expected to be able to arm themselves with a bow and quivers of arrows, HIBBERT, Christopher *Agincourt*, London, Phoenix, 1995, pp17-18. For an illustration of the regular practice of archery, see the Luttrell Psalter (1320-

The longbow remains associated with Robin Hood, his merry band of men, and resistance against the usurper or the tax man.[17] Active clubs in many countries still study not just archery, but a smaller number of aficionados train in the use of the traditional wooden longbow.[18] It is found proudly highlighted in various battle re-enactment societies that still operate in England and elsewhere. The practical tradition of the bow invokes several partial narratives, even if these are only poorly remembered by a given individual. Nor does it matter that the very historicity of Robin Hood, his possible exemplars, his class, dating, and mode of social action are hotly contested by academics.[19]

In this fable we see a mythologisation of English history, a story of popular resistance, the valorisation of the bravery and skill of ordinary soldiers verses mercenaries and knights, with a wider linkage to tales of brigandage, banditry, and robbery.[20] In part it is a heroic romance in which the under-dog can defeat the mighty, and also a folk tradition propping up national unity in the face of a divisive, class-laden reality. The bow also represents a symbol of the free if humble man, the hunter, an independent person who lives on the fringes between farm and forest.[21] The 'little tradition' of the longbow, then, merges into several larger narratives that are fundamental aspects of British and European history. This is part of its emotive appeal and its prestige, and when ordinary urban people today set out to learn the bow they do it for much more

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1340), in PRESTWICH, Michael *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, p139.

[17] For the way popular culture took over legends from folklore and transformed them, see HAYES, T. Wilson *The Birth of Popular Culture: Ben Jonson, Maid Marian, and Robin Hood*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1992. For the revival in films of this genre, see films such as *Robin Hood* (directed by Ridley Scott), *Robin and Marian, Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, and Mel Brook's *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*.

[18] See GORDON, Paul H. *The New Archery: Hobby, Sport and Craft*, N.Y., D. Appleton, 1939. For example, in 1998 some 1,600 archers hunted deer using tradition longbows and recurve bows at in a managed hunting preserve in Oklahoma, KAYSER, Mark "1,600 Merry Men", *Outdoor Life*, August 1999, 204 no. 1, pp88-89. Archery was also a central art in early samurai culture, and was later adopted as a suitable tool for the development of Zen insight, see HERRIGEL, Eugen *Zen in the Art of Archery*, translated by R.F.C. Hull, New York, Vintage Books, 1971.

[19] See HILTON, R. H. "Freedom and Villeinage in England", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp174-191; HILTON, R.H. "The Origins of Robin Hood", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp221-235; HOLT, J.C. "The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp236-257; HOLT, J.C. "Robin Hood - Some Comments", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp267-269; KEEN, Maurice "Robin Hood - Peasant or Gentlemen?", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp258-266; HAYES, T. Wilson *The Birth of Popular Culture: Ben Jonson, Maid Marian, and Robin Hood*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1992, pp57-68. A distinctly anti-clerical feeling seems a strong feature of many of the ballets associated with Robin Hood, see HOLT, J.C. "The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood", in HILTON, R. H. (ed.) *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp243-244.

[20] For the sociology of such linkages, HOBSBAWM, E. J. *Bandits*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1972.

[21] These traditions have been consciously invoked by a number of modern British writers including WHITE, T.H. *The Once and Future King*, N.Y., Putnam, 1958; WHITE, T.H. *Goshawk*, N.Y., Lyon & Burford, 1996, and of course in J.R.R. Tolkein's *The Hobbit* and *Lord and of Rings*, plus dozens of lesser historical and fantasy novels.

than for their health, for hunting, or competitive impulses. In the space of the ritual act of drawing the bow, they invoke a sense of the past which for them is in some sense liberating. Little traditions, in this way, may comprise social customs, oral traditions that become documented through writing, music, film or video, and often enshrine a particular view of the historical past.

Such traditions, whether consciously invented or not, serve diverse social functions: -

> They seem to belong to three overlapping types: a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, values systems and conventions of behaviour.[22]

Great Traditions and Selective Memory

The term 'Great Tradition' is even more problematic. It implies a singular greatness that sets itself over against countervailing, popular or minor traditions. The norms of a 'Great Tradition' can no longer be easily forwarded in academic circles. We are sometimes told that to assert a Great Tradition is to deny others, to engage in an act which is patriachical, authoritarian, hegemonic, historicist in misreading the past, propagandist or elitist.[23] Post-modernist thought, in particular, would deny the privileged claims of any single tradition over others as essentially misdirected, and potentially authoritarian. These criticisms have some validity. However, any meaningful engagement with the past does involve selection, organisation and interpretation of what is carried forward into current social memory.[24] On this basis, an attack on a Great Tradition is based at two levels: first, whether the correct tradition has been identified as 'great', and second whether the usage of the term is itself an invalid closure of alternative experiences.

Some attacks on Great Tradition rhetorics implicitly forward an alternative agenda or a more complete cultural canon for consideration. In history curricula, for example, the study of 'World History' was for a time disavowed in fear of a hidden Western and neo-colonialist orientation, leading to comparative histories that opened up more diverse readings, but also broke up any sense of history as an integrated object of study.[25] Even when insights from world history are used, they often still conceptualize the topic through Western approaches rather than a 'global lens'.[26] As Lyotard suggests, 'if we claim this world is historical, we necessarily intend to treat it

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[22] HOBSBAWM, Eric "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in HOBSBAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983, p9.

[23] For one such agenda, see HAYES, T. Wilson *The Birth of Popular Culture: Ben Jonson, Maid Marian, and Robin Hood*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1992, p7.

[24] See for example HEITZENRATER, Richard P. "Tradition and History", *Church History, 71 no. 3,* September 2002, pp621-638.

[25] GEYER, Michael & BRIGHT, Charles "World History in a Global Age", *American Historical Review, 100 no. 4,* October 1995, pp1034-1060.

[26] MARINO, Michael & BOLGATZ, Jane "Weaving a Fabric of World History? An Analysis of U.S. State High School World History Standards", *Theory and Research in Social Education, 38 Issue 3*, Summer 2010, pp366-394.

narratively'.'[27] In the current period of globalisation and intense cultural interaction, this poses the challenge of what would be a complete, or at least appropriately inclusive, narrative. It is precisely this challenge which is problematic, both because of a lack of perceived unity in subject and approach, but because at the dawn of the 21st century no grand narrative seems strong enough to legitimate an integrated view of humankind. Efforts at 'total history', though broadening the social palate of historians, has become too complex a task to generate a genuinely integrated account of social, economic and political trends. It now seems fruitful to speak of contested, plural globalisations, indeed the 'clash of globalisations',[28] engaging contested, divergent histories. How these divergent narratives interact or might be critically compared has yet to be systematically explored.

Likewise, any desire for a 'higher' canon of privileged texts (or cultural products) is disavowed, as in the postmodern attack on earlier modes of literary criticism. In this sense, post-modernism is another move in reaction to tradition, at first in relation to modernism, but also by invoking a new dialogue with major artistic, literacy and philosophical legacies of the past. It claims to be all-embracing because of its openness to all narratives, though sometimes anchored to a Marxist philosophy of history.[29] Alternatively, post-modernism has tried to place itself beyond normal historical or critical judgements: -

> Postmodernism is, in its negative way, a ruthlessly "totalizing" system, which forecloses a vast range of critical thought and emancipator politics - and its closures are final and decisive. Its epistemological assumptions make it unavailable to criticism, as immune to critique as the most rigid kind of dogma (how do you criticize a body of ideas that a priori riles out the very practice of "rational' argument?). And they preclude - not just by dogmatically rejecting but also be rendering impossible - a systematic understanding of our historical moment, a wholesale critique of capitalism, and just about any effective political action.[30]

Once the criteria legitimating a dominant tradition as rationally, empirically, or politically structured truth have been demolished, such choices may lead to relativism, with 'post-colonial, gay-feminist, popular-cultural' canons then being based on social choices and reform agenda.[31] It seems that individuals and societies are condemned to choose, even if having no ultimate foundation for the validity for the choices they make in perpetuating particular texts and traditions. However, the choice made has a

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[27] LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982-1985*, trans. by Don Barry et al., Sydney, Power Publications, 1986, p35. See also JAMESON, Fredric *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, Methuen, 1981, p35 for the centrality of 'textualization and narrativization' in the apprehension of the 'Real'.

[28] A term deployed in KOBRIN, Stephen J. "The MAI and the Clash of Globalizations", *Foreign Policy, 112*, Fall 1998, 97-109, but now part of the debate over patterns of globalisation and clashing values, norms and religious codes in the international system. See for example FLUSTY, Steven *De-Coca-colonization: Making the Globe from the Inside Out*, New York, Routledge, 2003; GILL, Stephen "Constitutionalizing Inequality, and the Clash of Globalizations", *International Studies Review, 4 no. 2*, 2002, pp47-65; BERGER, Peter & HUNTINGTON, Samuel (eds.) *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, Oxford, OUP, 2002.

[29] Contra the main thrust of JAMESON, Fredric *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, Methuen, 1981.

[30] WOOD, Ellen Meiksins "What is the 'Postmodern' Agenda", in WOOD, Ellen Meiksins et al. (ed.) *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, N.Y., Monthly Review Press, 1997, p14.

[31] BAUMLIN, James S. "Reading Bloom (Or: Lessons Concerning the "Reformation" of the Western Literary Canon")", *College Literature, 27 no. 3*, Fall 2000, p37.

profound effect on the wider culture, the operation of societies, the development of nations and the shaping of the international politics (see further below).

The term 'Great Tradition' was at first used in European scholarship to indicate central bodies of work that became a touchstone for later generations. These touchstones shaped not just literature and philosophy, but the dominant legal, social and institutional structures of Europe. Greek philosophy from the Pre-Socrates on was said to set the basis for a great tradition in philosophy that led to Christian and Roman pedagogy, directly to the Scholastics of the Middle Ages, and then via the Renaissance reaction to the systematic philosophy of Kant and the Enlightenment. Such a canon is sometimes explicitly structured, or forms an implicit selection in works that would seek to give a historical account of the subject. The titling of earlier Greek philosophy as 'Pre-Socratic', likewise, shows a clear focus on the work of Plato, concealing serious problems in the distinction between Socrates and Plato politically and methodologically, and making other important philosophical traditions distinctly secondary, e.g. the brilliance and humour of the early Cynics.[32]

For example, Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* provides in effect a suggested canon of major Western philosophies. It was first published in 1945 and thereafter became a best-seller in the field. A closer reading of this once 'popular' text, however, indicates the high degree of selectivity involved. Russell discounts virtually all of phenomenological and existential thought because he views it as irrational and insignificant to the mainstream he thinks vital to philosophy. Husserl and Heidegger are not found in the index of this work, and Nietzsche's philosophy is castigated as morally and emotionally 'unpleasant'.[33] This was very much an English philosophy that discounted much recent 'nonsense' from the Continent. This trend towards a rigid, analytic philosophy, sometimes dubbed the 'logic mafia' in Anglo-Australian academic circles, comes at the exclusion of huge segments of ethics and political philosophy. Here, the dangers of an exclusive canon become clear, even in apparently magisterial works by respected masters of a given tradition. Like magicians, such masters of canon must both conceal and reveal. Russel's *History of Western Philosophy* is anything but a history, and does not adequately embrace European let alone 'Western' philosophy.

In religious studies, early Christianity also generated a 'Great Tradition' of core religious texts (collected together as different versions of 'the' Bible) and orthodox commentaries that were structured to provide a unified body of validated, revelationary works. These were then used as the basis for a new 'universal' culture and its educational needs, partly absorbing, partly displacing earlier Graeco-Roman educational traditions. This process would persist through two millennia, though the contents (but not aim) of this project would come under severe disputation. This religious canon, and its interaction with Greek and Roman thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca (especially noteworthy in relation to St. Augustine, St.

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[32] This is parallel to Lyotard's effort to envision a 'nonhegemonic Greek philosophy' based on the Stoics, Cynics and Sophists in contrast to Aristotle, JAMESON, Fredric "Foreword", in LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pxix.
[33] RUSSELL, Bertrand *History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, London, Unwin Paperbacks, 1961, p739.

Thomas Aquinas and Hildebert, Archbishop of Tours)[34] has since been subject to the critical study of modern and post-modern scholarship, indicating that the way these texts are read is perhaps just as important as their selection. The result was, in any case, a canon that was highly disputed during epochs of religious conflict (during the first four centuries of the Christian era, during the Reformation, and over the following centuries as the canon was subject to critical, historical, linguistic, source-analysis and modernist readings). The hope for new revelations from non-orthodox sources (such as the Apocrypha and Gnostic texts), the dispute over who had the right to read and interpret scripture, and the effort to 'democratise' the Bible through extensive translation and private reading were major social controversies, now largely forgotten in popular memory. On this basis, even within Christian communities, there was an intense struggle over freedom of thought and conscience waged precisely at structuring a tradition that was to be dominant over others. This has a direct bearing on modern social issues, ranging from Papal infallibility to the ordination of female priests. This approach also generated methods of interpretation (literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical) that would have a profound influence on later literary and philosophical thought.[35]

In literature, F. R. Leavis established one (very contested) view of the 'Grand Tradition' in English literary studies that would set the tone and structure for the teaching of literature for several decades. The *Great Tradition* he developed was not an exclusively national or territorial one, but one defined by cultural and literary enterprises. This can be seen in the opening declaration of the work: 'The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad.'[36] There was no concern that Conrad was born in Poland or that Henry James was an American novelist.[37] The entire work was premised on the need to make 'challenging discriminations' in selecting the few really 'great' novelists from among those that were merely good, thereby forming a 'useful idea' of the tradition of the English novel.[38]

Numerous challenges can be made to F. R. Leavis' formulations. His choice of novelists seems limited and almost arbitrary, based on only partly expressed formulations of taste. The tradition he speaks of has been clearly invented on the rather tautological reasoning that these selected writers form the Great Tradition and this is what he 'means' by 'Great Tradition'. All other works must stand or fall by implicit comparison. Thus D. H. Lawrence is to be accepted, while a writer such as Meredith is clearly secondary. Lastly, the choice of works separates these particular writers from a much wider European and American engagement with the novel, something well understood and indeed central to the writers of the period. Classical, Russian, French, German, Italian and Spanish influences were vital to these 'English' writers, an issue largely ignored in Leavis' analysis. In doing so, Leavis does not explore the mentality of the writers or their milieu, but rather generates an inventive, post-hoc construction of taste.

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[34] On these issues, see SOUTHERN, R. W. *The Making of the Middle Ages*, London, Pimlico, 1993; BARCLAY, William *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World*, London, Collins, 1959.

[35] See DOWLING, William C. *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious*, London, Methuen, 1984, pp108-109.

[36] LEAVIS, F.R. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conr*ad, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1962, p9. To these he also adds D.H. Lawrence, Ibid., p37.

[37] F.R. Leavis notes this himself, Ibid., p19.

[38] Ibid., pp9-11.

Nonetheless, on these selected writers F. R. Leavis does show genuine and at times convincing insight, and for this reason his influence remained strong in structuring the education of the English the novel during the 20th century.[39] A positive view of his contribution makes the point that he helped shape a modern canon of literature and criticism: -

> Leavis's teachings have spread widely and sunk deeply. Their effects may be observed in entertainment (in the surge in popularity of Austen and James); in new hotbeds of criticism (it is difficult to imagine that some could have flourished without Leavis's seeding); in the rise of a lambent cultural commentary that cuts across formal boundaries, like the writings of Trilling, Clement Greenberg, Jacques Barzun, Joseph Epstein, or Gore Vidal; and, of course, in higher education. His devotion to teaching, about which he wrote too little directly, underpinned and informed all of his writing. In assessing the character of humanities education today, or of education in professions dependent on literacy, or of the canons of value in any of the literary arts, it would be impossible to overstate the importance of F. R. Leavis. In the company of Johnson, Arnold, Eliot, and Trilling, he belongs on a Mount Rushmore of literary lawgivers.[40]

F. R. Leavis' views almost immediately came under strong attack, but the impulse towards creating and debating a literary canon continued, at the very least for education purposes. This can be clearly seen in over 1,000 works that used the term 'canon' in relation to literary studies that were published from the 1960s onwards, leading to works such Leslie Fiedler and Houseton Baker's *English Literature: Opening Up the Canon* (1981), and then followed by formal debates in the journal *Critical Inquiry* (1983-1984).[41] This culminated in a tendency to extend and decentre the English-language literary canons, with new works drawn in on uncertain criteria,[42] often to simply show that the curriculum is open to modern, feminist and post-colonial influences.

Nor was this tendency toward canon creation just an 'English' phenomenon. These trends were especially strong within 'national' literatures. For example, efforts have been made to structure a canon of Jewish writing, based around the idea of a *kinus* or in-gathering of Hebrew texts, a project conceived as early as 1913 by the Hebrew poet Chaim Nachman Bialik.[43] This project remained controversial, however, even through the 1960s, and today what to include or exclude in such a canon, let alone in the 'best one hundred', remains highly contested.[44] Similar processes can be cited for all major national cultures, partly generated for educational reasons. However, these are also pressing political reasons for such projects, such as valorising a nation and a particular set of ideas promoted within it. This is especially important for new and emerging nations (often combined with stabilisation of language norms), but also for peoples that feel that their culture or status is to some degree under threat, e.g. France's

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[39] Among thinkers and writers such as T.S. Eliot and Northrop Frye.

[40] FREEDMAN, Morris "The Oracular F. R. Leavis", *The American Scholar, 70 no. 2*, Spring 2001, p99.

[41] BAUMLIN, James S. "Reading Bloom (Or: Lessons Concerning the "Reformation" of the Western Literary Canon"), *College Literature, 27 no. 3*, Fall 2000, pp32-33.

[42] Ibid., p38.

[43] RUBIN, Adam "'Like a Necklace of Black Pearls Whose String Has Snapped": Bialik's 'Aron ha-sefarim' and the Sacralization of Zionism", *Prooftexts, 28 Issue 2*, Spring 2008, pp157-198; HALKIN, Hillel "Writing Jewish", *Commentary,110 Issue 3,* October 2000, pp37-43.

[44] HALKIN, Hillel "Writing Jewish", *Commentary,110 Issue 3,* October 2000, pp37-43.

promotion of language and culture (Francophonie) within a dominant English-speaking global culture, or the need to maintain a distinct Ukraine language in the face of a dominant Russian tradition. Another example is the emergence of a unified modern Greek language through the 19th to early 20th centuries, a process that needed to collapse the distance between elite, literary Greek and everyday argot (*katharevousa* verses *dhimotiki*), as well as to heavily borrow from ancient Greek to structure an educational language suitable for the emergence of a modern, independent state, an issue which remains debated today.[45] This very process led to heroic literary productions in modern genres, e.g. Nikos Kazantzakis' retelling of the Odyssey legend in modern form, and in more general terms to the work of writers such as Odysseus Elytis and George Sepheris.[46] Likewise, Catalan nationalism was boosted in the 19th century by efforts to promote written Catalan and its use as language for poetry and high art.[47]

National literatures have been somewhat broadened to the include the idea of cultural literacy, an effort to extend a literary canon to a wider circle of cultural understandings, yet sometimes still tailored to particular national audiences.[48] Key prizes, e.g the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer prize, the various honours for media products (the Emmy and Grammy awards), also generate *de facto* lists of greats that are deemed worth of sustained study. The great proliferation of 'peak' prizes in all areas of literature, media, professions, sporting and social life is one of the unremarked trends of the twentieth century. In part driven by commercial interests, it also responded to a need to create a new canon, once 'out-dated' great traditions were displaced. There has also been some effort to broaden this approach through the idea of an emerging global 'cultural literacy', thereby widening the range of media and ideas studied, but still in effect generating an exclusive canon in part based on 'a western template of knowledge'.[49] Likewise, museums, universities and heritage institutes around the world, and UNESCO globally, preserve key artistic and architectural products on the basis of an implicit canon, even when this is structured from diverse professional opinions.

The presuppositions of these usages of Great Tradition rhetorics include a conscious tradition of valuation and evaluation. Some works, ideas or traditions are deemed of greatest significance, others are lesser, minor, or unimportant. In turn, certain works are excluded as heretical, either in a religious sense, or as a profanation or demeaning of the values of the tradition. Popular works or specialised genres are often excluded as ephemeral or trivial, though there has been some tendency to include a few of these

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[45] TSOUKALAS, Constantine "European Modernity and Greek National Identity", *Journal of Southern European and the Balkans, 1 no. 1*, 1999, p12; BRAGUE, Rémi *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, trans. by Samuel Lester, South Bend Indiana, St. Augustine's Press, 2002, p99.
[46] See KAZANTZAKIS, Nikos *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, trans. by K. Friar, N.Y., Simon & Schuster, 1958 & TSOUKALAS, Constantine "European Modernity and Greek National Identity", *Journal of Southern European and the Balkans, 1 no. 1*, 1999, p13.
[47] HUGHES, Robert *Barcelona*, London, Harvill, 1992, pp298-306.
[48] See HIRSCH, E. D. et al. *Cultural literacy : What Every American Needs to Know*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
[49] See these concerns in MacKINNON, Dolly & MANATHUNGA, Catherine "Going Global With Assessment: What to do When the Dominant Culture's Literacy Drives Assessment", *Higher Education Research & Development, 22 no. 2*, 2003, pp131-144.

to demonstrate a new democratisation of judgement.[50] In literature, for example, the occasional science fiction or detective novel may find a place in the realm of 'high art', but more often these genres have their own specialised prizes and awards.[51] A few works may cross these boundaries, e.g. Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle*, and Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, but this is relatively rare. Likewise, there has been until recently a turn away from historical fiction as a frame which might generate works fitting for elevation in the canon.[52] Indeed, genre itself helps shape the canon by deciding that some forms are more 'canonical than others', in part on a loose grading of 'generic height', e.g. serious and realist fiction verses 'thrillers, westerns, and fantasy'.[53]

Nonetheless, emerging narratives value the learning and transmission of earlier sources, even when a rebellion in content or ideas occurs. Aristotle would overturn much that he had learnt from Plato, who apparently stated that 'Aristotle has kicked me just as a colt kicks it mother.'[54] Beethoven soon extended the symphonic form as handed to him by Haydn and Mozart. Mao would use and then transform the thought of Marx and Lenin, adapting it to China, with a new emphasis on the role of peasant and people's war. In such cases, the prior tradition was understood, mastered and adapted. As a blues musician might say, 'they had paid their dues'. These were generational processes, with occasional revolutions that never fully escaped their origins. In this sense, there is an organic (and quasi-systematic) integration of a body of learning within major, consciously-defined traditions. Music or art or literature is handed down in complex forms, even iterating earlier forms that have been largely superseded. This is also the case with the complex transmission of literary genres and poetic influence operating unconsciously: -

> In literature, the basis of resemblance lies in literary tradition. What produces generic resemblances, reflection soon shows, is tradition: a sequence of influence and imitation and inherited codes connecting works in their genre. Poems are made in part from older poems: each is the child (to use Keats' metaphor) of an earlier representative of the genre and may yet be the mother of a subsequent representative. Naturally the genetic make-up alters with slow time, so that we may find the genre's various historical states to be very different from one another. Both historically and within a single period, the family grouping allows for wide variation in the type. In its modified form, the theory of family resemblance also suggests that we should be on the lookout for the unexhibited, unobvious, underlying connections between the features (and the works) of a genre. As with heredity, with generic tradition too we have to expect quite unconscious processes to be at work, besides

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[50] For how the decision as to the genre of a piece of work shapes the readers view of its meaning, see FOWLER, Alastair *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p38.

[51] Science Fiction and Fantasy awards include the Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy and Arthur C. Clarke awards, while the Agatha Award provides a list of classic mystery and detective novels. These lists are sometimes displayed in public libraries as a de facto reading guides.

[52] Briefly noted but not further explored at BLOOM, Harold *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, N.Y., Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994, p21. Thus, in any given period there is 'a fairly small repertoire' to which readers and critics can respond to easily, FOWLER, Alastair *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p226.

[53] See FOWLER, Alastair *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p226. See also Ibid. p216.

[54] HUMMEL, Charles "Aristotle", *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education, 23 no. 1/2*, 1993, p39 [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/ThinkersPdf/aristote.pdf].

those that readers are aware of. It would be strange if genre did not in part operate unconsciously, like other coding systems within language and literature.[55]

In some cases does this lead to the 'anxiety of influence', a largely misplaced fear based on the twentieth century emphasis originality and individuality.[56]

Even revolutions often invoke the past as they point towards a new future. The body of learning is seen as a key or prize, a solution that must be struggled for, then developed or transcended. Even rejection (Down with Confucius! 'Down with representation! No key changes!),[57] the classic revolutionary or postmodern move, entails a kind of appraisal of the earlier tradition to which it is therefore still linked in opposition. These social transformations superficially justify a special role for the custodians of a tradition within society, whether as insiders or critical outsiders. These gatekeepers either preserve or declare war on a heritage, labelling it for valorisation or destruction. This process generated several key phases of intense debate on cultural works that were deemed central to a culture, and in doing so created the equivalent of 'canon warfare'.[58]

At one stage Harold Bloom argued that the creation of such canons is a radical political act: -

> All canonizing of literary texts is a self-contradictory process, for by canonizing a text you are troping upon it, which means you are misreading it. Canonization is the most extreme form of what Nietzsche called Interpretation, or the exercise of the Will-to-Power over texts.[59]

In a later work Harold Bloom went on to generate a 'Western Canon', which he argued was not a personal creation but a general assessment of great works of literature on largely aesthetic criteria, and that the creation of the canon should not be viewed as an essentially ideological act.[60] However, he did recognise that 'canons always do indirectly serve the social and political, and indeed the spiritual, concerns and aims of the wealthier classes of each generation of Western society.'[61] On this basis he focused on twenty-six writers, with Shakespeare paramount.[62] The only criterion explicitly developed, outside of literary values, was that a great work had to be not only re-readable, but would yield more understanding and engagement on repeated readings for a suitably serious reader.[63] Along the way Bloom makes wild swings at those he registers in the 'School of Resentment': 'Feminists, Afrocentrists, Marxists, Foucault-inspired New Historicists, or Deconstructors'.[64] In the end, *The Western*

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[55] FOWLER, Alastair *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p42.

[56] Perhaps rather overstated in BLOOM, Harold *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, N.Y., Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994, p8.

[57] These slogans refer to revolutionary doctrines in 20th century China, in abstract European art, and in modern modal jazz respectively.

[58] BAUMLIN, James S. "Reading Bloom (Or: Lessons Concerning the "Reformation" of the Western Literary Canon"), *College Literature, 27 no. 3*, Fall 2000, p32.

[59] In Ibid., p22.

[60] BLOOM, Harold *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, N.Y., Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994, p22.

[61] Ibid., p33.

[62] Ibid., p3.

[63] Ibid., p30, p518.

[64] Ibid., p20.

Canon is an eminently readable if idiosyncratic appreciation of sections of the Western tradition, but not a coherent argument in support of aesthetic choice, nor a serious engagement with the historical forces shaping reading, writing and canon formation over the last three thousand years.

It is true, however, that these traditions are only partly determined by social and economic necessity. On the contrary, in the case of symbolic traditions, objects and customs are often only freely used symbolically when their practical use has faded.[65] In Marxist terms, this means that the economic base (or infrastructure) and the modes of production do not fully determine the superstructure,[66] which is itself a powerful source of social forces that in turn affect the way power, wealth, and political affiliation is structured. The ceremonial ownership of a sword by modern military officers now has connotations of class and honour that is only possible when the sword is no longer an appropriate weapon for soldiers. Salutes are still made when visors no longer need to be lifted from helmets. Soldiers drill even as modern armies aim to be increasingly mechanised and mobile and no longer march by ranks into battle. T-shirts bearing the face of Che Guevara can only be worn by de-politicized (North) American you once his revolutionary threat faded.

At a deeper level, the wholesale submission of the 'public' to commodified and 'canned' cultural products has in turn sustained new industries in the mass media and entertainment areas that now help drive growth in developed and some developing countries (especially India and China). These products generate the ideas and images mobilising in everyday values. These trends do allow a certain innovation and improvisation,[67] but only by those knowledgeable enough to create and shape the cultural products and their attendant technologies. These issues are important, because it is only within the realm of culture and thought that humans can begin to grasp the possibility of a critical 'Freedom' positioned against the conditioning forces of physical 'Necessity'.[68]

However, there is an important relationship between latent meaning and superficial structures or forms of expression that does need careful consideration. Exploring the relationship between the psychoanalytic thought of Freud and the Postmodernism of Jameson gives us one entry point to the need for interpretation: -

> . . . Freud's central importance for Jameson derives from his insight that interpretation is indispensable in any situation where a latent meaning lies hidden behind what is open or expressed or manifest, and that this in turn is always the case when a primal and eternally repressed source of energy (for Freud the individual unconscious, for Jameson the collective or "political" unconscious) exists in a troubled and antagonistic

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[65] See HOBSBAWM, Eric "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in HOBSBAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence (eds) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983, p4.

[66] For short accounts of the 'vulgar' Marxist view, see DOWLING, William C. *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious*, London, Methuen, 1984, pp59-60; JAMESON, Fredric *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, Methuen, 1981, p25, pp32-33.

[67] See APPADURAI, Arjun *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p55. Some of this wild creativity can be seen in some intentionally cross-genre hybrids, e.g. 'Steampunk' literature and film, mixing historical, science fiction and fantasy elements.

[68] Adapting the position found in JAMESON, Fredric *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, Methuen, 1981, p19.

relation to those overt structures (for Freud the mechanism of the conscious, for Jameson culture and ideology viewed as a whole) that exist to hold the repressed at bay or "manage" its threatening eruptions.[69]

Furthermore, it matters a great deal whether these traditions look backwards or forwards for their legitimation. Different ways of viewing history can be typified as to whether they look to an ideal origin or utopian past, forward to an end or completion of human life, or whether they are cyclical in their explanations.[70] Traditions tend to anchor themselves either on a supposed founding event, proto-typical act, or to a future aspiration. As expressed by Jean François Lyotard: -

> The "metanarratives" I was concerned with in *The Postmodern Condition* are those which have marked modernity: the progressive emancipation of reason and freedom, the progressive or catastrophic emancipation of labour (source of alienated value in capitalism), the enrichment of all humanity through the progress of capitalist technoscience, and even - if we include Christianity itself in modernity (in opposition to the classicism of antiquity) - the salvation of all creatures through the conversion of souls to the Christian narrative of martyred love. Hegel's philosophy totalises all of these narratives and, in this sense, is itself a distillation of speculative modernity.
> These narratives aren't myths in the sense that fables would be (not even the Christian narrative). Of course, like myths, they have the goal of legitimating social and political institutions and practices, law, ethics, ways of thinking. Unlike myths, however, they look for legitimacy not in an original founding act but in a future to be accomplished, that is, in an Idea to be realised.[71]

Of course, the pasts idealised may never have existed, and the futures postulated may not be probable. Both trends have strong elements of projection and wish fulfilment, a choice made in the face of current conditions in the hope of change. Even when far short of a rational expectation, traditions help sustain a wide range of projected heavens and hells, hopes and fears. In their legitimating role, such projects alternatively mobilise, titillate, and infantilise people as they make emotional choices about their lives, about what they will passively accept, or passionately embrace.

Over the last thirty years the usage of the term Great Tradition was diffused, broadened, and then ideologically attacked. For essentially good reasons, the term Great Tradition was extended to the idea of Great Tradition*s* in the plural. It was thus recognised that major cultures around the world had their own literary, philosophical and religious traditions that in terms of duration, total output and historical important certainly rivalled that of Europe. This concept was at first most readily applied in Asia, especially to India and China, then more begrudgingly to the non-Judaeo-Christian cultures of Islam and the Middle East.

Dangers in this approach, however, soon emerged. In looking for these great Asian traditions, there was a tendency to read them through the lens of European history and define them in contrast to Western religion or philosophy. Buddhist ritual systems which did not develop a coherent doctrine, like the monotheisms of the Middle East,

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[69] DOWLING, William C. *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious*, London, Methuen, 1984, pp36-37.

[70] Hence the difference between mythic (past), cyclical views of universal history (as in Greek historians such as Polybius), and teleologies looking forward to the Messiah or the 'End of Times', as in Judaeo-Christian thought.

[71] LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982-1985*, trans. by Don Barry et al., Sydney, Power Publications, 1986, p29.

were apparently not really religions in a doctrinal or 'dogmatic' sense, but religions only in a falsified 'orientalist' imagination. Logic in India and China was largely ignored in the philosophical mainstream and treated as a historical specialisation, with perceptions of Indian thought as essentially religious, and Confucianism as little more than a social ethic. Liberal thought spoke of dialogue and tended to treat these traditions as unique in their own right, but still resulted in lopsided historical or comparative analysis. Though important, no truly synthetic or global dialogue of these diverse Great Traditions has emerged, in spite of the sincere efforts of scholars and organizations to structure comparative religious studies and a 'dialogue of civilisations'.[72]

However, the challenge to the Great Tradition went well beyond this diversification into alternate civilisational traditions. In a sense, the Great Tradition was correctly nominated as a coercive body of ideas that tended towards reaction, conservatism, patriarchy, and colonial mentalities even within a 'core' culture.[73] By its very act of choice it disesteemed, edited and suppressed alternative viewpoints. Put simply, the 'master narrative, much missed by some of our craft, imposes the view of the masters (and less often of the mistresses) on all other human beings.'[74] Such realisations left literary critics and educators in a difficult position, and posed a direct attack on the traditional humanism on which liberal education had been built: -

> Need I repeat the liberal view? Surely its most common argument - that the secular canon teaches "humane" and "universal" values - is the least persuasive: if aesthetic judgements are arbitrary (as Marxists claim) rather than universal, then a literary canon preserves little more than the tastes and interests of the dominant class (or race, or gender). And the argument that a literary canon preserves cultural memory proves nearly as objectionable: by equating cultural value with the dominant ideology, such a canon serves little more than to silence marginalized cultural voices (so the refutation goes).[75]

These insights led not just to revision, but to an enormous widening of the canon and its related teaching curricula, and to a re-reading of the cultural products of the past for that which had been lost or obscured. This can most easily be seen in the 'rescue' of the culture and literature of the working class and peasantry, in the recovery of female artists and feminist literatures, in the acceptance of gay counter-cultures, and the decentring of the canon to include more non-Western works (mostly in translation). In this setting almost any item of popular culture can be viewed as a valid object of social study equal to that of other cultural products, whether Warner Brothers cartoons, comics or the collecting bottle tops.[76]

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[72] See for example ABADJIAN, Vahram "Towards A New Strategic Goal: The OSCE and the Dialogue of Civilizations", *Helsinki Monitor*, 17 Issue 4, October 2006, pp302-306; KÜNG, Hans *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, London, SCM Press, 1997.
[73] HOERDER, Dirk "How the Intimate Lives of Subaltern Men, Women, and Children Confound the Nation's Master Narratives", *The Journal of American History*, 88 no. 3, December 2001, pp874-881.
[74] Ibid., p877.
[75] BAUMLIN, James S. "Reading Bloom (Or: Lessons Concerning the "Reformation" of the Western Literary Canon"), *College Literature, 27 no. 3*, Fall 2000, p30.
[76] See for example BRIENZA, Casey "Taking Otaku Theory Seriously: Comics Studies and Japan's Theorists of Postmodern Cultural Consumption", *Studies in Comics, 3 Issue 2*, 2012, pp213-229; SANDLER, Kevin S. (ed.) *Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Bros. Animation*, New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1998.

At the same time, the notion of popular culture and 'cultural studies' was thrown into the forefront of academic circles as a new and transparently 'relevant' industry, in part because of the huge economic interests involved in the entertainment and media industries.[77] This new consumerism was based on diversified information media, infotainment, voyeurism, and vicarious excitement (culminating in the misnamed 'reality tv'). Popular culture is important because it is indeed one vehicle for popular history and cultural memory, but there is a real danger that its uncritical reiteration will result in replication of prejudices and exclusions.[78] Power and meaning are embedded in well-established narratives and metanarratives that are the main means of viewing the world. Hence, much of this popular culture repeats existing themes and relationships, though dressed up in new styles and fashions. Such products also tend to yield the most fame and economic returns, with the market reinforcing the mainstream with only limited viability for marginal products.[79] These help mould the kind of stories, narratives and wider meta-narratives that dominate cultural production.

Metanarratives and Grand Narratives

Metanarratives are structured patterns of context and meaning that shape human understanding of the world, society, and states, often within a dominant or hegemonic framework.[80] These narratives provide implicit and explicit touchstones of meaning, as well as providing a core of moral judgements. They may be ahistorical or erroneous in their factual foundations, but these wider metanarrative structures inform any 'Grand Narrative' of national 'destiny' or civilizational 'progress'.

In the post-modern intellectual world it is now hard to appeal to any standard, whether neo-Kantian ethics, revolutionary neo-Marxism, or positivistic scientific reasoning. Such referents have been undermined by the academic attack on metanarratives of all stripes: -

> Particularly suspect in current theory is the Enlightenment 'metanarrative," with its "explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectic of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth." . . . Postmodernist/poststructuralists thus disavow, in their formalist and ultimatist rejections, divergence of considerable, oppositional importance. They throw out Kant and Hegel as well as Marx, all of whom rely on metanarratives of one sort or another, little consideration being given to the fundamental differences separating such systems of thought. All states are simply states, and hence oppressive, an anarchist might argue (Down with the Bolsheviks!); all wars are to be condemned, asserts the pacifist (We take no sides in Vietnam!); all metanarratives are suspect and compromised, there being no master categories of

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[77] CUSIC, Don "The Popular Culture Economy", *Journal of Popular Culture*, *35 no. 3*, Winter 2001, pp1-9.
[78] See for example, the South African experience in COPLAN, David B. "Popular History; Cultural Memory ", *Critical Arts*, *14 no. 2*, July 2000, pp122-144. One clever analysis of such relations can be found in SAUNDERS, Robert A. "Undead Spaces: Fear Globalisation, and the Popular Geopolitics of Zombiism", *Geopolitics, 17 Issue 1*, 2012, pp80-104.
[79] See HERMAN, Edward S. & CHOMSKY, Noam *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, N.Y., Pantheon Books, 1988.
[80] See further WHITE, Hayden *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

explanatory authority, proclaims the post-structuralist (Away with all interpretive pests!).[81]

In this sense, postmodernism is defined by its rejection, incredulity towards and critique of metanarratives.[82] However, in their rejection of the explicit use of metanarrative, they merely open the door to implicit influences from embedded forms of understanding that structure their own use of alternatives. In rejecting such narratives they fall either in oppositional (dialectical) tropes of irony or denial, affirming well-known patterns of historical understanding that they wish to deny.[83]

This can be seen in the structuring of historical accounts as continuous narratives, providing the context for how the past and present are 'read'. In this sense, historical accounts are partly structured by wider narratives that shape their preconceptions and meaning. As noted by Hayden White: -

> I treat the historical work as what it most manifestly is: a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse. Histories (and philosophies of history as well) combine a certain amount of 'data', theoretical concepts for 'explaining' these data, and a narrative structure for their presentation as an icon of sets of events presumed to have occurred in times past. In addition, I maintain, they contain a deep structural content which is generally poetic, and specifically linguistic in nature, and which serves as the precritically received paradigm of what a distinctively historical explanation should be. This paradigm functions as the 'metahistorical' element in all historical works that are more comprehensive in scope than the monograph or archival report.[84]

Historical accounts thus do not escape their aesthetic, cognitive and ethical frameworks, leading both to underlying narrative structures (Romantic, Tragic, Comic or Ironic),[85] and to the carrying forward of current concerns into the re-construction of the past. Thus the valorisation of the 'great man' verses the 'working class', conservative male values verses the recovery of feminist heroes, the focus on the individual verses social and economic determinants, often mirror current political and ideological orientations. Likewise, the post-modern rejection of historical contextualisation and the 'meaning' of history itself is conditioned by an inventive intellectual move designed to dislodge prior patterns of explanation, i.e. is it a deeply ideological move designed to create it own new metanarrative, even if this is more pluralist than those preceding it.

The trend in historiography over the last several decades to become more 'scientific' and sociological, or to use a wider range of economic and archaeological data, does not remove the problem of the centrality of narrative. As summarised by Dowling: -

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[81] PALMER, Bryan D. "Old Positions/New Necessities: History, Class, and Marxist Metanarrative", in WOOD, Ellen Meiksins et al. (ed.) *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, N.Y., Monthly Review Press, 1997, p66.

[82] FOSTER, John Bellamy "In Defense of History", in WOOD, Ellen Meiksins et al. (ed.) *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, N.Y., Monthly Review Press, 1997, p184.

[83] See the detailed discussion of modes of ironic understanding in WHITE, Hayden *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

[84] Ibid., Preface, pix

[85] Ibid., pp7-37.

> The serious challenge that has arisen within historiography in recent years to old-fashioned "narrative history" may thus be regarded not as an attempt to escape narrative itself - which would on this account be impossible - but simply to move from one narrative mode (kings, battles, riots, elections, etc.) to another. The account of the Mediterranean world given by Braudel, with its long, slow, magnificent sweep of geological changes, trade routes, and the rest is, as has often enough been pointed out, no less a story than the histories it aimed to correct or replace, but simply a story on a different scale, and the same will be true of other *Annales* historians or, in the United States and Britain, of the "cliometricians" who favor quantitative methods.[86]

Visions of a 'total history', an all-embracing and adequate world view, have been difficult to sustain in an intellectual climate which is both critical and willing to deconstruct all assumptions and criteria. [87] There has been a late 20th century move to suggest that all 'Grand Narratives' or 'master codes' that would provide a unified, meaningful context for contemporary experience are now discredited, or at best an interpretive method that perpetuates a given ideology.[88] In part, this critique is based on the highly reductive nature of any method which claims to explain what complex 'reality' actually 'means'.[89]

Lyotard has seen this as a 'crisis of narratives' and in particular of the rational Enlightenment narrative in which 'the hero of knowledge works toward a good ethico-political end - universal peace'.[90] Furthermore, it is not possible to position this interaction of traditions and narratives as merely a form of education, since equality between 'sender and receiver' in such a system is precisely *not* possible.[91] Far from equality, one tradition is usually dominant, either by its authoritative source (State or Church), because of its relative dominance of key gate-keepers (academics, journalists, politicians), or because it has shaped popular mentality into 'a way of thought' that has become a false 'second nature'. In the current period, this dominance has been further reinforced by the productive structures of knowledge and science, which give enormous advantages to large, rich institutions in the production and legitimation of data verified as productive within the capitalist system.[92]

Furthermore, even within what used to be the critical domain of scholarship, universities, and research centres, there tends to be collective groups of networked researchers that in effect create new 'invisible colleges' that have the 'critical mass' needed to gain further funding. These collectives dominate information flows and publishing within their areas of expertise (as researchers, sources of peer review,

[86] DOWLING, William C. *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious*, London, Methuen, 1984, p96.

[87] For these problems, see HERNANDEZ, Rafael "A Total History", *Radical History Review, Issue 91*, Winter 2005, pp94-97; LEITHART, Peter J. "Theories of Everything", *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, no. 85, August-September 1998.

[88] JAMESON, Fredric *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, Methuen, 1981, p10; DOWLING, William C. Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious, London, Methuen, 1984, p107.

[89] DOWLING, William C. *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious*, London, Methuen, 1984, p101.

[90] LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp1-2.

[91] Ibid.,, p24, p28.

[92] Ibid.; HERMAN, Edward S. & CHOMSKY, Noam *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, N.Y. , Pantheon Books, 1988; THRIFT, Nigel "The Rise of Soft Capitalism", in HEROD, Andrew et al. (ed.) *An Unruly World?: Globalization, Governance and Geography*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp25-71.

editors, and subsequent decision-makers in funding), a factor now deepened by financial, marketing and corporatist pressures.[93] Enlightenment knowledge, ironically, becomes complicit with 'various oppressions'.[94] Such knowledge-systems have now been recognized as part of the persuasive and attractive 'soft power' that underpins the political influence that states wield in their own interest. Rising or 'returning' powers such as Russia, India and China recognise the need to increase such informational and research capacities on the global stage.[95]

In brief, if we accept these views, no all-embracing universal metalanguage seems possible, and even 'the nostalgia for the lost narrative' has been lost.[96] Modern science does not fill this role, even though it builds its own narratives of explanation and tries to establish its legitimacy through them.[97] However, for the wider public, science has become synonymous with a 'magical' technology, a universal 'fix-it' that provides computer toys, machinery and improving efficiency, but few 'tools of thought'.

However, as Jameson has noted, it is possible to go beyond merely describing the fracturing of these grand narratives and great traditions, and to assess 'their passage underground, as it were, their continuing but now *unconscious* effects as a way of "thinking about" and acting in our current situation' and the 'persistence of buried master-narratives in what I have elsewhere called our "political unconscious"'.[98] The everyday search for wholeness, unity, embracing understanding, and a metanarrative that tells us about the world and who we are within it remains, even as new intellectual pundits suggest that such a task is fruitless. Part of the issue here is that such quests are never purely individual, intellectual or emotional. They also shape society, influence material and power relations, and set up major projects that societies may pursue for decades or even millennia. Hence, mental, religious and political orientations are interlinked. For example, for the last four centuries at least, the cure for the discontent of those trapped in the exploitation that was a central feature of the European social structures was not through the healing offered by orthodox religious faith, but a more radical break with the values of their time, i.e. by

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[93] See LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p99, footnote 185; SAUL, John Ralston *The Unconscious Civilization*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1997, pp70-73; THRIFT, Nigel "The Rise of Soft Capitalism", in HEROD, Andrew et al. (ed.) *An Unruly World?: Globalization, Governance and Geography*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp25-71.

[94] PALMER, Bryan D. "Old Positions/New Necessities: History, Class, and Marxist Metanarrative", in WOOD, Ellen Meiksins et al. (ed.) *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, N.Y., Monthly Review Press, 1997, p65.

[95] MILLER, Benjamin "Contrasting Explanations for Peace: Realism vs. Liberalism in Europe and the Middle East," *Contemporary Security Policy, 31 Issue 1*, April 2010, pp134-164; DING, Sheng. "Analyzing Rising Power from the Perspective of Soft Power: a New Look at China's Rise to the Status Quo Power," *Journal of Contemporary China, 19 Issue 64*, March 2010, pp255-272; NYE, Joseph S. "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly,* 19, no. 2, Summer 2004, pp 255-270.

[96] LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p41.

[97] Ibid., p64.

[98] JAMESON, Fredric "Foreword", in LYOTARD, Jean François *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pxii. Cf Jameson, Fredric *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Itaca, Cornell UP, 1981.

becoming rebels.[99] This rebellion involved past challenges to the power of the Catholic Church, to religious explanations of the world, to its control of education and the problem of the tutelage of society by exclusive groups. This problem, clearly identified by Kant in the tutelage of society by priests, educators and moral mentors,[100] remained, for example, a driving force in the freemasonry movement (at times a radical organization in Europe and America), and was a powerful factor in anti-clerical feeling in early twentieth century Spain and Mexico.

Moreover, such repressed groups are not necessarily powerless, as noted in the thought of Antonio Gramsci, here summarized by Marcus Green:

> In his separate analyses, Gramsci never reduces subordination to a single relation, but rather conceives subalternity as an intersectionality of the variations of race, class, gender, culture, religion, nationalism, and colonialism functioning within an ensemble of socio-political and economic relations. Gramsci's analysis considers the composition of the dominant political power within the state, civil society, and hegemony, as well as the conditions in which subaltern groups organize institutions to represent themselves. The Gramscian notion of 'subalternity' implies that subaltern groups are subordinated to the power, will, influence, leadership and direction of a dominant group or a 'single combination of dominant groups. However, subaltern groups do not necessarily lack political power by definition.[101]

Subaltern traditions then, are not just an intellectual challenge to dominant-culture systems, they are a direct social and political challenge as well.

This dynamic between dominant and alternative culture complexes is also found in the production and control of popular media. The recovery, adaptation and appropriation of secondary traditions remains deeply involved with the changes of popular culture, which contains patterns of appropriation and commodification. This can be seen in the music industry: -

> In his model, the arts of the subaltern are musically "edited" by dominant groups into a form compatible with their own aesthetic norms or stereotyped notions of the "other." The "other" in turn accepts (and in some cases even perpetuates) these new representations as a means of gaining access to the commercial market but evidently transcends them, developing new and more oppositional forms of expression that more accurately reflect the subaltern's own social experience. Dynamics of this sort are evident in the successive popularizaton of jazz, blues and R & B in the United States, the controversy they first aroused, and their eventual mass acceptance in somewhat altered form.[102]

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[99] For parallel ideas, see JACOBY, Russell *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing*, Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1975, p35; HOBSBAWM, Eric *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz*, London, Abacus, 1999; HOBSBAWM, E. J. *Bandits*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1972; HOSBAWM, E.J. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1971.

[100] KANT, Immanuel, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?*, translated, with an introduction, by Lewis White Beck, Upper Saddle River, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1997.

[101] GREEN, Marcus "Rethinking the Subaltern and the Question of Censorship in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks", *Postcolonial Studies, 14 no. 4*, 2011, p400.

[102] MOORE, Robin *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburg, 1997, p7. See further KEIL, Charles "People's Music Comparatively: Style and Stereotype, Class and Hegemony", *Dialectical Anthropology, 10*, 1985, pp119-130.

The crucial point is that there are often hegemonic relations between different cultures and traditions: -

> Cultural hegemony on a national level entails a constant reformulation of the norms of group behaviour so as to include and thereby neutralize at least some oppositional forms of expression associated with minorities. To regulate subordinate groups, the dominant classes are thus forced to accept the cultural markers of those they repress.[103]

Repression is only one of the many mechanisms whereby cultures displace alternative and threatening bodies of knowledge, while recording and remembering (constituting) 'themselves'. This remembered cultural identity, however, would be greatly impoverished if subaltern traditions did not flourish underground, developing ways to not only survive but also influence the wider society with which they are often in conflict. More than adornments or curiosities, and even more than a resistance literature structuring the 'borderlands' for marginalised groups,[104] the subaltern provides a source of creativity, revolution and pluralism which has been crucial for European, Asian, Middle Eastern, American, African and global cultures. It is this interaction between 'great' and alternative traditions that shapes a more inclusive 'grand narrative', refreshed to differing degrees in each generation.

From Grand Narratives to Grand Strategy

Nonetheless, there has been a return in the 21st century to the use of historical 'grand narratives' and 'grand strategy' as explanatory mechanisms helping understand new patterns of conflict and the role of rising powers. Thus it is hard to explain the return of Russia as a regional 'post-imperial' power, the rising influence of China and India, and recent revolutions in the Middle East without recourse to long-term narratives that can explain the behaviour of states, populations and civilizations. Such narratives permeate the news media and current affairs blogs, but are also commonly found in academic journals and scholastic books.[105]

As noted by J.M. Bernstein: "Grand narratives are one of the central ways in which the social imaginary of a people is instituted and becomes manifest; and grand narratives are 'grand' because what they narrate is the work of the social imaginary itself."[106] These grand narratives present a way of seeing the broad sweep of history, enhance soft power credentials, and present to others a justification or understanding of the behaviour of states, organizations or civilizations. Under conditions of

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[103] MOORE, Robin *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburg, 1997, p88.

[104] For this approach, see BROWN, Stephen "Decomposing the Canon: Alter/Native Narratives from the Borderlands", *College Literature*, *25 no. 2*, Spring 1998, pp30-44.

[105] For a small sample see MILLER, Paul D. "American Grand Strategy and Democratic Peace", *Survival, 54 no. 2*, April-May 2012, pp49-76; TRENIN, Dmitri "Russia Quests for New Role in Post-Imperial Age", *Global Times*, 21 December 2011 [http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=46321]; TRENIN, Dmitri "Russia's Post-Imperial Condition", *Current History*, October 2011 [http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=45753#];TSYGANKOV, Andrei P. *Russia's Foreign Policy Agenda: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, Second Edition, Lanham, Rowan & Littlefield, 2010; FRIEDMAN, George "Russia's Grand Strategy", *Stratfor*, 21 November 2012 [http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/DigitalLibrary/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=155023].

[106] BERNSTEIN, J.M. "Grand Narratives", in WOOD, David (ed.) *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, London, Routledge, 1991, p115.

globalization and global information flows, it is therefore often the nation 'that tells the better story' that can sustain its comprehensive national strength, its foreign policy, and a more supportive international environment.[107]

These historically-based grand narratives are often used as the essential background for suggesting current policies and future goals for states. Russia's unique political role as a Eurasian 'power', China's need to rise to is 'rightful-place' in the Asian political order or the United States' effort to retain 'global leadership' are examples of prescriptions based on such implicit narratives.[108] As such, grand narratives are implied in most 'grand strategies', whether applied as historical explanations or as arguments for political action.

'Grand strategies' link societal, political, economic and military capabilities into long-term agenda that empower states or organisations. It is directed to future goals and the shaping of the tools and environment needed to achieve that future:

> Firstly, while grand strategy is also concerned with applying the means, it also crucially includes the *development* of the 'means' used. Strategy neglects the resources - the people, money and materiel - needed but grand strategy includes these as an integral part of its implementation - an important matter in this age of austerity. Secondly, grand strategy directs the full array of the instruments of national power, rather than like strategy focusing on a single type of instrument. A grand strategy directs all the national means, including diplomatic, informational, military and economic. More than simply whole-of-government, it's whole-of-nation.[109]

When these 'grand strategies' and political narratives are tied to national identity clashes, e.g. past Serbian claims over Kosovo, Russia's 're-assertion' of itself as a great power on the global stage, the territorial boundaries of modern China, or the relationship between China and Japan, the states involved may be less open to diplomatic negotiation, may suffer from strong domestic pressures on foreign policy, and find competition deepened.[110]

Grand strategy concepts are often invoked to explain the long-term behaviour of empires or powerful states. In the case of the Roman Empire, a grand strategy evolved for the use of large legionary forces (originally a citizen army, but then drawing on a widening population base outside of Italy) as a deterrent and strike force, backing up an expanding frontier region intermeshed by specific tribal alliances and economic

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[107] THAROOR, Shashi (2007). „The Land of the Better Story: India and Soft Power‟, *Global Asia, A Journal of the East Asia Foundation, Vol. 2, No. 1*, Spring, 2007 [http://globalasia.org/articles/issue2/iss2_9.html]; LEE, John *Unrealised Potential: India's 'Soft Power' Ambition in Asia*, Centre for Independent Studies, Foreign Policy Analysis, No 4, 30 June 2010 [http://www.cis.org.au/images/stories/foreign-policy-analysis/FPA4.pdf].
[108] See for example BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, N.Y., Basic Books, 2009.
[109] LAYTON, Peter "Grand Strategy? What Does that Do For Me?", *The Strategist*, The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, July 2012 [http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/grand-strategy-what-does-that-do-for-me/].
[110] ANAMI, Yusuke "Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" and the Unity of the Chinese Nation", *AJISS Commentary* (Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies), No. 180, 13 August 2013 [http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en_commentary/201308/13-1.html]; KUCHINS, Andrew C. & ZEVELEV, Igor A. "Russian Foreign Policy: Continuity in Change", *The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 35 no. 1*, Winter 2012, pp147-161 [http://csis.org/files/publication/twq12winterkuchinszevelev.pdf]

interests.[111] Political and military leadership became deeply connected, with Roman leaders such as Marius, Sulla, Julius Caesar and Augustus proving themselves as military commanders to gain prestige and dominance. Rome was also willing to pre-emptively weaken any major powers on its borders, e.g. Carthage, Macedonia, Hellenistic Kingdoms, and to avoid power vacuums along its borders by making new alliances, e.g. with Armenian kings in order to reduce the power projection of external empires such as Parthia.[112]

In the case of the (Eastern Roman) Byzantine Empire, surviving even after hundreds of years of conflict with Parthians, Arabs, Hungarians, and Turks (until 1453), Edward Luttwak has suggested:

> It was by creative responses to new threats - by strategy, that is - that the empire survived century after century. More than once, successive defeats reduced it to little more than a beleaguered city-state . . . . But time after time, allies were successfully recruited to attack the attackers, allowing the imperial forces to regain their balance, gather strength, and to go over to the offensive. And when the invaders were driven back, as often as not imperial control was restored over larger territories than before. The enemies of the empire could defeat its armies and fleets in battle, but they could not defeat its grand strategy.[113]

Thus at various stages the Byzantines used 'barbarian' allies such as the Goths, Russians (via the treaty of 911 A.D.), local Turkic forces, and later on Italians and Venetians against strong enemies, e.g. to resist repeated Ottoman attacks.

These 'grand strategies' are often long-term political, foreign policy and military agenda that allow states to survive conflict and crisis. In grand strategy, a state pursues its national security goals through the many instruments of power at its disposal (ranging from the technological and military to the financial and legal). Among the early theorists of grand strategy were J.F.C. Fuller, B. H. Liddell Hart, Julian Corbett, and Edward Mead Earle.[114] Liddell Hart (1895-1970) famously explained grand strategy as follows:

> As tactics is an application of strategy on a lower plane, so strategy is an application on a lower plane of 'grand strategy.' If practically synonymous with the policy which governs the conduct of war, as distinct from the permanent policy which formulates its object, the term 'grand strategy' serves to bring out the sense of 'policy in execution.' For the role of grand strategy is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by national policy…Furthermore, while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but so regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peacefulness . . . [115]

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[111] LUTTWAK, Edward N. *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*, London, John Hopkins University Press, 1976; CUNCLIFFE, Barry Greeks, *Romans and Barbarians: Spheres of Interaction*, London, Batsford, 1988.

[112] DYSON, Stephen L. The Creation of the Roman Frontier, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985

[113] LUTTWAK, Edward *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009, p12.

[114] See MILEVSKI, Lukas "The Mythology of Grand Strategy", *Infinity Journal, 3, no. 1*, Winter 2012, pp29-33.

[115] LIDDELL HART, B.H. *The Decisive Wars of History: A Study in Strategy*, London, G. Bell & Sons, 1929, pp150-151.

Because grand strategy operates in peacetime to secure advantage in war or to avoid war altogether, this often causes it to be conflated with the enterprise of foreign policy. There is even a tendency among contemporary commentators to regard grand strategy as properly within the foreign policy framework. Yet the danger of turning grand strategy into a subset of foreign policy has prompted the observation that '. . . it [grand strategy] is frequently not even associated with purposeful action at all, but merely with the expression of purpose or posture'.[116] In other words, while foreign policy 'posture' does have a role to play under the 'purposeful action' that grand strategy seeks, it cannot subsume it. Rather, grand strategy finds a more pertinent field of articulation in national security. This is often expressed in formal policy documents, such as the U.S. *National Security Strategy,* which resolved in 2010 to 'renew American leadership in the world'.[117]

Official articulations are rife with assumptions. In the case of the U.S., part of its implicit grand strategy has been the maintenance of its role as a 'liberal hegemon' and provider of public goods that permit it effective global leadership, partly using soft power, but also as dominant holder of hard military power that can reach any point on the globe.[118] In this view, national military power and alliances such as NATO are important, but building political cooperation on new agenda such as economic and environmental stability remains crucial. U.S. power was thus maintained by being able to write the 'rules of the game' (via norm and institutional construction):

> But this . . . narrative misses a deeper reality: although the United States' position in the global system is changing, the liberal international order is alive and well. The struggle over international order today is not about fundamental principles. China and other emerging great powers do not want to contest the basic rules and principles of the liberal international order; they wish to gain more authority and leadership within it. . . . Indeed, today's power transition represents not the defeat of the liberal order but its ultimate ascendance. Brazil, China, and India have all become more prosperous and capable by operating inside the existing international order -- benefiting from its rules, practices, and institutions, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the newly organized G-20. Their economic success and growing influence are tied to the liberal internationalist organization of world politics, and they have deep interests in preserving that system.[119]

However, we can see some of the risks in such 'grand strategies' when we look at one assessment of America's long-term global role. Aside from maintaining enhanced power capacities (economic and military), one of the main long-term agenda in U.S. foreign policy has been 'democracy promotion'. As explained by Millar:

> In truth, there is nothing new about a grand strategy of democracy promotion. It is a coherent continuation of past American grand strategies. In the nineteenth century Americans believed it was their 'manifest destiny' to establish an 'empire of liberty'

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[116] MILEVSKI, Lukas "The Mythology of Grand Strategy", *Infinity Journal, 3, no. 1,* Winter 2012, p31

[117] President of the United States *National Security Strategy*, Washington DC, White House, May 2010 [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf]

[118] IKENBERRY, G. John "The Future of the Liberal World Order", *Foreign Affairs, 90 no. 3*, May/June 2011, pp56-68; NYE, Joseph S. " Soft power and American foreign policy", *Political Science Quarterly, 19 no. 2,* Summer 2004, pp255-270; MEAD, Walter Russell Mead, "America's Sticky Power." *Foreign Policy,* Issue 141, 1 March 2004, p48.

[119] IKENBERRY, G. John "The Future of the Liberal World Order", *Foreign Affairs, 90 no. 3*, May/June 2011, pp56-68.

over the North American continent and leave no trace of European imperial rule anywhere in the hemisphere. As America emerged as a great power after the Spanish–American War, US presidents from Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson advocated for the aggressive expansion of American influence – and its democratic model – throughout the Caribbean and Central America. Wilson entered the Great War famously to make the world 'safe for democracy', and worked tirelessly (but unsuccessfully) to create a new global liberal order anchored on the principle of self-determination for all peoples in its aftermath. The sides in the Cold War were divided along ideological lines, with US policymakers animated by the belief that containment of the Soviet Union was necessary precisely to ensure the survival of liberty in Europe and North America. The United States has consistently seen democracy – either its defence or expansion – to be a central part of its foreign policy, both as a goal in itself and as a tool for keeping America safe. It has not always succeeded, nor has it always been consistent or honest. Moreover, democracy-promotion has always been appropriately coupled with pragmatic concerns, such as defending the homeland, and pursued within the constraints of what is achievable. But for a general framework in which to understand America's role in the world – a grand narrative that explains who we are and why we are here – there is no credible alternative.[120]

Beyond the benefits of 'democratic peace theory', what is less obvious in this narrative are the dangers of democracy promotion when used for subversive regime change. Problematic and destabilising democratic transitions over the last two decades in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Haiti and the Middle East (via the Arab Spring) made this a difficult proposition for U.S. foreign policy, indicating the limits of their ability to secure preferred outcomes. Even hints of covert efforts to support regime change for Russia and China, let alone the explicitly conditional policies towards Cuba,[121] have increased tensions with these nations, making this a dangerous 'grand strategy' if taken to extremes.

Conclusion: Beyond Devaluation

Grand strategies can be postulated by historians and planned by strategists. However, such projects remain large-scale, whole-of-nation enterprises that have serious costs and transnational implications. The links between productive grand strategies and the grand narratives they appeal to are complex, and may risk a rebound towards the nationalism and crude power-politics of earlier generations. Socially embedded grand narratives are not malleable, and changes to them require sustained engagement and reflection on the 'great traditions' that have shaped the philosophy, literature, history and popular culture of entire peoples. As such, the viability, flexibility and reflective self-examination of such narratives remain crucial factors in the adaptability and survivability of any polity. Alternative, subaltern and dissenting traditions are essential resources for creating 'better and true stories' for the 21st century. Such narratives need to be newly constructed as well as repeatedly deconstructed.

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[120] MILLER, Paul D. "American Grand Strategy and Democratic Peace", *Survival, 54 no. 2*, April-May 2012, p73.

121 Via the Embargo, the Helms-Burton law, USAID and the Cuban Democracy and Contingency Planning Program (CDCPP), see KORNBLUH, Peter "Our Man in Havana", *Foreign Policy*, 25 January 2013 [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/25/our_man_in_havana]; LEO GRANDE, William M. "Making-Up Is Hard to Do: Obama's 'New Approach' to Cuba", *NACLA Report on the Americas*, *44 Issue 4*, Jul/Aug2011, pp38-44.