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IN MEDIAS RES:

the Problem of Cultural Translation
of International News in Mumbai, India.

A dissertation submitted to the University of London, in accordance with
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Centre for Media and Film Studies
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)
University of London

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DECLARATION FOR PHD THESIS

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Matti Pohjonen

Date: 28.08.2014

ABSTRACT

My thesis is a theoretically driven yet empirically grounded investigation into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India. Underlying it is the assumption that a significant part of what we call international news is composed of a limited amount of original news material - text and pictures - in circulation on any given day. As a consequence of this, news organisations across the world have to routinely rely on news material produced somewhere else for their own coverage of major world events and themes. What we call international news thus largely consists of different kinds of practices through which this limited amount of original text and pictures is re-used in different ways by news producers in other parts of the world. The thesis explores in detail - empirically and theoretically - the different kinds of relationships that are formed with such practices of re-use and their broader significance to international news as a field of study. These questions are investigated in the thesis by looking at four points of entry to the English-language print and online news media in India: (1) a historical analysis of how the relationship between Indian news media and international news has been imagined since the colonial times; (2) the re-use of international news at the biggest English-language tabloid in India; (3) alternative journalistic practices by a popular Indian blog during the Asian tsunami in 2004; and (4) the discourse of international news in the English-language newspapers since India liberalised its economy in 1991.

A key argument of the thesis is that what we broadly call international news should not be seen as a naturalised object of study. On the contrary, it is itself the outcome of different practices of articulation, sometimes antagonistic and

contradictory, through which it has been given closure. These points of closure need to be now opened up for critical analysis. The thesis is thus as much about research into this relatively unexplored problem in international news research as it is a critical reflection into the theoretical frames of reference we use to understand news practices and processes in other parts of the world with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. This critical dialogue between theory and practice of research developed in this thesis I call the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thinking is seldom an orderly process. On the contrary, something in the world forces us to think, something unfamiliar - a shock from the outside. Similarly, a PhD thesis rarely begins with a clear set of research questions that one systematically pursues. Rather, it begins with some kind of an encounter that inspires us, sometimes even compels us, to begin the long and often arduous process of research and writing. The final result that you read here is the outcome of a series of such encounters, some more pleasant than others. Without these, I would not have arrived where I have or become who I am. A few words of gratitude are in place:

The *first* encounter was getting sick during fieldwork. This was a blessing in disguise. What began as a more classical ethnographic research project into news production practices at a popular tabloid in Mumbai, India - through contingencies of fieldwork - was transformed into a theoretical reflection on the difficulties of researching cultural difference in countries such as India. This thesis is thus dedicated to the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) and especially its Water Works Department for making my fieldwork as a corporeal experience as any fieldwork can be.

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Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes.

(Nietzsche)

1. INTRODUCTION

"the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained..."

(Deleuze 1987b: vii)

Introduction | Framing the research | Research design and
Methods | Outline of thesis

1. Introduction

This thesis is a theoretically driven yet empirically grounded investigation into the problem of cultural translation¹ of international news in Mumbai, India. It begins with the assumption that a significant part of what we call international news is, in fact, composed of a limited amount of original news material in circulation on any given day. As a consequence of this, news organizations across the world have to routinely rely on news material produced somewhere else for their own coverage of major world events and themes. What we call international news thus largely consists of the different kinds of practices through which this limited amount of original text and pictures produced in one part of the world is re-used in different ways by news

1. The specific use of this term will be explicated in the Introduction and throughout the thesis.

producers in other parts of the world. The thesis sets out to explore in detail - empirically and theoretically - the different kinds of relationships that are formed with such practices of re-use. These relationships have been conventionally approached in global media and cultural studies either through a macro-level analysis of the political economy of international news flows or through a micro-level analysis of the practices of news production/reception. To complement these existing approaches, the thesis, however, begins with an altogether different starting point. It asks what if we adopted neither of these two levels of analysis to my object of study - neither the bird's eye view nor the worker ant's view on international news? What if we began our research *in medias res* instead: by foregrounding the theoretical tensions, contradictions and problems that are raised by a close examination of these differential relationships underlying international news and the theories we use to understand them? What insights could such an approach engender, not only for international news research, but also more broadly for understanding the changing dynamics of global media?

These questions are investigated empirically in the thesis by looking at four points of entry to the English-language print and online news media in India. These are: (1) a historical analysis of how the relationship between Indian news media and international news has been imagined since colonial times; (2) the re-use of international news at the biggest English-language tabloid in India; (3) alternative journalistic practices by a popular Indian blog during the Asian tsunami in 2004; and (4) the discourse of international news in the English-language newspapers since India liberalised its economy in 1991. The argument uniting these divergent points of entry to my object of study is that international news should not be approached as an abstraction. On the contrary, it is itself the outcome of different practices of

articulation, sometimes antagonistic and contradictory, through which the relationships and practices underlying international news have been given coherence and closure. These points of closure need to be opened up for critical analysis.

The thesis is thus as much research into a relatively unexplored problem in international news research as it is a critical reflection into the theories we use to understand news practices and processes in countries such as India with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. As a result, it has been written with two broad objectives in mind. The first objective is to contribute to the broadening of knowledge of international news in India with all its social and political implications. The English-language print and online news media in India is uniquely situated for the research. Much of the recent work on Indian media has focused on its television and film industry, thus overlooking its complex print media industry and online news forms such as blogs and citizen journalism (see Mehta 2008). Arguably, however, especially India's elite English-language print news media remains an important locus where articulations about the rest of the world are produced (see Jeffrey 2000; Sonwalkar 2002). Despite this importance, little research has nonetheless focused on how the English-language print and online news media in India (in the broadest sense possible) positions itself *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world: that is, how it articulates topics considered more broadly *videshi* (Western, foreign) and/or *swadeshi* (Indian); and what are the broader political implications of how international news has been debated in India?

The second objective of the thesis is to develop a dialogue between international news research and more critical theory/post-structuralist approaches to

global media and cultural studies. In particular, the thesis hopes to critically interrogate theoretical approaches that have reified the relationships underlying international news by focusing predominantly on the political meanings that are communicated in international news coverage. A key argument developed in the thesis is that such approaches to international news have foregrounded theories premised on *representation/interpretation* over other ways of imagining the problem. Yet if we accept the theoretical intervention of especially post-structuralist theory we must then also ask how applicable are these theoretical frames of reference to countries such as India? Indeed, one of the core arguments developed in the thesis is that such approaches to international news are insufficient insofar as they cannot adequately account for this problem of *difference* that needs to be addressed when we research countries with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. In other words, if we accept that there is no universal theory, and that theory itself is linked to complex relationships of knowledge/power in how such differences in other parts of the world have been historically represented (see Said 1979; Asad 1986; Inden 1990), what kinds of critical interrogation do our theories themselves require when researching international news in other parts of the world? In this thesis, I have chosen to call this tension between the theory and practice of research the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

While hoping to present a concise argument about this problem of cultural translation the thesis, however, makes no claim to surpass some of the theoretical tensions, contradictions and problems raised or provide conclusive answers to the questions asked. It is written with the assumption that good research does not end with clear answers but, rather, with new questions that are better formulated.

Ultimately, then, if the thesis helps provide at least a few original ideas for research, it will have already accomplished its goal.

2. Framing the research

(a) The problem of international news

Over the past 50 years, one of the most controversial debates in global media studies has revolved around the question of how much of international news is dominated by the West. In these debates, loosely united under the cultural imperialism thesis, what we call international news composes of a limited amount of original news in circulation on any given day. Most of this news has been produced by a handful of Euro-American news corporations who hold a dominant position globally in disseminating international news to the rest of the world. As Sreberny and Paterson summarise the debates, when this news "becomes integrated into local news channels it produces a common structure: a media map that is ethnocentric and narrow. *In any country's media on any given day can be found a small set of common stories that are reported with virtually identical pictures or words* (2004: 8-9; my emphasis)." A popular argument in global media and cultural studies has thus been that such inequalities in the production and dissemination of international news reflect broader questions of media power and global geopolitics. Yet even if much of what we call international news is composed of such "virtually identical pictures of words" in circulation on any given day, can we nonetheless assume that these remain the same in different instances of their re-use across the world? In other words, if we look at how this original news

material is re-used in other parts of the world, what kind of a relationship are we then presupposing that is formed between the primary moment of production of this news material (or the originals) and its sub-sequent re-uses (or copies) elsewhere? What exactly is it that happens somewhere *in-between* this supply chain of international news through which a small amount of text and pictures multiplies to form the diversity of international news coverage found across the world on any given day?

Existing approaches to international news have conventionally given news organisations such as *Associated Press (AP)*, *Agence France Presse (AFP)* and *Reuters* a hegemonic role in disseminating original news material to countries such as India. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, for instance, argue that these are organisations whose aim is to “gather and to see news throughout the world to the benefit of 'retail media' (newspapers, broadcasters, on-line suppliers) and other outlets (business, finance institutions, governments, private individuals) (1998: 19).” The extensive resources these organisations have available guarantee that they are in the position to “make the first decision of how and if international stories - particularly from the news flow fringes of the non-industrialised world - will be covered (1998: 82).”² These decisions,

-
2. The statistics of the scope, for example, of the three major Euro-American news agencies might indicate their position in international news. For example, "Agence France Presse (AFP) had 12,500 clients, including 650 newspapers and magazines, 400 radio and television stations, 1,500 companies and public agencies and 100 national news agencies (which in turn served 7,600 other newspapers, 2,500 radio stations and 400 television stations) receiving AFP services in six principal languages, amounting to a total of 150,000 words, 250 photos and 20 graphics a day. The agency claimed 3,100 employees, including 150 photographers, 900 correspondents and 2,000 freelancers, located in 207 bureaux, reporting from 165 countries (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998: 29)." In 1997, "Associated Press (AP) served 8,500 foreign subscribers in 112 countries, through five languages translated by AP (with scores more translated by foreign subscribers). Of the total staff, some 2,566 were based in the USA, and 855 were international. AP had a total of 237 news bureaux: 144 domestic and 93 international news bureaux across 71 countries (1998: 29)." Reuters, in 1995, "claimed that its customers watched news and prices on more than 327,000 computer screens, in 42,000 locations, linked to a Reuters communication network spanning 154 countries, through

in turn, are influenced by where “to allocate resources, the selection of stories they distribute to their clients, the amount of visuals provided and the nature and amount of accompanying audio and textual information (1998: 82).” Van Ginneken (1998) argues similarly that because of this dominant position these organisations have, they are able to produce the first framing of important world events and themes. He writes that these “three major world news agencies ... have a quasi-monopoly in providing prime definitions of breaking news in the world periphery. Even if they are not actually the first on the spot, they are usually the first to inform the rest of the world (1998: 113-114).” This ground-breaking work has raised important questions about media power in international news. Yet what has been less addressed in the research is a sustained reflection on the *kinds of changes* these virtually identical text and pictures undergo as they are routinely re-used by news producers in different parts of the world. Hartley (2003, 2004), for instance, has argued that the creative re-use of existing news material is, in fact, one of the defining characteristics of our “post-modern” news environments. He argues that such practices of re-use (or what he calls *redaction*) always produce something new, something different, in the process. He writes that

so much material was available directly to readers and consumers that mere provision of news (newly gathered knowledge) was no longer enough to justify the undertaking. The instantaneous availability of primary information ... meant that the public utility and commercial future of journalism depended more than ever on choosing, editing and customising existing information for different consumers ... this was 'redaction' - the social function of editing. Redaction meant bringing materials together, mixing ingredients to make something new - a creative practice in its own right, the one that came to increasingly define our times (2003:

24 languages. It had 14,348 staff, gathering news from 197 offices in 207 cities in 90 countries. For Reuter’s media products the agency claims 1,200 journalists and photographers working in 120 bureaux in 81 countries. The Reuters World Service news report sends a total of 150,000 words daily. One hundred photos are distributed a day (1998: 29).”

Yet the question is once again raised: if such practices of "redaction" change the originals in one way or another, how do we then understand that which becomes new, that is, what is this *difference* that is produced from this mix of news ingredients forming international news coverage in different parts of the world? How is this redacted news different from the original? How is it similar? And what insight could a closer examination of these similarities and/or differences engender for understanding the hyper-connected digital news ecologies increasingly premised on such sharing, linking and re-use of pre-existing news material for other purposes?³

These questions raised, the thesis will argue, are relevant not only for international news research but also for any research interested in global media more broadly. Underlying them are some of the key theoretical debates in global media and cultural studies. Sreberny argues that there is a "conceptual challenge to the 'cultural imperialism' model, stemming from new modes of analysing media effects, which question the 'international hypodermic needle' assumption of the earlier models (1991: 608)." In place of older theories such as cultural imperialism that foregrounded questions of media power, Sreberny notes that the focus of international news research has increasingly shifted to the different ways audiences "bring their own

3. Older debates on "post-modernism" as well as more recent debates on new digital technologies have focused on the creative potential involved in such re-using of existing material for a new purpose. This practice has been described by various names such as appropriation, bricolage, cut-n-paste, remix, mashup etc. See, for instance, <http://remixtheory.net/> [as accessed on June 1, 2012] for some of the best resources on this. These debates have not focused, as far as I know, specifically on international news or the problem of cultural translation that I am interested in. As debates on post-modernism are somewhat out-dated now, I will also not discuss them much more in this thesis.

interpretive frameworks and sets of meaning into media texts, thus resisting, re-interpreting any foreign 'hegemonic' cultural products (1991: 608)." Yet the question is once again raised that, if audiences (and news producers in other parts of the world) bring their own interpretive frameworks and sets of meaning into the re-use of international news, what again is this difference that is produced alongside these alternative interpretive frameworks and sets of meaning? Morley suggests that we need to now ask "serious questions about the audience to the questions that political economy poses; but that does not mean that we should simply substitute the one set of questions for the other. Rather, we need to develop a perspective that can deal with both sorts of issues, and how they can be understood in their complex relations to each other (2006: 31)." According to him such work is needed because for "too long this debate has oscillated between a political economy of the global media that sees everything else as a foregone conclusion, and an over-optimistic cultural studies critique of this model ('don't worry, they've indigenised it') that sidelines the question of media power (2006: 31)." As an alternative, Morley suggests that we adopt (following Derrida) a research approach that is able to take better into account the theoretical contradictions at the heart of our object of study. He writes that

when Derrida says that we must recognize that philosophy, as a form of writing, involves figures of rhetoric, to which we must pay attention in ways that philosophers have not always done before, he does not conclude that philosophy is therefore reducible to rhetoric, or that it is only rhetoric. Rather, he argues, we must develop a 'bi-focal' perspective, in which we have to look both at and through the rhetoric of philosophy, in assessing the truth claims that it makes. In a similar sense, to suggest political economy has an inadequate analysis of the media audience is not to conclude that we should necessarily thus abandon all the truths of political economy in favour of those of audience scholars but, rather, following Derrida, to argue that we should adopt a similarly bi-focal perspective which will allow us to understand *these different registers of truth in their articulation with each other* (2006: 32; my emphasis).

Through establishing a critical dialogue between international news research and approaches from critical theory/post-structuralism, this thesis also hopes to develop such a "bi-focal" approach to international news in India (see also Clifford and Marcus 1986). In particular, by reading international news theory in conjunction with theories from critical theory/post-structuralism the thesis hopes to provide a modest opening towards new theoretically-driven yet empirically-grounded research on international news aimed at addressing some of these contradictions, tensions and problems underlying my object of study.

(b) The problem of cultural translation

Theories of translation have been developed in international news research as a potential way to explain the practices through which news produced in one part of the world is re-used in another. Bauman et al write "as global organisations proliferate and as international stories become a part of daily news coverage - whether adequately so or not - interest in not only linguistic but broader *cultural translations* is starting to develop (2011: 135-136; my emphasis). A growing body of work has researched problems of translation around different kinds of metaphors involved in translation (see Podkalicka 2011), the politics of translating news from conflict zones (see Thiranagama 2011, Bauman and Jaber 2011) or linguistic translations of political events (see Montgomery 2006; Cheesman and Nohl 2011). The primary concern of this research, however, has been with those kinds of translations that take place across different linguistic registers. Less research has addressed those kinds of translations

that take place in situations where international news is translated *but within the same language itself* (such as the example of international news in the English-language news media in India).⁴ In other words, how do we theoretically account for those kinds of translations that take place in situations where the text and pictures remain virtually identical yet the cultural, political and social context and media environments changes significantly? Because of this the thesis argues that it makes sense⁵ to look at international news as a broader form of cultural translation. This is for two reasons. Firstly, this allows us to foreground some of the conceptual challenges and theoretical problems involved in translating across different cultural contexts. Secondly, the concept of cultural translation helps develop what I call in this thesis a doubly critical (or bifocal) approach to research: a methodology that is critical both of what I am researching (international news in India) as well as of the theories that I use to research this object of study (theoretical work in global media and cultural studies).

Theories of cultural translation have a long history in translation studies, postcolonial theory and media and cultural studies. The different approaches have been united around the broader question of how to negotiate the "politics of difference" implicated in practices of translation/representation across different cultures. For instance, in one of the foundational texts cited in theories of cultural translation, Benjamin (1996) argued that the translator can never, or should try to,

-
4. Whether English is actually the same everywhere is a more difficult question that I cannot get into within this thesis. Suffice to say, my assumption here is that - at least on level that counts - UK/US English and Indian English are sufficiently similar to make this claim.
 5. Chapter 3 will discuss the relevance of using theory as a toolbox rather than as a system of representation (see Deleuze and Foucault 1980). Such a pragmatic approach to theory does not see theory as reflecting an underlying reality but rather as something that can be used to address a particular problem at hand.

communicate the meaning of the different languages under translation accurately. This is impossible. Rather what translations ought to aim for is creative representations of the "foreignness" of the translated text but in one's own familiar language. This is possible, Benjamin argued, if one aspired for a kind of a "pure language" into which the differences in context and meaning could be reconciled. Bhabha (1988, 1990, 2004) has argued similarly that this kind of part-foreign/part-familiar standpoint that Benjamin talks about allows for a possibility of a "third space" to be created where differences can be negotiated. The new element produced by such practices of cultural translation, he writes, does not "necessarily involve the formation of a new synthesis, but a negotiation of them *in medias res*, in the profound experience or knowledge of the displaced, diversionary, differentiated boundaries in which the limits and limitations of social power are encountered in an agonistic relation (1988: 13; quote found in Oswell 2006: 118; my emphasis)." Young (2012), in turn, has argued that the negotiation of difference is central to any claim to cultural translation. When seen positively, this allows for some sort of "hybridity" through which the stable identities presupposed by this relationship can be critically examined. Yet when looked at more critically, the concept of cultural translation itself is premised on a theoretical contradiction. Young continues that

the term cultural translation therefore turns out to be strictly speaking an oxymoron - for it is always concerned with elements that have no correspondence and therefore cannot be translated ... put it another way, cultural translation is the name we give to the axis within translation of the impossibility of translation. The negotiation of this void in representation or understanding, temporal and spatial at once, remains the irresolvable dynamic at the heart of all translation. (2012: 172).

Sakai (1997, 2006), in turn, has argued that all claims to cultural translation involve this constitutive theoretical tension. He writes "no cultural difference is given in and of itself. Without the process of signification, cultural differences themselves would never be there as ontologized differences between beings (1997: 121-122)." As a consequence, he argues, what practices of cultural translation do is pick up "various fragments from the existent discourse that are heterogeneous to one another, and connects them in new and accidental ways, even if it is represented in the name of an acknowledgment of difference and separation (1997: 121-122)." In other words, what practices of cultural translation do is create the very differences they claim to mediate by clawing back these differences into objects of representation. Sakai continues that "the experience of cultural difference, therefore, is possible exactly because of the 'the incomplete character of every totality.' This is to say that it can be brought into awareness only in the midst of articulatory practice (1997: 121-122)."

The concept of cultural translation is thus useful as it foregrounds the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems that are raised when we research international news in countries with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. On the one hand, it shows the theoretical difficulties involved in negotiating the cultural differences involved in representing other parts of the world. On the other hand, it also shows how the practices of theorising through which we represent these very differences are never a neutral process. Indeed as critical research has shown, such practices of representing differences have been historically implicated in the broader post-colonial politics of representation. Asad (1986), for instance, has argued that such practices of cultural translation are always underwritten by what he calls "strong" and "weak" languages. This is to say that the theories academics use to

represent differences in other parts of the world do not exist on an equal epistemological footing with the people being researched. As a consequence, cultural translation between these different frames of reference must always take into account the power/knowledge relationships involved in translating between them. He writes that

translation/representation of a particular culture is inevitably a textual construct, that as representation it cannot normally be contested by the people to whom it is attributed, and that as a "scientific text" it eventually becomes a privileged element in the potential store of historical memory for the nonliterate society concerned. In modern and modernizing societies, inscribed records have a greater power to shape, to reform, selves and institutions than folk memories do. They even construct folk memories. The anthropologist's monograph may return, retranslated, into a "weaker" Third World language. In the long run, therefore, it is not the personal authority of the ethnographer, but the social authority of his ethnography that matters. And that authority is inscribed in the institutionalized forces of industrial capitalist society ... which are constantly tending to push the meanings of various Third World societies in a single direction (1986: 163).

While Asad's approach belongs more to the critical turn in social anthropological writing (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 2002), his ideas are nonetheless relevant to my research insofar as they link cultural translation to questions of power. Asad concludes that all practices of cultural translation are "inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power - professional, national, international ... given that this is so, the interesting question for enquiry is ... how power enters into the process of "cultural translation," seen both as a discursive and as a nondiscursive practice (1986: 163)." When we look at the problem of cultural translation from this perspective, a critical examination of the researcher's subject position becomes an equally important part of research practice, as is the critical analysis of the subject under research. This kind of a doubly critical or bi-focal approach thus needs to closely negotiate between the theories researchers use to make truth claims about any given topic and the truth

claims of the people he/she is researching. And while cognisant of the difficulty of succeeding with this in a PhD thesis, this problem of cultural translation has nonetheless inspired the research design and methods adopted in it.

3. Research design and methods

(a) Research design

The research design and methods developed in the thesis reflect, insofar as possible, this double inspiration. In particular, the thesis develops two approaches - empirical research and theoretical reflection - in dialogue with each other. The first approach focuses on a series of empirical examples from the English-language print and online news in India. The second examines the theories through which we understand these examples and give them significance. Furthermore, if international news is itself the outcome of different practices of articulation, this requires me to leave my own definition of international news as open-ended as possible in the thesis in order to avoid prematurely closing down my object of study from alternative perspectives. Yet in order to provide some form of "arbitrary closure" (Slack 1996: 114) to the argument developed, I have chosen to approach this problem of cultural translation through two narratives that help me structure the empirical examples looked at. These narratives are of course not the only way we can, or should, approach international news in India. They have been chosen to provide what I consider the most relevant points of entry into the multiplicity of debates surrounding international news in India based on my experiences during fieldwork research. The

two narratives are:

1. *The politics of international news.* The first narrative looks critically at how international news has been historically constructed as an object of study through its political significance over other ways of imagining the problem. This approach has been selected because it is the most common way international news has been understood both in international news research as well as in historical accounts and public debates on international news in India. Behind this narrative we can thus find refractions of many of the key theoretical debates in international news research and global media and cultural studies and in India in specific.
2. *The politics of difference.* The second narrative looks at the politics of difference implicated in our understanding of international news in India. This involves looking specifically at how markers of difference have been constructed between what is defined as *swadeshi* (Indian) and *videshi* (Western, foreign) in the historical accounts of international news in India and in the discourse of liberalisation in India since 1991. There are two reasons why this second narrative has been chosen to structure the research. Firstly, it has been widely argued that, following economic liberalisation in 1991, the Indian society has undergone considerable changes where these markers of difference (*swadeshi/videshi*) have been re-articulated in complex ways reflecting India's changing relationship to global capitalism. Secondly, this narrative allows me to examine what I consider to be some of the most important contributions of critical theory/post-structuralism to global media and cultural studies, and especially theories that have critically examined theories of representation and difference.

(b) Points of entry

With these two narratives in mind, the thesis has been structured the following way. The first two chapters of the thesis - the literature review and the methodology chapter - provide the theoretical frame of reference and methods used in this thesis. In the four chapters that follow, I then investigate the theoretical questions that have been raised by focusing on examples from the English-language print and online news in India. These empirical chapters are based on my 10 months long fieldwork in Mumbai (2004-2005), archival research made during two follow-up trips in 2006 and 2008 as well as close reading of historical accounts and documents discussing international news in India.

1. The first point of entry looks at the different historical accounts of international news in India. As little has been written on this history, the first point of entry thus consists of reading historical accounts of the press in India where international news was discussed as well as other documents from this period. The aim of the chapter is to provide a historical analysis of the "ontology of the present" (Foucault 1984a) in how international news has been historically imagined in India in order to show some of the closures around my object of study;
2. The second point of entry is participant-observation into the news production practices at the biggest English-language tabloid in India, the Mumbai-based tabloid *Mid-Day*. In addition to observing the newsroom practices around the US presidential elections in 2004, I also spent three nights a week at *Mid-Day* for a duration of three months observing newsroom practices of its international news section (both serious news and popular culture news). I also conducted semi-

structured interviews with all the key editors, sub-editors and designers at *Mid-Day* as well as a detailed archival research into all the past issues during its 25-years of operation since its launch in 1977. The aim of the chapter is to provide alternative ways to understand international news by looking at different kinds of media-related practices at the level of production at a popular Indian tabloid;

3. The third point of entry is *Desimediabitch*, a Mumbai-based group blog that gained international visibility during the Asian Tsunami in 2004 when it published SMS-messages and eyewitness accounts from disaster-struck areas in Sri Lanka and South India. I spent a total of six months conducting participant-observation at the blog before and following the Asian tsunami. This included both online and offline activities of its key members based in Mumbai. More specifically, being primarily an online conglomeration of journalists writing for the blog, this consisted of daily participation into its online activities but, as importantly, following closely the offline lives of its key contributors who lived in Mumbai at the time of my fieldwork. I also conducted email interviews with all the key participants who were involved with its Asian Tsunami coverage and the bloggers and journalists in the mainstream media. Finally, I also conducted a full archival analysis into all the blog posts before and after the Asian Tsunami as well as a longer-term analysis of the other activities its members had been involved in after the Asian tsunami and since the group blog was shut down in 2005. The aim of this chapter is to look at the relevance of alternative journalistic practices and especially the relevance of new digital technologies to the international news environment;

4. The fourth point of entry is an archival analysis of all the major Indian English-language newspapers from 1991 to 2008 looking at themes relevant to this thesis. The archival research took place at the *Center of Education and Documentation (CED)* newspaper archives both in Mumbai and in Bangalore. The archival research comprised of an initial one-month period of research at the *CED* archives in Mumbai and Bangalore in April and May 2005. This was extended by two follow-up research periods in November 2006 and September 2008 focusing more in detail at themes found in my initial round of research. The selection criteria consisted of pre-selected articles by *CED* from which all the relevant articles were analysed.⁶ From the hundreds of articles that were selected, I focused specifically on two key themes reflecting the broader theoretical concerns of the thesis. The first of these was the shifting articulations of the politics of international news coverage of major world events in India: the First Persian Gulf War, September 11 and the Second Persian Gulf War. The second set of commentaries consisted of a series of debates around the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposal looking at allowing foreign investment in Indian newspapers. In these debates the shifting markers of difference behind what is considered Indian and what is not in the self-

6. CED has developed its own "Alpha-Numeric" classification system for archiving news from different parts the India. The criteria for CED's classification system can be read here: <http://www.doccentre.net/index.php/documentation/49-classification> [last accessed on July 29th, 2012]. As of 2012, CED's Electronic Documentation System (ELDOC) has documents from our more than 25-year-old archives. This database has over 160,000 records. In specific, the following sub-categories were looked at in detail: P00 MEDIA(GENERAL); P00a FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION; P00b MEDIA INDUSTRIES: P11 PRESS-INDUSTRY/INDIVIDUAL PUBLICATIONS/PRESS-ECONOMICS; P12 JOURNALISTS, JOURNALISTS' ETHICS, SALARIES ETC; P20 TELEVISION (GENERAL); P21 DOORDARSHAN CABLE TV; P61 INFORMATICS, DCS, NIIO; P61a PERIODICALS, SOURCES; P61b ELECTRONIC SOURCES OF INFORMATION; P62 INTERNET, ELECTRONIC SOURCES/SITES, CYBERSPACE DEBATES

imagination of journalists and other commentators in India were articulated often in contradictory ways. The aim of the last chapter is to position the examples looked at the broader political discourse in India since it liberalised its economy in 1991.

Finally a crucial part of my research consisted of living in Mumbai for 10 months and conversing with a wide variety of different people in the city on a daily basis. This allowed me to gain a broader understanding of the changing debates and idiosyncrasies of its news environment as well as position my research within the biggest and arguably the most cosmopolitan city in India. Ultimately, therefore, one of the most important methods used in this thesis - however informally - consisted of hours of discussions with tens of media professionals, activists, academics and organic intellectuals from diverse backgrounds. As such research never comes to an end, these discussions still continue to inform and modify my shifting research focus, blurring the line of what is research and what is friendship and life.

(c) A note on the theory and practice of research

This thesis began as an ethnography of production of the re-use of international news at the biggest English-language tabloid in India, *Mid-Day*. Through contingencies of fieldwork the thesis changed from a classical news production analysis into a more theoretical self-reflection about the theories through which international news research constructs its object of study. Deleuze (1994) remarked that research

seldom emerges from ready-made facts that we quietly reflect on. On the contrary, something in the world forces us to think, something unfamiliar - a shock from the outside.⁷ Deleuze wrote that

all truths of that kind are hypothetical, since they presuppose all that is in question and are incapable of giving birth in thought to the act of thinking ... do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposed itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself ... Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but a fundamental *encounter* (1994: 175-176; emphasis in original).

Getting sick during fieldwork was one encounter that substantially changed my research plan, and has subsequently informed the approaches and methods selected for this thesis. What started as a more classical ethnography of production into newsroom practices at an Indian tabloid opened up during the long duration of the PhD into a critical investigation of the theoretical questions I encountered during fieldwork and that I considered then, and still consider, crucial for research on international news. In retrospect, this encounter was a blessing in disguise: what began as a more "orthodox" approach to international news production turned out to

7. As my supervisor Mark Hobart has reminded it is only from the contingent conditions during fieldwork from which new research can arise. When you know *what is going on*, you are not probably discovering anything but rely on your own already-crystallized presuppositions as a researcher. This is perhaps where the intense ethnography of critical anthropology maintains its importance as a method of research. Interestingly, outside critical anthropology, I am reminded here of Deleuze's quote: "experiment, never interpret." My methodological interests therefore also echo Deleuzian ethic of experimentation insofar as it hopefully allows for the emergence new forms of research that might have not been anticipated before hand. For a detailed discussion of this please see for example the chapter "Image of Thought" from *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1994: 129-168).

become, in the end, a cross-disciplinary and transversal dialogue between international news theory and critical theory/post-structuralism. Hopefully some of the questions I have struggled with shine through the pages of the final product.

4. Outline of thesis

The chapters of the thesis are organised the following way. The first two chapters provide the theoretical framework for the thesis; the following chapters provide four empirical points of entry to the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review section of the thesis. This aim of the chapter is to position the research within the broader theoretical literature in international news research and global media. Through a dialogue with international news research and approaches from critical theory/post-structuralism, the chapter looks at approaches to international news that have foregrounded theories premised on theories of representation/interpretation in international news analysis. In particular, it provides an alternative reading of international news through the concept of the *simulacrum*;

Chapter 3 builds on the critical reading to explicate on the methods developed in the thesis. The aim of the chapter is to position my research within debates in media and cultural studies about what it means to be critical in research, and, based on this discussion, to outline the conceptual tools developed in the thesis, namely

around theories of practice, articulation and assemblages;

Chapter 4 provides the first point of entry into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India: a historical analysis of the relationship between Indian news media and international news. The aim of this chapter is to position the research within the broader historical accounts that have looked at international news in India to provide what Foucault called a critical analysis of the "ontology of the present" through which we approach international news in India;

Chapter 5 provides the second point of entry into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India: Mumbai-based tabloid, *Mid-Day*. The aim of this chapter is to criticise representation-based approaches to international news by looking at the media-related practices behind the re-use of international news at the level of news production. In particular, three "theoretical detours" are suggested around questions of design, probable/territorialised relationships and the heterotopia of international news;

Chapter 6 provides the third point of entry into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India: Mumbai-based blog, *Desimediabitch*. The aim of this chapter is to look at examples of citizen journalism in order to better understand the relevance given to new digital technologies in bringing about the changes that have taken place in the international news environment. In particular, the chapter proposes the concept of "virtual/deterritorialised relationships" as an alternative way to understand the disruptive relevance of new digital

technologies to the international news environment;

Chapter 7 provides the fourth point of entry into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India: discourse analysis of how the politics of international news has been commented on in the public debates and media commentaries in the Indian English-language newspapers. The aim of this chapter is to situate the examples in the thesis within the broader political discourse in India, and especially following the liberalisation of India's economy in 1991. In particular, the last chapter develops the concepts of hegemonic articulation and antagonism as alternative ways to understand the politics of international news and, finally, the problem of cultural translation developed throughout thesis.

The *Conclusion* finally summarises the different chapters, provides an overview of the argument made and provides suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In truth, significance and interpretation are the two diseases of the earth or the skin, in other words, humankind's fundamental neurosis.

(Deleuze 1987a: 114).

Introduction | Framing the problem | An overview of a debate |
Metaphysics of communication (part I) | In medias res |
Conclusion

1. Introduction

The first two chapters of the thesis map out the theoretical terrain explored and methods used. The first of these, the literature review, provides a critical reading of how international news has been conventionally imagined as an object of study. In this chapter, I argue that international news has been historically imagined as that site of global media production where political meanings are communicated. As a result, the differential relationships underlying international news and the practices around them have been reified through research approaches that have focused on the politics

of representation/interpretation: that is, how major international news events and themes are represented in international news coverage; and how news producers (and audiences) across the world interpret these representations. Through a dialogue between international news research and approaches from post-structuralist philosophy, the chapter argues that such representation-based approaches to my object of study are inadequate insofar as they cannot account for the problem of difference. In other words, the chapter asks, if the theories we rely on are based largely on examples from Euro-American media practices and processes, what kind of cultural translation do our theories themselves need when researching other parts of the world with different cultural, social and political histories and media environments? And what methods are best suited for this kind of cultural translation needed when we research international news in India?

This chapter has thus two aims. Firstly, it positions my research within the literature in international news research. Secondly, through a dialogue with international news research and approaches from post-structuralism, the chapter looks at alternative ways to understand my object of study. The specifics of this dialogue will be explicated in the methodology chapter that follows.

2. Framing the problem

(a) Imagining international news

How we imagine international news matters because it has been historically imagined as that part of global media production where its political stakes are most manifest. As a consequence, the preponderance of debates in international news research have focused on the different ways major world events and themes are represented in international news coverage and how these representations reflect broader questions of media power and global geopolitics. Mattelart (1994, 1996) has argued that behind media theory we can always find a set of socio-political problems these have tried to address. He writes

we need to examine the “history of theories and the ways in which they have been mobilized ... intelligence, propaganda, psychological warfare, disinformation, modernization, the cultural industry (or industries), the information society, interdependence, cultural imperialism, and globalization ... *the socio-historical contexts in which each of these concepts appeared and the precise function of each of the given moments* (1994: x; my emphasis).

While such detailed historical analysis is beyond the scope of this literature review, it is important to note that international news theory also emerged out of a specific set of socio-political concerns in the post-Second World War US and the UK around propaganda and the emergence of the mass consumer society, and later around concerns about cultural and media imperialism internationally (see Schiller 1976). Theoretical models premised on examining the politics of representation/interpretation were especially useful for this purpose. These theories, however, now need to be critically examined as the problems have changed. Indeed, when we look at how international news has been imagined as an object of study, we find similar

concerns. For instance, in an overview of research trends in international news, Sreberny and Paterson write

much of the recent research on international news comes to the same, increasingly monotonous yet necessary, conclusion - that international news coverage is inadequate. While the media make more reference to human rights than ever before, the topic is seen by Northern, and international, media as a "foreign" matter that concerns developing countries, rarely applying human rights principles to their own societies. Many aspects of human rights are underreported, with a strong focus on political and civil rights while economic, social and cultural rights tend to be ignored. The danger is the coverage is inadequate, superficial and subject to bias and that 'audiences rely on the media to inform them are not always in the position to understand and judge properly the actions and policies of governments and authorities' (2004: 4)."

As we can see from this quote, international news is articulated here first and foremost through the political meanings that are communicated. Moreover, because of problems in the system of international news production, international news is described here as "*inadequate, superficial and subject to bias*" with audiences "*not always in the position to understand and judge properly the actions and policies of governments and authorities* (2004: 4; my emphasis)." Two assumptions about international news can be inferred from this quote that are looked at critically in this chapter: (1) international news is the location where political meanings are communicated (representation); and (2) audiences (and other news producers) in other parts of the world depend on this international news for their understanding of relevant global political events and themes (interpretation).

Terranova (2004a, 2004b) suggests that - especially in the English-speaking world - media and cultural studies has largely focused on analytical categories such as meaning, identities and representation. She writes "the question of media and

communication has been related mainly to the problem of how a hegemonic consensus emerges out of the articulation of diverse interests; and *how cultural struggle is waged within the representational space* (2004a: 8; my emphasis)." From such a perspective when a newscaster reads the news what she is doing is

not simply communicating information about today's events (a bombing, a strike, a presidential speech) but also adding a set of connotations (or meanings) to a basic denotative message (minimally coded) in such a way as to give rise to a particular set of meanings expressing the interests and values of a ruling class or hegemonic bloc. Such a perspective would typically articulate the interests of the capitalist classes who overwhelmingly "own" the media. In this sense, the information transmitted by a news broadcast is secondary when compared with the meanings articulated within it, which in their turn have then to be taken up by social practices to engender a social reality (from support for wars to cultural identities and lifestyles). Information is thus implicitly seen only as a kind of alibi for the communication of social meanings, which is where the "real" cultural politics takes place. In other words, if meanings arise and return to social reality as an active force, then the *political dimension of culture is mainly concerned with the struggle over meaning* (2004b: 54; my emphasis).

According to such approaches, Terranova argues, the basic level of communication (denotation) is seen as a guise for a "deeper" level of meaning exchange (connotation) through which hegemonic politics is maintained and resisted. The role of critical research thus becomes to discover what the political meanings communicated between different parts of the world are. What Terranova is doing here is providing a criticism of conventional representation-based accounts of communication.

Terranova writes that

a representation can never be said to draw its meaning from reality but only from other representations—that is, from the whole fabric of the signifying knowledges that weave together a common understanding of reality. From this perspective, a shared social reality is constructed through and by language, and is not conceivable or accessible without it. The question of the referent (of the object of representation) is bracketed off ... representation always encounters reality through the mediation of the sign, and signs always refer mainly to each other: *they are solid moments within the ever-shifting chain of associations, difference and oppositions* (2004b: 61-62; my emphasis).

This chapter argues that such representation-based approaches to international news need to be critically looked at as they cannot properly account for the problem of difference. In other words, if representation functions within this "ever-shifting chain of associations, differences and oppositions" how we understand this relationships between representation and difference emerges as central to understanding this problem of cultural translation of international news looked at in this thesis. A critical reading is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, such representation-based approaches have come under increasing criticism in media and cultural studies. Alternative approaches that have emerged have provided, among other things, more materialist perspectives to contemporary digital media (Hansen 2006; Packer and Wiley 2011); looked at alternative readings of media histories neglected from existing accounts of media and communication (Hayles 1999; Parikka and Huhtamo 2011; Parikka 2012) and have tried to de-westernise communication theory by providing non-Western perspectives to key questions in media and communication (Zielinski 2008; Zielinski et al 2011). These approaches have been largely informed by a critical dialogue they have had with post-structuralist philosophy and its instrumentalisation for media and cultural studies. Because international news has been historically given such importance in the communication of political meanings internationally, a critical dialogue with post-structuralism is thus also needed to open up some of the closures around it. Secondly, how cultural difference has been historically represented in academic research has been, by no means, a neutral practice (see Said 1979; Inden 1990). On the contrary, the thesis will suggest, differences in other parts of the world have been conventionally understood by clawing these back into some originals through which they has been given identity and meaning in the final instance. By not

being able to account for this problem of difference, do such representation-based approaches then also risk over-interpreting my object of study by bearing more resemblance to the theories used to represent these differences rather than the multiplicity of media-related practices found across the world?

To address some of these questions raised, this chapter first looks first at three ways these relationships underlying international news have been conventionally theorised in international news research. Following this, it critically examines the models of communication that have informed these approaches. Finally, it asks, in particular, what kinds of cultural translation do our theories themselves need when looking at countries such as India? And what methods are best suited for such a critical dialogue between the theory and practice of research developed in this thesis?

3. An overview of a debate

(a) Political economy approaches to international news

Perhaps the most influential way these relationships underlying international news have been theorised is through approaches that have focused on the political economy of international news. Since early 1960s scholars and representatives from newly independent countries such as India voiced concerns about what they considered to be problems in the system of international news production. These debates culminated in the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates at the UNESCO in the late 1970s and early 1980, during which a

series of empirical studies were commissioned to look at international news production in different countries in the world. The resulting report, "Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries," mapped out the geography of international newsgathering and production. What emerged was a picture of international news where major Euro-American news organisations such as *Agence France Presse*, *AP* and *Reuters* produced the majority of original news in circulation. This news material was then subsequently re-used by smaller news organisations in other parts of the world that had no choice but to rely on news produced elsewhere for their own coverage of major world events and themes (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1986).

This research set the foundation to how we theoretically understand the relationships underlying international news. Many of the research questions continue to rehash, in one way or another, the political concerns of these political economy approaches: namely, questions concerning the significance of this Euro-American dominance in international news production. This research also showed how much political importance was given to how original international news was produced and, more importantly, *by whom*. As Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen summarise the political refractions of the debates:

for countries in the South, the role of the major news agencies was especially significant in provoking official anger at how the international news system favoured western definitions of the exceptional and significant, and seemed to obstruct the ability of new southern nations to contribute to the representation of their national image and national interests in northern media markets, with potentially enormous implications, politically and economically (1998: 10)

Many of the follow-up studies to the NWICO debates have confirmed similar macro-level inequalities in the production of international news (see Chang et al 2000; Wu

2000; Ekeanyanwu 2006, 2007). Recent research has also found that, despite the emergence of new forms of news production and dissemination especially on the Internet, this has nonetheless not changed the geography of international news gathering significantly. For instance, Paterson's research into the political economy of online news echoes the findings of the NWICO debates. He writes that we have a "picture of an online news world (in the English language) where only four organisations do extensive international reporting (*Reuters, AP, AFP, BBC*) and few other do some international reporting (*CNN, MSN, New York Times, Guardian* and a few other large newspapers and broadcasters) (2007: x)." Despite arguments to the contrary (see McNair 2006), Peterson thus concludes that the same criticisms that were popular during the NWICO debates are still present in at least the English-speaking online news world.⁸ He writes

the political economy of online news is not one of diversity but one of concentration, and the democratic potential of the medium remains mostly that - potential ... despite the deluge of information online, the most conservative (with a small c) old media sources remain the privileged tellers of most of the stories circulating around the world. These providers are demonstrably wedded to journalism as tied to established power and promotional culture as it can be (2006: x).

In fact, most of the criticisms of these earlier political economies approaches have not been about their empirical findings. Rather, the criticism targeted the theoretical frameworks used and the conclusions drawn. Sreberny-Mohammadi et al (1986), for instance, criticised the quantitative analysis for a kind of positivism that did not take

8. And whether new social media platforms such as *Twitter* or *Facebook* have changed the fundamentals of this geography of international newsgathering - at least from the political economy perspective - still remains under heated debate (see Ekeanyanwu et al 2012).

into account the diversity of different ways international news was interpreted in other parts of the world. Hjarvard (1995) similarly criticised the research for the assumptions it made about the relationship between macro-level production and political discourse at the local level. Sreberny and Paterson (2004) point out that this political economy research also inordinately reflected the preoccupations of the Cold War. They write

the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the splintering of the Soviet Union shattered the interpretive paradigm that had dominated international news-gathering and that had allowed an easy framing of and assignment of value to international news stories: pro- or anti-West, a "Third World" was rendered a misnomer ... an highly globalised world consisting of a single global hegemon but with a number of other key economic centres, shifting peripheries and changeable loyalties, volatile border disputes, ethnic antagonisms, new forms of terrorism and of political solidarity constitutes a much harder environment to interpret adequately and frame simply for news viewers and readers (2004: 9)

What thus characterises more recent approaches to international news is a conceptual shift that has taken place away from earlier normative accounts of media power towards a closer examination of the different ways international news is interpreted in other parts of the world. Similarly, the theoretical assumptions underpinning the earlier political economy approaches - such as the hypodermic needle model of communication - have been substantially criticised. In their place, newer research has foregrounded different strategies through which producers and/or active audiences interpret the meanings found in international news representations at the local level (Cohen et al 1996).

This political economy research thus linked international news production to questions of media power. The ability to produce original news was argued to have

political consequences for countries such as India who depended on original news, text and pictures, always first produced somewhere else for its own coverage of important world event and themes. As I will show in this thesis, this articulation of international news through its political significance still widely informs how we imagine international news both in academic debates and in public debates in India.

(b) Domestication of international news

The second influential way these relationships have been theorised in international news research has focused on how international news is domesticated in different parts of the world. This body of work draws on a long line of research that has looked at the different strategies news producers have available when selecting international news from the pool of news available. Different theories have been used to explain what informs such practices of re-use. Galtung and Ruge (1965), for instance, argued that how international news is produced is informed by a set of *news values* that determine why some news material is selected from all the material available. While these values may differ between countries, they argued, the criteria through which this takes place produces a selective image of the world linked to broader geopolitical questions (see also Hardcup and O'Neill 2001). Different theories of *news agenda setting* have similarly argued that the practices through which international news is re-used provide a selective news agenda through which certain international themes and events are foregrounded over others (see McCombs and Shaw 1993; Wanta and Hu 2001). Theories of *gatekeeping* have similarly looked at the various ways news producers filter news from the abundance of possible material available thus providing a selective view of the world (see Barzilai-Kahon 2008;

Shoemaker and Vo 2009).

Moreover, in international news theory, theories of *domestication* have looked specifically at how international news is re-used by producers in different parts of the world. For instance, in her work on Japanese news production practices, Clausen (2003a, 2003b, 2004) argues that such re-use of existing news material always depends on national frameworks of interpretation through which news producers make international news relevant for their own audiences. Drawing on the work of Gurevich et al (1991), Clausen argues that such practices of re-use involve processes of domestication through which original news material is re-framed into the "narrative framework that is already familiar to and recognisable by newsmen as well as audiences (2004: 12)." International news thus involves a kind of a double articulation between similarity (homogenisation of international coverage news across the world) and difference (different interpretations of this same news material at the national and local level). She writes that

news producers at the national broadcast stations, who work in the space between the global and the national, have included a *reflexive hunch* into their strategies for selection and production of international stories. The Janus-faced ability of both knowing international affairs *and* knowing the receiving audience is essential in framing of international news information and an important element in the process of 'domesticating' news information ... the process of globalisation is as much a psychological phenomenon as it is an economic or political reality. Owing to the dynamic flows of media images, texts, sounds, and graphics across countries, globalisation entail both an increased awareness of other cultures often in competition with one's local culture and much more immediate experience of the world as a whole (2004: 13; emphasis in original).

Theories of domestication thus diverge from earlier political economy approaches insofar as the analytical focus has shifted from a macro-level analysis of news content

to the practices through which news producers interpret, and thus mediate, international news to local audiences. In Clausen's analysis, for instance, international news consists of the "dynamic flows of media images, texts, sounds, and graphics across countries" that make globalisation "as much a psychological phenomenon as it is an economic or political reality (2004: 13)." Yet how exactly this flow of text and images translates to become a psychological phenomenon (or a economic or political reality for that matter) remains largely under-theorised in theories of domestication. At the least, this requires us to postulate some kind of a model of communication that explains how international news representations have an effect in countries such as India, whether through notions of media effects or different theories of interpretation.

(c) Sociology of international news production

The third influential way these relationships have been approached has been through sociological analysis of news production. Since the 1950s, a number of influential empirical studies have looked at what informs the production of news. Gans (1980), for instance, has argued that in this research we can find four different strands of theories that have been used to explain what informs such practices of news production. The first of these gives primacy to professional judgement of the journalist in determining the selection of news. A classical example of this would be the much-cited 'gatekeeper' study by White (1950). White investigated the selection process behind how an editor of a small-town American newspaper selected news for his newspaper. White concluded that news selection was mostly determined by the personal and professional feelings of the editor. The second strand of theorising

consisted of the sociologically oriented approaches to understanding media production. According to the many variants of this line of theorising, news was argued to be an outcome of complex organisational practices. Epstein, for example, concluded that what determines the selection of news depends on the “basic requirements which a given organisation needs to maintain itself (1973: xiv).” This organisational approach was further elaborated, among others, by Schlesinger (1978), who spent three years observing the working practices of BBC between 1972 and 1976. According to him news was the outcome of pre-planning and routine and thus the result of ideological and organisational practices (1978: 47). Similarly, Golding and Elliot's comparative research into Irish, Nigerian and Swedish newsrooms concluded that news production across countries is the outcome of a “strongly patterned, repetitive and predictable work routine, essentially passive in character and varying only in detail from country to country (1979: 83).” The third strand of theories saw news as a 'mirror' of reality. While this approach has been more in favour with journalism practitioners themselves, most media and cultural scholars have dismissed it as a form of 'naive realism' (see Tuchman 1972). Finally the fourth cluster of theories explains the selection of stories by influences outside the newsroom. This has included technological determinists; Marxists analysts who foreground the influence of capitalism (Gans 1980); ideological determinists who link news selection with political ideology of the ones in power (see Herman and Chomsky 2002); cultural theorists who see journalists' actions mirroring the values of the national culture (see Galtung and Ruge 1965); and theories which suggest that news is shaped by the sources on which journalists rely (see Cohen 1973).

This influential work of news theory that emerged out of these sociological

approaches to news production was the outcome of long-term research carried out in 1970s and 1980s in newsrooms primarily in the US and the UK. Sreberny and Paterson, however, note that

the paradigm of news production research which has yielded out most influential theoretical understanding of news developed, and indeed matured, between 1950 ... after which time the news production process became a substantially less popular topic of analysis in mass communication research. Since then there have been remarkably few widely published research studies of news production which are both substantive and influential. Our understanding of news are, therefore, based upon very dated research. While the nature of news and the nature of news producing have changed in massive ways from two decades ago and beyond - globalisation, ownership, and technology are prime examples - news research has failed to keep pace ... *ironically this lack of analysis of ... news production at the global level comes at a time when news production, like the rest of mass media, has become increasingly internationalised* (2004: 17; my emphasis).

The critical question that thus needs to be raised here is to which degree have the theoretical findings of this foundational research over-interpreted the diversity of different kinds of news practices found across the world? With the exception of Batabyal's (2012) work in Indian television news practices and Rao's (2010) work on vernacular newspapers in India, such substantive research remains largely undone in India. Because of this lack of contemporary research, Cottle (2000) argues that new research is now needed to critically examine some of the "orthodoxies" of this earlier research and its applicability to a more differentiated international news environment. He notes, in particular, that six such orthodoxies need critical investigation:

1. *Bureaucratic routines or cultural practices.* In the earlier research, Cottle argues, there was an emphasis on organisational routine that was used to explain practices of news selection. He questions whether we should now theoretically approach news production as a more culturally situated practice rather than bureaucratic routine

(2000: 21-22);

2. *Professional objectivity or news epistemologies.* In the earlier research, notions of professional objectivity, or the rhetoric of objectivity, was widely used to explain news selection. Cottle writes that "the organisational requirements of news combined with the professional ideology of objectivity to routinely privilege the voices of the powerful, and this further reinforces the tendency towards the standardized and conservative nature of news (2000: 24)." Cottle, however, asks whether we should see news as a more complex form of epistemology rather than focus on claims to professional objectivity?
3. *Hierarchy of access or cultural symbolism.* In the earlier accounts, it was argued that journalistic routine reflected the interests of the powerful elites in society. Recent theorising, however, has criticised such top-down models of social hierarchy and power. Cottle thus questions whether such hierarchical models are the best way to understand the diversity of news production practices in different parts of the world (2000: 25-26);
4. *Forgotten audience or imagined audience.* In the earlier research, news producers also seemed to know little about what their audiences thought about news and did not always seem to care about this. Recent theoretical work, however, has also questioned the naturalised concept of an audience presupposed by some of the older theories of news production. Cottle notes that a new kind of discursively-produced and/or imagined audience has become widely accepted in media and cultural studies that might be more suitable to understand news across the world

today (2000: 26);

5. *Public knowledge or popular culture.* In the earlier accounts, news was also widely seen as a form of "public knowledge." This led to an understanding of news that was framed primarily through its political significance. According to Cottle, this orthodoxy needs to be now critically examined as both the rational public sphere as well as the transmission model of communication have been theoretically criticised (2000: 127).

6. *Homogenisation or differentiation?* Finally, Cottle also asks whether such totalising theories of news production are applicable anymore to the differentiated news environments across the world. Where there once was a consensus amongst news scholars interested in the homogenising influence of international news media, there is now growing appreciation towards what Cottle calls "news differentiation" of news ecologies in different parts of the world (2000: 28). New ways to understand the diversity of newsroom practices across the world are thus needed that are based on a more diverse range of examples rather than just looking at Euro-American newsroom practices as the earlier research did.

Cottle's criticism is thus relevant as he raises questions about the applicability of existing news theory to countries such as India. Moreover, his approach is useful as he makes the conceptual shift from earlier sociological focus on organisational routine to a more practice-based understanding of news production. Cottle writes elsewhere

the earlier theoretical and explanatory emphasis placed upon routine tended towards a form of *organisational functionalism* in which ideas of journalist agency and practices become lost from the view in the working of bureaucratic needs and professional norms. This may have helped qualify easy ideas of conspiracy

and ideological partisanship as the principle explanation of output, but at the cost of denying human actors their central role in the purposeful construction and reproduction of differentiated news products ... conceptualising of 'practice,' borrowing in part from Michel Foucault, is preferable in that it can accommodate both a sense of the 'discursive' and the 'administrative' in the enactments and regulations of social processes – including those of cultural production. Moreover, negative ideas of power, control and regulation as imposed from the outside or from above, are also broadened to include a more discursive appreciation of the role of human agency and meaning within the prevailing administrative procedures and/or regimes of truth (2003: 17; emphasis in original).

I argue similarly in this thesis that approaching international news as a broader form of *practice* potentially allows us to sidestep some of the theoretical problems found in the earlier sociological studies. As Cottle points out the difficulty involved in understanding news production is linked to the broader theoretical debates in social science around structure and agency. Different kinds of journalistic practices have been usually explained either by recourse to underlying structures (such as organisational routines) or by recourse to human agency (such as professional judgement, objectivity). While the complexities of this debate cannot be fully addressed in the space available here, post-structuralist theories have raised serious questions about the validity of either of these approaches for explaining social action alone (see Foucault 1994a; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Deleuze 1987a).

While Cottle is thus right in identifying the need to critically reflect on the applicability of this earlier research to other parts of the world, he does not, however, go far enough in his critical approach. As I will argue in this thesis, such a critical version of practice requires us to be not only critical of the earlier research findings and orthodoxies but also requires us to place the *practice of academic research* on the same epistemological grounding with the practices of the people we are researching. In other words, Cottle does not go far enough in examining the theoretical

presuppositions on which international news theory itself is built on and how these relate to the different ways international news is understood in other parts of the world and the problems involved in translating between these different perspectives and viewpoints.

4. Metaphysics of communication (part I)

The previous section looked at three conventional ways the relationships underlying international news have been approached in international news research. This section will now argue that underpinning these approaches are theoretical models of communication that need to be critically examined. In particular, two models of communication have conventionally underpinned approaches to international news that have been premised on the communication and interpretation of political meanings. These are the sender/receiver model and the encoding/decoding models of communication. As both of these have been extensively discussed in media and cultural studies I will only provide here a brief overview of them insofar as they pertain to the argument developed in the thesis (see McQuail 1994)

(a) Two models of communication

The *sender-receiver* model of communication is perhaps the most influential model underlying media and communication theory. This model (also known as the

Mathematical Theory of Communication) was first proposed by Shannon and Weaver in 1949 (Shannon and Weaver 1949) as a way to address some of the problems involved in the emerging field of telecommunication. Despite its origins in telecommunication, it nonetheless emerged as one of the foundational models for the emerging field of mass communication research and later for media and cultural studies. Fiske, for instance, argued that "Shannon and Weaver's Mathematical Theory of Communication is widely accepted as one of the main seeds out of which Communication Studies has grown. It is a clear example [of] seeing communication as the transmission of messages (1990: 6)." Hayles (1999) argues similarly that this transmission model of communication emerged out of a set of debates in the 1950s in the US where there was a need to theorise communication in a way that allowed it to be separated from unquantifiable notions such as meaning or context. This was because Shannon and Weaver, the two scientists who were instrumental to the formalisation of the Mathematical Theory of Communication, were first and foremost interested in the technical necessities of telecommunication. Hayles writes that these two scientists wanted "information to have a stable value as it moved from one context to another (1999: 53)." Within the background of these debates, this made sense. Taken out of context, she continues "this allowed communication to be defined as if it were an entity that can flow unchanged between different material substrates ... *a simplification necessitated by engineering considerations becomes an ideology in which reified concepts of information is treated as if it were fully commensurate with the complexities of human thought* (1999: 54; my emphasis)." Thus, if looked at from the perspective of the sender-receiver model, underpinning the different relationships in international news (original and its re-use) is some kind of a communication act that takes place between two (or

more) participants involved. The relationship between news media in different parts of the world is abstracted into four components. On one side, we have the sender who produces the original representations. These representations, in turn, are sent over a communication channel in the form of a signal, message or media text. On the other side, we have the receivers. Between these instances we then have a channel of communication through which the original representations pass through. Seen from this perspective, international news is produced by the senders (such as the Euro-American news agencies who hold a dominant position) and its subsequent re-uses are by its receivers (such as news producers in India). Tying together the two sides of this communicative act is then some kind of a message that is transmitted between the sender and the receiver (in the form of political meanings or representations). The differences between the original and its re-use can thus be attributed to the "meanings", "messages" and/or "text" communicated between them with varying accuracy and effect.

The second influential model of communication is the *encoding/decoding* model of communication. In this model, Hall (1991) criticised earlier models of communication for not taking into account the potentially active role audiences have in interpreting, and resisting, the political meanings that are communicated. In the place of earlier linear models premised on more direct media effects or the transmission of media texts, Hall therefore proposed an alternative formulation of communication that was based on a more complex relationship between the different participants in the communication process. Hall writes that here communication is "sustained through articulation of linked but distinctive moments - production, circulation, distribution, consumption, reproduction ... each of which ... retains its

distinctiveness and has its own specific modality and conditions of existence (Hall 1991: 107)." Where the encoding/decoding model thus differed from the sender/receiver model was that it presupposed no *necessary correspondence* between the different sides of the communicative act: the act of production could not determine how the representations produced were received or interpreted. Hall wrote

it was argued earlier that since there is no necessary correspondence between encoding and decoding, the former can attempt to 'prefer' but cannot prescribe or guarantee the latter, which has its own conditions of existence. Unless they are wildly aberrant, encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate. If there were no limits, audiences could simply read whatever they liked into any message. No doubt some total misunderstandings of this kind do exist. But the vast range must contain some degree of reciprocity between encoding and decoding moments, otherwise we could not speak of an effective communicative exchange at all (Hall 1991: 125).

The relationship between the two ends of the communication act was thus not grounded in the transmission of messages (i.e. the hypodermic needle model of media effects) but rather on the different socio-political strategies audiences had available for interpreting the messages that were produced. In particular, the practices of encoding took place through three different subject positions audiences had available. These were: (1) *the dominant-hegemonic position*, which consisted primarily of agreeing with its political meanings; (2) *the negotiated position* which, in turn, composed primarily of situations where the audiences agree but also occasionally oppose these political meanings; (3) and finally, *the oppositional position*, which composed of situations where the audiences resisted the political meanings or interpreted them in an entirely different way. Compared to initial sender/receiver-model, Hall's model provided researchers with a more complex understanding of the communicative relationships that underlie contemporary mass media. Here the basic level of communication

exchange (denotative level) was added with an additional layer of political meanings (connotative level) through which social and political relations were maintained and resisted. This also gave agency to the audiences who could actively interpret the meanings that were embedded into mass media representations. Thus, if we look at the relationship between original news material and its re-use from this perspective, here the original news material is produced through a set of practices of production (for instance by Euro-American news agencies) through which the representations are decoded into meaningful discourse (news representations that can be sold internationally). These representations, then, in turn, are encoded in other parts of the world through another set of production practices (such as news producers in India re-using them for local purposes). The differences between the original and its re-uses in different parts of the world can be best explained by looking at, on the one hand, the different strategies news producers have available for interpreting the representations that are circulated and, on the other hand, the broader socio-political structures that surround these practices of interpretation (such as capitalist conventions of news production shared between the US/UK and India).

In this reading of these foundational communication theories, the sender/receiver model thus foregrounds the representations that are communicated whereas the encoding/decoding model foregrounds the different interpretations that are possible. This distinction also reflects some of the theoretical shifts that have taken place in international news research from political economy approaches (focusing on news content) to later approaches in the domestication of international news and news production analyses (focusing more on the agency news producers have in interpreting these representations). What I will suggest in this thesis, however, is that - despite these

ostensible differences - both of these models still presuppose a kind of *metaphysics of communication* that needs to be critically examined when looking at this problem of cultural translation in countries such as India.⁹

(b) Communication as metaphysics of presence

In his history of ideas of communication, Peters (2001) argues that underlying commonplace Western notions of communication is the assumption that there is something present that is being communicated. He traces this assumption back to the roots of Western thought. Peters writes that "nominating Plato as the source of communication theory might seem simply as an act of grasping a noble lineage if the Phaedrus was not so astoundingly relevant for understanding the age of mechanical reproduction (2001: 36)." According to Peters' reading, in this text, Plato discussed the difficulties that emerge when personal communication was threatened by the written text. Plato was haunted by the possibility for misunderstanding that arises when personal connection is severed with the impersonality of the written text. Peters writes that "whereas oral speech invariably occurs as a singular event shared uniquely by the parties privy to such discussion, writing allows all manner of strange couplings: the distant influence the near, the dead speak to the living, and the many read what was intended for a few (2001: 37)." Plato thus considered speech superior because it contained some kind of a *presence* that could be grounded into the personal relationship of the interlocutors performing the communication. Peters picks up on this point to

9. Reddy has called this the "conduit metaphor of knowledge," according to which language/communication acts as a container through which knowledge is transported a bit similar to how a train moves people. Reddy argues that this metaphor is one of the central metaphors through which especially the English-language approaches questions of knowledge (see Reddy 1979).

argue that it is also here we can trace some of the key assumptions still made about communication in media and cultural studies. He writes that "the great virtue of Phaedrus is to spell out the normative critique of media in remarkable clarity and, even more, to make us rethink what we mean by media ... *the deprivation of presence, in one way or another, has always been the starting point of reflection about communication* (2001: 47; my emphasis)."

Peters thus traces the roots of these fundamental assumptions about communication to more philosophical questions. In particular, he links this problem of presence to the work of one of the key figures of post-structuralist philosophy: Derrida. Derrida called this idea that there is some kind of a presence implicated in Western thought the *metaphysics of presence*. According to Derrida's critical reading, this assumption of presence reflects an overarching desire in Western thought for an immediate access to truth and meaning, prioritising unity, identity, immediacy and presentness over difference, dissimulation, deferment and distance. While Derrida's own philosophical oeuvre has of course focused on tracing out moments in Western philosophy where this metaphysics of presence can be found (Derrida 1985, 1999), his work is also relevant when we look critically at some the presuppositions underlying the commonly used models of communication in international news research.

Beer (2005), for instance, argues that one of Derrida's most explicit criticism of communication based on the transmission/interpretation of meanings can be found in his text "Signature, Event, Context." Beer notes that in this text Derrida explicitly criticises

the traditional conception of communication [as a] a self-sufficient endeavour

of a phonocentric and logocentric nature to transfer meaning in an adequately understandable way from one point to the other, from the sender to the receiver ... communication, and writing as it is traditionally understood, are the means by which meaning is transferred, by which intentions and meanings are exchanged, by which discourses proceed, and by which consciousness is communicated. Reading, interpretation and clear communication are all straightforward possibilities that can be pursued unambiguously (2005: 160-161)

According to a deconstructive reading of communication theory, Beer argues, Derrida shows how the key assumptions underlying communication are based on metaphysical illusions about the possibility of meaning being unambiguously present in communication. In particular, Derrida finds four problems with classical accounts of communication:

1. The first of these problems is what Beer calls idealisation. This is the assumption that there can be a transparency of meanings present in communication. This presupposes that there exists an ideal situation where one can fully understand what the other "says, writes, meant to say or write, or even that he or she intended to say or write in full what remains to be said, or that any adequation need obtain between what he or she consciously intended, what he or she did, and what I do while 'reading' (2005: 163)." As Beer notes, the problem with this is that communication always involves iteration through which difference is introduced. This leaves no other choice but "to mean (to say) something that is (already, always, also) other than what one means (to say), to say something other than what one says and would have wanted to say, to understand something other than ... and so on. *Iterability inscribes alteration irreducibly in repetition* (2005: 163; my emphasis);"
2. The second problem with this notion of communication has to do with the

impossibility of anchoring meaning into context. Beer argues that, according to Derrida, this presupposes that there is a conscious intention behind communication that is fully present and transparent both to the ones performing the communication and to the others interpreting it. According to Derrida, this is impossible because context can be infinitely reproduced. Beer explains "every sign, spoken or written, linguistic or non-linguistic, can be cited. In so doing it can break with any given context, engendering infinity of new contexts in a manner, which is absolutely illimitable. There are only contexts without centre or absolute anchoring (2005: 163)." Context introduces difference into communication that cannot be clawed back to the presence of meaning;

3. The third problem with this notion of communication has to do with what Beer calls intentionality. He argues that the problem, according to Derrida, is not that there are no intentions in communication but rather that these intentions can again be transparent and fully present (*as telos*). This too suffers from the same metaphysical illusion as notions of idealisation and context. Beer writes that "when the telos of intentionality, as the plenitude of meaning, becomes questionable, so does the whole issues of signification as meaning-giving activity in the context of multiple meanings (polysemy) and distribution of meanings (dissemination) (2005: 164)." In other words, despite the intentions behind communication, meaning can be always infinitely re-produced through its iteration in different contexts;
4. The fourth problem with this notion of communication has to do with polysemy. Here Beer argues that, according to Derrida, conventional accounts to

communication characterised by the polysemy of interpretations are also problematic. Derrida picks up here on the difference between polysemy (meaning is multiple but nonetheless the same meaning is interpreted in different ways) and dissemination (a disruption and scattering of meaning that cannot be grounded in processes of interpretation). According to Derrida, Beer notes, communication is always more than just the polysemy of interpretations: it cannot be reduced to the interpretation or decoding meanings but rather overflows with difference that always exceed attempts to close it down.

If we take Derrida's criticism of conventional approaches to communication seriously, this shows us, at the least, the fundamental difficulties in pinning down the relationships underlying international news with models of communication based on the transmission and/or interpretation of messages or meanings. This is because any act of communication always-already introduces difference as an intrinsic part of it. Beer writes that "as soon as there is meaning, there is difference. This is true of any signifying act. The "lag" inherent in this act is called *différance* by Derrida, coming from 'to differ' and 'to defer' ... this *différance* is what habits the core of what appears to be immediate and present, and disrupts meaning-giving activities all the time (2005: 161)." What Derrida's critical reading thus shows us are two problems involved in reifying international under theories that are premised on representation/interpretation or the communication of political meanings. On the one hand, it shows how such approaches are implicated in the broader Western philosophical tradition and, as such, cannot be exported to other parts of the world without at least some critical examination involved. And on the other hand, this shows us how any approach to international news needs to account for this problem of difference always

involved in communication or any act of representation more broadly.

5. In media res

The previous section looked critically at approaches to international news theory premised on representation/interpretation. I argued that such approaches are problematic insofar as they presuppose a particular understanding of communication that cannot account for the problem of difference. This section will now further argue that what such representation-based theories to international news potentially do is claw back differences into some originals through which their meaning/identity is determined in the final instance. Furthermore, through a reading of the concept of *simulacrum* found in the works of Deleuze and Baudrillard, this section suggests that this inability to adequately account for difference poses both risks and opportunities for research. On the critical side, this risks losing our object of study by turning it into something that has more to do with other theories that precede it than the multiplicity of practices we encounter in countries such as India. But on a more affirmative side, this critical reading allows us to become doubly critical (or bifocal) in our research: that is, critical of both of our object of study as well as the theories we use to understand and construct this object of study.

(a) The problem of difference

This re-thinking of difference in media and cultural studies has been

influenced especially by work in post-structuralist philosophy. Larouelle (2010) has argued that the primary preoccupation of continental philosophy has been its effort to understand difference (rather than being) as the ground on which to construct meaning and identity. May (1997) notes similarly "it has become clear that the articulation of an adequate concept of difference, as well as how a proper sense how to valorize it, is the overriding problem that occupies French thought. *To cast the issue in terms common to many Continentals, the problem is how to avoid reducing the difference to the logic of the same* (1997: 1-2; my emphasis)." This work has foregrounded an anti-essentialist understanding of identity and meaning. Influenced by this rethinking of difference, a body of work has thus emerged that has critically analysed how identity and meaning are constructed in fields such as race, gender and queer theory through this shifting logic of similarity and difference. A full overview of these complex debates is of course beyond the scope of this chapter (see Butler 2006). What this section will instead do is provide a critical examination of this problem of difference through a dialogue between international news research and what I consider the most relevant work in contemporary post-structuralist theory for this purpose: the theories of Deleuze and Baudrillard.

(b) Difference and repetition

In his philosophical works, and especially in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze has critically looked at how Western thought has approached this relationship between representation and difference. According to Deleuze, difference has been conventionally clawed back into an object of representation through which this difference has been given meaning in the final instance. A result of this has been,

Deleuze argued, that

difference is not and cannot be thought in itself, so long as it is subject to requirements of representation ... difference in itself appears to exclude any relationship between different and different which would allow it to be thought ... every other difference, every difference which is not rooted in this way, is an unbounded, uncoordinated and inorganic difference: too large or too small, not only to be thought but to exist. Ceasing to be thought, difference is dissipated into in non-being (1994: 330)."

Deleuze looked critically at four key moments in Western philosophy where this domestication of difference has taken place. The first of these he traces to the work of Aristotle. Here difference is understood according to its relationship to some pre-existing category, species or genre into which it can be placed and be given identity and meaning in relation to. The problem with this, however, Deleuze noted, is that difference is thought here in terms of categories that pre-exist it and not as something that underwrites these categories itself. This understanding of difference thus depends on some kind of a representation according to which the categories to which these differences belong to can be first judged. This hides a conservative and essentialist view of the world: by clawing back differences into the categories through which they are understood, "it cannot account for change, newness or mutation (see Williams 2004: 60-61)." The second understanding of difference Deleuze traced back to the work of Hegel and Leibniz. Here difference is thought of as the limits set to theories of representation. In Hegel, this takes place through positing an infinitely large difference, contradiction, as that which transcends representation; in Leibniz, this takes place through infinitely small variations. As Williams summarises Deleuze's critique of these positions "in Hegel's case it is that anything is always subsumed, in a greater and contradictory thing, to infinity [and] Leibniz posits infinitely small

differences at the limit of anything, so that whenever we arrive at a final identity, it is undone by tiny but significant variations (2004: 69)." Both of these understandings of difference, however, Deleuze notes, are still essentialist and conservative in nature: they also require prior representations through which these infinitesimal small and infinitely large differences can be judged.

More importantly for my argument (and similar to Derrida's criticism of the metaphysics of presence), Deleuze traced the roots of this inability to think difference in Western thought back to Plato. Deleuze argued that what was at stake in Plato was not the problem of categorisation or the problem of infinitely large or small differences. What was at stake was a more fundamental selection that Plato wanted to establish. This was between differences that can be represented and differences that cannot be represented. Williams explains that "the Platonic answer ... is that difference is not about oppositions and distinctions but about selection. This means that the division does not operate according to the question 'In which way do these things differ?' but according to the questions 'Which is best?' (2004: 80)." This selection is a moral one. Behind it we find a prior division that is established into those kinds of differences that can be judged according to some pre-existing representation and those that cannot not be. With this selection, Deleuze wrote, "difference is understood only in terms of the comparative play of two similitude: the exemplary similitude of an identical original and the imitative similitude of a more or less accurate copy (Deleuze 1994: 154)."

This critical re-reading of the relationship between representation and difference thus provides a challenge to how we understand the relationships

underlying international news and, especially, this relationship between an original and its re-use. This is because, Deleuze argued, what Plato was trying to establish was a deeper selection he wanted to establish. This was not between the original and the copy but between "two kinds of images ... of which copies ... are only the first kind, the other being simulacra (1994: 154-155)." In other words, the aim of this division was to provide a normative ground based on which we could judge differences and, more significantly, *to exclude those kinds of differences that cannot be judged according to some original.*

Deleuze wrote that

the Platonic wish to exorcise simulacra is what entails the subjection of difference. For the model can be defined only by positing an identity as the essence of the Same ... and the copy by an affection of internal resemblance, the quality of the Similar. Moreover, because the resemblance is internal, the copy must itself have an internal relation to being and the true which is analogous to that of the model. Finally, the copy must be constructed by means of a method, which, given to opposed predicates, attributes it to the one which agrees with the model. In all these ways, copies are distinguished from simulacra only by subordinating difference to instances of the Same, the Similar, Analogous and the Opposed ... (1994: 333-334).

This critical reading of the relationship between representation and difference found in the work of Deleuze thus changes how we understand the differential relationships underlying international news. First of all, what theories premised on representation/interpretation potentially do is subordinate differences in other parts of the world (in re-us, in practice, in frames of references) under an *a priori* original through which these differences can be judged and given meaning in the final instance. As Deleuze argued, such a representation-based approach cannot adequately account for *difference as difference*. Instead, this difference becomes a supplement of some original through which its identity and meaning is derived from. Furthermore, Deleuze warned us that

this ultimately obfuscates a conservative view of the world (state philosophy) that has normalised the Western white male as the point of origin according to which such differences are compared. Deleuze writes that this kind of philosophical approach

reposes on a double identity: of the thinking subject, and of the concepts it creates and to which it lends its own presumed attributes of sameness and constancy. The subjects, its concepts, and also the objects in the world to which the concepts are applied have a shared, internal essence: the self-resemblance at the basis of identity. Representational thought is analogical; its concern is to establish a correspondence between these symmetrically structured domains. The faculty of judgment is the policeman of analogy, assuring that each of these terms is honestly itself, and that the proper correspondences obtain. In thought its end is truth, in action justice. The weapons it wields in their pursuit are limitive distribution (the determination of the exclusive set of properties possessed by each term in contradistinction to the others: logos, law) and hierarchical ranking (the measurement of the degree of perfection of a term's self-resemblance in relation to a supreme standard, man, god, or gold: value, morality). The modus operandi is negation: $x = x = \text{not } y$. Identity, resemblance, truth, justice, and negation. The rational foundation for order (1987: xi).

Secondly, as Deleuze has pointed out, this essentialist understanding of difference is only possible if we exclude those differences that cannot be judged according to some original, or what he calls *simulacra*. Deleuze wrote

what is condemned in the figure of the simulacra is the state of free, oceanic differences, of nomadic distributions and crowned anarchy, along with all that malice which challenges both the notion of the model and that of the copy. Later, the world of representation will more or less forget its moral origin and presuppositions. These will nevertheless continue to act in the distinction between the originary and the derived, the original and the sequel, the ground and the grounded, which animates the hierarchies of representative theology by extending the complementarity between model and copy (1994: 333-334).

These simulacra are thus a challenge because - by being differences that cannot be determined by some original ground or model - they threaten the very system of representation on which differences have been conventionally judged according to.

The question that is thus raised here is that, by not being able to properly account for differences in other parts of the world, do not such representation-based approaches risk turning my object of study into a simulacrum itself: a representation that has more to do with other representations that have come before it than the multiplicity of differences that we encounter in our research? If nothing else, does this not risk overdetermining my object of study? Does this not therefore force us, at the least, to be critical of the hegemonic frames of reference through which differences in other parts of the world such as India have been understood and, in turn, explore alternative methodologies that would help us understand difference as difference?

(c) International news as simulacra?

The concept of simulacra was made popular in media and cultural studies especially through a postmodern reading of Baudrillard. We need to therefore first distinguish this reading from what I consider to be Deleuze's challenge to my object of study. In order to do this, I will look at two different readings of simulacra found in the works of Baudrillard and Deleuze. Massumi (1987) argues that the concept of simulacra was made popular especially during the discourse of postmodernism in the 1980s and 1990s. According to him, in the concept of simulacra, theories of postmodernism lamented the loss of reality in the contemporary world where signs had lost their ability to refer to some fundamental referent or reality behind them. This, Massumi argued, was the reading of simulacra found in the work of Baudrillard. He writes

our world, Jean Baudrillard tells us, has been launched into hyperspace in a kind of postmodern apocalypse. The airless atmosphere has asphyxiated the referent, leaving us satellites in aimless orbit around an empty center. We breathe an ether of floating images that no longer bear a relation to any reality whatsoever. That, according to Baudrillard, is simulation: the substitution of signs of the real for the real. In hyperreality, signs no longer represent or refer to an external model. They stand for nothing but themselves, and refer only to other signs (1987: 1)

Baudrillard's concept of the simulacra, according to Massumi, is thus exemplary of some of the overkills of postmodernist theory where any claims to truth have been dismissed. Yet while Massumi's criticism of Baudrillard can be understood in the context of the postmodern hype popular at the time¹⁰, Baudrillard's concept of the simulacra is more radical than how it is commonly understood in such postmodern readings. If we look at "Simulacra and Simulations" where Baudrillard developed his concept of the simulacra most extensively, we can see how he developed here a four-stage progression through which such theories of representation have passed through in Western thought. According to Baudrillard, these four stages where the relationship between the sign and the referent have changed are:

1. The first stage is where there is a more or less direct relationship between the sign and the reality it represents;
2. The second stage is where the sign has lost this direct relationship to reality and distorts it. Instead of representing that which is, the sign has become a bad or

10. A lot of the work on Baudrillard, in my reading, underestimates his radical challenge and position within the French poststructuralist canon. For instance, in my reading, his work negotiates closely with the work of Deleuze and Foucault and thus has been misunderstood when positioned as a priest of postmodernism especially in the American cultural studies debates. See Cusset 2008 for a French reading of the cultural translation of post-structuralism in the US.

distorted copy of reality. Yet underlying it remains some reality, which the sign can only distort but not faithfully represent;

3. The third stage is where the sign masks the absence of an underlying reality. The signs claim to represent something real all the while such true representation is not possible as all signs are, in the end, arbitrary;
4. The final stage of this is pure simulation. Here the sign "has no relationship to reality whatsoever: it has become its own pure simulacrum (1994: 11)."

Similar to Deleuze, Baudrillard thus argues here that the concept of simulacra threatens to overturn not only the relationship between the sign and the referent - between representation and reality - *but also the very possibility that we know what this relationship itself is*. Simulacra are not only copies of copies that have lost their relationship to some reality or truth underlying it. More crucially they simulate this very reality or truth itself making it impossible to differentiate what is a simulacra and what is not in the end. Massumi therefore wrongly attributes Baudrillard this postmodern reading when he suggests that

the work of Baudrillard is one long lament. Both linear and dialectical causality no longer function, therefore everything is indetermination. The center of meaning is empty, therefore we are satellites in lost orbit. We can no longer act like legislator-subjects or be passive like slaves, therefore we are sponges. Images are no longer anchored by representation, therefore they float weightless in hyperspace. Words are no longer univocal, therefore signifiers slip chaotically over each other. A circuit has been created between the real and the imaginary, therefore reality has imploded into the undecidable proximity of hyperreality. All of these statements make sense only if it is assumed that the only conceivable alternative to representative order is absolute indetermination, whereas indetermination as he speaks of it is in fact only the flipside of order, as necessary to it as the fake copy is to the model, and every bit as much a part of its system. Baudrillard's framework can only be the result of a nostalgia for the old reality so intense that it has deformed his vision of everything outside of it. He cannot clearly see that all the things he says have crumbled were simulacra all along: simulacra produced by analyzable procedures of simulation that were

as real as real, or actually realer than real, because they carried the real back to its principle of production and in so doing prepared their own rebirth in a new regime of simulation (1987: 2).

In my reading, Baudrillard's account of the simulacra can be better understood if we compare it to another less known theory developed by Deleuze at the time and his reworking of the relationship between representation and difference.

Deleuze's concept of the simulacra has been developed most extensively in his book *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1983) and in *Difference and Repetition* (1994). Perhaps its most clear articulation can be found in his essay "Plato and the Simulacrum" found in the *Logic of Sense* (2004). Similar to Baudrillard's ideas, Deleuze's conceptualisation of simulacra not only provides an affirmation of difference; it also threatens the division between an original and a copy on which systems of representation have been historically based on (difference between the sign and the reference, difference between reality and its representation). This is because simulacra, Deleuze wrote

provide the means of challenging both the notion of the copy and that of the model and the originals. The model of the original collapses into difference, while the copies disperse into the dissimilitude of the series which they interiorise, such that one can never say the one is copy and the other a model ... is this not to indicate a point at which the identity of the model and the resemblance of the copy become errors, the same and the similar are no more than illusions born on the functioning of the simulacra ... in the infinite movement of degraded likeness from copy to copy, we reach a point where everything changes nature, at which copies themselves flip over to simulacra and at which, finally, resemblance or spiritual imitation gives way to repetition (Deleuze 1994: 128).

In other words, in place of theories that claw back differences to some original identity, presence, or grounding truth, in Deleuze's account there is a more complex appreciation of difference *as difference*, as something ultimately impossible to domesticate into any system based on representation. Deleuze noted that, as a

consequence of this, "no series enjoys a privilege over others, none possesses the identity of the model, none the resemblance of the copy. None is either opposed or analogous to another. Each is constituted by differences, and communicates with the others through differences (1994: 348)." What Deleuze's concept of simulacra thus provides is a criticism of the very system of representation as the foundation for knowledge. In place of originals based on which to judge differences, we find only simulacra that foreground these differences. A classical model of representation gives way to a more complex system where things gain their identity and meaning not through their relationship to some original representation, or foundational truth, but rather through a different kind of a process based on difference and repetition (see Deleuze 1988).

This critical dialogue between international news research and approaches from post-structuralist philosophers such as Derrida, Deleuze and Baudrillard has two potential consequences to how I approach my object of study. First of all, according to this reading, there are problems in reifying the differential relationships underlying international with theories premised on representation/interpretation or the communication of political meanings. What such representation-based approaches ultimately do is subordinate differences under some originals through which they are given their identity and meaning. This criticism is especially relevant when we look at international news in countries such as India with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. Indeed is this not ethnocentrism at its worst: seeing difference (in re-use, in practice, in theoretical frames of reference) as always supplementary copies of some original, and thus perhaps - as post-colonial historians have warned us - historically of the Western intellectual? And if so, how then could we

understand differences in international news in ways that would not always domesticate these differences as inferior copies of some original? Secondly, this concept of the simulacra changes the relationship between practice and theory of research. Two additional things need to be noted here. Firstly, if such representation-based approaches to international news cannot account for differences, what then stops my object of study becoming itself a simulacrum - that is, something that bears more resemblance to the theories we rely on rather than the empirical variation and multiplicity of different kind of practices we encounter in other parts of the world? Do we thus not risk over-interpreting our objects of study when we claw back differences into some original theoretical frame of reference through which we given it meaning and identity? And, on the other hand, the concept of simulacra potentially helps overturn this system of representation based on which differences have been conventionally judged and represented. Contrary to a more popular understanding of it as something to be lamented, Deleuze's and Baudrillard's work potentially offers a productive re-imaging of our object of study. Instead of representation-based approaches, we now enter a different theoretical terrain where things attain their identity and meaning not through their relationship to some foundational truth, meaning or original model (representation) but through a complicated process of difference and repetition (discourse). I hope to show in this thesis that this approach also hopefully allows for a better understand of the complexities of the postcolonial world where the Euro-American subject has lost its central positionality.

6. Conclusion

The literature review positioned my research within the theories that have looked at international news. In particular, the chapter argued that conventional approaches to international news are problematic insofar as they presuppose metaphysics of communication that may not be shared universally. This causes two problems for research. Firstly, such representation-based approaches to international news cannot be applied to countries such as India with at least some critical examination involved. Secondly, such approaches are problematic as they cannot adequately account for the problem of difference. What such representation-based theories potentially do is claw back differences into some originals through which their meaning/identity is determined in the final instance as an object of representation. The chapter thus argued that by prioritising originals as the point of comparison, this risks turning our object of study into a simulacrum: something that potentially bears more resemblance to the theories used than it does to the diversity of media-related news practices we encounter in different parts of the world. In the next chapter, I will look at the methodology through which I propose to critically examine these questions in dialogue with the empirical research into the English-language print and online news media in India.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice.

(Deleuze and Foucault 1980: 208)

Introduction | Framing the Problem | Critical approach(es) to research | Re-imagining my object of study | Conclusion

1. Introduction

In the literature review I looked critically at representation-based approaches to my object of study. I asked whether this risks over-interpreting my object of study by not seeing differences as differences but rather as variations of some original - theoretical or otherwise? I also preliminarily suggested that because of these difficulties involved in representing differences, we need to adopt a doubly critical research approach in my research: an approach that is both critical of the object of study as well as the theories we rely on to understand it. The second theory chapter - the methodology chapter - now, in turn, explores the methodology developed in the thesis. It asks what research methodologies are best suited for such a doubly critical or

bi-focal approach to research? And how do we define what it means to be "critical" in the first place - a concept that, by no means, is agreed upon in media and cultural studies?

This chapter has thus two aims. Firstly, it positions my research within critical tradition of media and cultural studies. Secondly, building on this tradition, it outlines the methodology used in the thesis to empirically research the different points of entry into the broader problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

2. Framing the problem

(a) The paradox of conservatism

Taylor and Harris (2008) warn us that media and cultural studies risks becoming a form of "cultural populism" when it uncritically celebrates the active agency audiences have in interpreting mass media representations. Taylor and Harris write that the

contemporary rejection of critical media theory is largely based upon varying degrees of post-structuralist sensitivity to the ways in which the audience can re-appropriate the meanings imposed upon them by the owners and producers of media content. Rather than seeing media audiences or commodity consumers as simply passive consumers of the products of an overarching culture industry, cultural populists (broadly defined) prefer to emphasize the way in which audiences actively reinterpret or 'read' programmes or products using alternative meanings better suited to their own particular, localized environments (2008: 4).

To counter this tendency, Taylor and Harris thus advocate adopting critical distance from theories that foreground active audience over analyses of media power. This

critical distance, they argue, can show us how the media is still (1) "permeated by ideological components that are overlooked - not because they don't exist but rather because they are an innate part of how media functions (2008: 2);" and (2) that such "uncritical theories of the media have a perverse tendency to celebrate such ideological processes such as evidence of the rude health of cultural life and agency with mass media society (2008: 2)." Taylor and Harris call this theoretical tension between media power and audience interpretation underlying contemporary approaches to media and cultural studies the "paradox of conservatism (2008: 5)." Instead of celebrating contemporary mass media, they suggest that we need foreground approaches from critical theory (and especially ones informed by the Frankfurt School) that "do not so much flatly deny the basic findings of cultural populism as argue that specific evidence of audience interpretive activity needs to be judged in terms of the deeper political significance of this activity (2008: 5)."

This paradox of conservatism illustrates the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems that underlie the problem of cultural translation examined in this thesis. On the one hand, Taylor and Harris rightly criticise what they call the "cultural populism" involved in uncritically celebrating global media (or international news). Yet, on the other hand, research that has explored mass media's ideological effects in different parts of the world has found it difficult to substantiate these theories with empirical evidence. This paradox of conservatism is thus all the more relevant when I look at international news in countries such as India with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. Underlying this problem of cultural translation is, once again, the problem of difference. Can we assume that critical approaches that originate from particular historical concerns in Europe and the US

(such as the ones influenced by the Frankfurt School) can be exported to other parts of the world without, at the least, some interrogation involved?

I suggested in the Introduction that a doubly critical or bifocal research approach helps me potentially negotiate some the tensions that exist between political economy approaches and theories that focused on the active agency audiences have in resisting hegemonic Western cultural products. The methodology chapter addresses these tensions directly. In particular, it provides a kind of a meta-methodological analysis of what it means to be critical in research but, as importantly, *what it means to be critical of the practices through which we criticise as researchers*. In particular, as shown in the previous chapter, I argue that some of the theoretical tensions underlying this paradox of conservatism can be avoided if we shift our analytical focus away from representation-based approaches to my object of study towards approaches that foreground theories of practice and discourse. In other words, if there are no origins, essences or truths on which to ground our theories, the status of critical research itself changes: theory becomes a form of practice applied for a particular purpose. Through a dialogue between approaches from critical theory, cultural studies, post-marxism and post-structuralism, this chapter thus examines what such a relationship between theory and practice developed in this thesis could look like.

3. Critical approach(es) to research

The first section looks at critical theory and cultural studies' approaches to critical research. It first examines approaches from critical theory: what it means to be

critical in the tradition influenced by Frankfurt School. Secondly, it looks at approaches from post-Marxist theory that has critically addressed the theoretical presuppositions on which conventional understandings of ideology-based criticism have been based on. Finally, it looks at approaches from media and cultural studies, and, in particular, the critical tradition of audience theory. I finally suggest that a dialogue between these different approaches - critical theory and media and cultural studies - can potentially provide us with a methodology that helps us overcome this paradox of conservatism.

(a) Critical Theory

What is commonly known as critical theory (or Critical Theory with a capital C) refers to a body of work inspired by the Frankfurt School and its applicability for media analysis. Its distinctiveness stems from its differentiation from empirical social science methods insofar as in critical theory research should not only seek to describe the existing situation but also to seek emancipation from existing circumstances of domination and oppression. In Horkheimer's influential definition of critical theory, theory/research is sufficient only if it meets three criteria: (1) it must be able to explain the problems with the overall current social reality; (2) identify who the agents are that could change it; (3) and provide practical suggestions and norms for criticism and social transformation (Horkheimer 1982). What is loosely called critical theory thus refers to research approaches that involve practical political aims in addition to empirical concerns. As the work associated with the Frankfurt School touches on some of the core problems underlying this thesis, I will briefly examine two of its key ideas and how they relate to the broader problem of cultural translation developed in

this thesis.

(b) Art in the age of mechanical reproduction

In his seminal text, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin (1969) outlined some of the theoretical tensions that underlie these critical theory approaches to media analysis. His essay examined in detail the political implications of new technologies, and, in particular, the challenge that photography posed for older forms of representation. Benjamin argued that the radical potential of photography as a new mode of representation resulted from the fact that it removed the "aura" of originality granted to classical forms of art such as paintings. As Paul and Harris elaborate on Benjamin's key concerns:

although Benjamin hoped for empowering freedom from the inhibiting qualities of tradition, critical readings of the mass media stem from this dislocation of the artwork from its previously unique point in space and time. While the artwork and its public are now freed from a dependence upon location, a reduction in the particularity of the artwork occurs as it loses part of this singular location-specific context (2008: 23)

This severing of the relationship between an original (aura) and its photographic duplication (potentially infinite re-uses/copies) was seen by Benjamin as both a positive and negative development. It was potentially positive as this liberated the originals from the "parasitical relationship" that it previously had to rituals or social settings thus freeing it for all kinds of progressive or revolutionary uses. This, Benjamin noted, potentially empowered the masses that could now break the bonds of elitism characteristic of classical art. However, at the same time, this also made

possible the commodification of culture and the alienating effects of the mass media society characteristic of capitalistic cultural industries. Taylor and Harris write

although Benjamin hoped for empowering freedom from the inhibiting qualities of tradition, critical readings of the mass media stem from this dislocation of the artwork from its previously unique point in space and time. While the artwork and its public are now freed from a dependence upon location, a reduction in the particularity of the artwork occurs as it loses part of this singular location-specific context. It is now usurped by a *simulacral copy* that can never encompass the totality of the original (2008: 23; my emphasis).

These theoretical tensions implicated in this relationship between an original and copy also underlie the relationship between an original and its re-use in international news looked at in this thesis. In Benjamin's account, this theoretical tension between this original (aura) and re-use (mechanical reproduction) had both potentially positive and negative effects that result when representations are freed from what Baudrillard called "the unbreakable reciprocity with their social setting (Baudrillard 1983a: 85; quote found in Taylor and Harris 2008: 21). Similarly, in international news research, the political question has largely revolved around the degree to which audiences/news producers in other parts of the world can re-use (interpret) the originals in ways that break the framing of international news events and themes produced by the original moment of production usually by the hegemonic Euro-American news agencies. In the earlier models the original moment of production was linked to media power; in later approaches, media power was seen as more fragmented and diffused by the different interpretations this original news material underwent in its re-uses in different parts of the world. This tension was already present in Benjamin's account. This proliferation of "simulacral copies" has both empowering effects for the masses as well as has facilitated the emergence of the mass consumer society and the

homogenising effects of the cultural industries (2008: 23).

(c) Dialectic of Enlightenment

Similar theoretical tensions are also present in the work of two other major figures of the Frankfurt School: Adorno and Horkheimer. In their work, and especially in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer (1969) discussed the political implications that emerge when location-specific social settings are severed in the mass media. In this text, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that Western thought has always been instrumentalist in nature. This is because reason operates by reducing the play of differences (what they called the non-identical) of the social world into a concept or object of representation that allows it to be controlled. What Adorno and Horkheimer called the "dialectic of enlightenment" has thus proceeded historically in their argument through three stages: (1) domination of self; (2) domination of labour; and (3) domination of nature, including human nature. And while such instrumental reason is characteristic of Western thought, problems arise when it is severed from being only a location-specific activity and turned into mass media representations in the capitalist cultural industries across the world. Taylor and Harris suggest that this tension outlined by Adorno and Horkheimer also underpins the critical analysis of mass media. They write

the theoretical basis of critical theory and its subsequent application to the cultural impact of media technologies. The instrumental reason that characterizes the Enlightenment is commensurate with the consolidation of capitalism. Both commodification and utilitarian, instrumental reason involve a decontextualization of the particular and its reduction to interchangeable units. This results in an exhaustion of what is potentiality inherent in the non-identical. The limits of what is possible become defined as limits of the established order (a weakness underpinning much of cultural populism). Thus,

at the cultural level, the totalizing nature of the new myth of capitalist instrumental reason - the unknowable and all other social values are commodified. The media act as technological vessels reinforcing such commodity values, and only that which pre-exists within the media is granted attention (2008: 27).

In this reading, whereas previously instrumental reason operated on limited scale, now media technologies make it possible for it to operate on a mass scale, resulting in the standardised and homogenised products of the culture industry. The creative potential of the play of differences (non-identical) is domesticated into an object of representation by processes of capitalist commodification in the mass media. As we have seen in especially in the political economy approaches, questions around international news have been similarly linked to questions of media power because of the assumption that hegemonic news representations are able to homogenise differences in other parts thus serving the interests of the Euro-American news agencies who produce them.

(d) Mass media (and international news) as ideology

While this selective reading of course only scratches the surface of a sophisticated body of theoretical work, this nonetheless helps ground the discussions of my thesis. Two things should be noted here. First of all, Benjamin's and Adorno and Horkheimer's critical approach is closely linked to the problem of cultural translation insofar as it deals with the theoretical tensions implicated in how we understand the relationship between an original and re-use. Benjamin's work looked at the political implications that emerge when the "aura" of the original is severed from its social setting and what the consequences of these "simulacral copies" are. Adorno and

Horkheimer's critical reading of western reason, in turn, also notes a similar theoretical tension in the relationship between the original and the re-use. In their criticism, the culture industry works by reducing the non-identical (difference) into objects of representation that can be commodified in the culture industry. Secondly, while rightfully pointing out the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems that emerge from this relationship between an original and its re-use, where I diverge with these approaches is how this criticism is translated over to empirical research. My disagreement here has to do primarily with the notion of ideology that has been used as an explanatory framework to explain the political significance of the processes described outlined above (or, more specifically, this triadic relationship between the original, copy and the simulacrum). The theoretical question raised here has to do, once again, with the broader problem of cultural translation. In other words, when critically identifying such ideological effects of contemporary mass media (or international news) in other parts of the world, how do we then empirically substantiate these claims in countries such as India with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments? What methods can be used to do this? And how do we understand the resulting relationship or tension between the interpretations, or truth claims, of academics identifying ideological effects in other parts of the world and the interpretations, or truth claims, of the people he/she is researching who may or may not always agree with these interpretations?

(e) Post-Marxist challenges to ideology

Theories of ideology have a long history in global media and cultural studies. It is of course beyond the scope of this research to address all these debates (see

Eagleton 2007). For the purposes of this discussion, I will only look at the notion of ideology common in the Critical Theory examples discussed above. At the core of this is a Marxist conception of ideology according to which the ruling classes dominate both through material means (base structure) and through a system of beliefs (superstructure) that works against the interests of the masses who are excluded from the benefits of this system. Ideological criticism, thus, works to "unmask" the different ways ideological beliefs operate in society, and in particular, in the workings of the mass media. Recent work in post-structuralism and post-Marxist theory, however, has begun to criticise many of the assumptions on which earlier theories of ideology have been premised. I will focus here on one these criticisms as it directly applies to the discussions in this chapter. Laclau (1990) argues that classical Marxist notions of ideology rely on two essentialist assumptions made. These approaches presuppose, on the one hand, a level of social totality; and, on the other hand, a notion of false consciousness as the foundation on which to ground this concept ideology on. Yet Laclau notes that

both approaches appear to have been undermined as a consequence of the crisis of the assumptions on which they were grounded. The validity of the first depended on a conception of society as an intelligible totality, itself conceived as the structure upon which its partial elements and processes are founded. The validity of the second approach presupposed a conception of human agency - a subject having an ultimate essential homogeneity whose misrecognition was postulated as the source of 'ideology.' In this respect, the two approaches were grounded in an *essentialist* conception of both society and social agency (1990: 89; emphasis in original)."

According to Laclau, the notion of society as an intelligible totality has historically consisted of different attempts to provide a holistic explanation for any explanatory system. The problem with this assumption, he points out, is that for it to cohere it

requires that the meaning of the processes within this system must be fixed *outside* the system itself, that is, in a "system of relations with other elements (1990: 90)." In other words, any social totality needs to be understood in a way that these systems have an essential centre (origin) based on which the differential elements that compose it are given their identity or meaning in the last instance. Laclau thus writes "the status of this social order was a totality that was an essence of social order which had to be *recognized* behind the empirical variations expressed at the surface of social life (1990: 90; emphasis in original)." Following the criticism of post-structuralist philosophy on such essentialist categories or origins, Laclau notes that against this "essentialist vision we tend nowadays to accept the *infinitude of the social*, that is, the fact that any 'structural system is limited, that it is always surrounded by an 'excess of meaning' which it is unable to master and that, consequently, 'society' as a unitary and intelligible object which grounds its own partial processes is an impossibility (1990: 90; emphasis in original)" The problem with this notion of social totality has thus to do with the impossibility of fixing meaning, once and for all, to the play of differences that surround any social system. Laclau writes "each social formation has its own forms of determination and relative autonomy, which are always instituted through a complex process of overdetermination and therefore cannot be established a priori (1980: 91)."

The second problem with ideology, Laclau argues, has to do with the concept of false consciousness. In other words, in order for critical research to determine that ideology has effects on the people who are subordinated by it, they need to first determine what the positive needs of the people affected are. According to Laclau, however, this is only possible if the identity of the subject is transparent and fixed. Only if we are able to recognise what the authentic (original) nature of the subject is

behind these variations (copies/false consciousness), can we, in turn, determine what their true identity is behind the surface variations of any ideological system. And the only way these interests of the masses can be known is if their identity is "*positive and non-contradictory*" (1990: 91; emphasis in original)." Yet as recent work in post-structuralism has shown, this notion of the positive and non-contradictory subject is theoretically problematic. Laclau therefore warns us that the relationship between what these *true* interests are and what the *actual* practices of people are (or how they have been represented) has never been a neutral relationship. On the contrary, when we look at this problem historically, Laclau notes that we see questions of power. He writes that

the gap between 'actual consciousness' and 'imputed consciousness' grew increasingly wider. The way this gap was filled - through the presence of a Party instituted as the bearer of the objective historical interests of the class - led to the establishment of an 'enlightened' despotism of intellectuals and bureaucrats who spoke in the name of the masses, explained to them their true interests, and imposed on them an increasingly totalitarian forms of control. The reaction to this situation inevitably took the form of the assertion of the actual identity of the social agents against the 'historical interests' which burdened them (1990: 91-92).

Given these dual problems with conceptions with ideology - of social totality and of false consciousness - Laclau therefore suggests the concept of ideology needs to be inverted for political analysis. Instead of seeing ideology as a structural system composed of a founding totality or centre driven by false consciousness, ideology should be instead defined as the *misrecognition* of the impossibility of establishing closure in a society that overflows with differences. Laclau concludes that with this reversal

the ideological would consist of those discursive forms through which a society tries to institute itself as such on the basis of closure, of the fixation of meaning, of the non-recognition of the infinite play of differences. The ideological would be the "will to totality" of any totalising discourse. And insofar as the social is

impossible without some fixation of meaning, without the discourse of closure, the ideological must be seen as constitutive of the social. *The social only exists as the vain attempt to institute that impossible object: society. Utopia is the essence of any communication and social practice* (1990: 91; my emphasis).

Laclau's criticism thus shows us some of the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems that underlie the problem of cultural translation. In order to determine that international news has ideological effects on other parts of the world, we need to first be able to posit some kind of a media effect these representations have on the audiences/news producers who are implicated in international news. Yet as Laclau has pointed out, without logically presupposing a notion of false consciousness that the researcher is able to criticise, the only way to determine such ideological effects is by conducting empirical research in order to see how audiences themselves imagine and/or comment on what the relevance of such ideological effects is for their own practices. The problem that emerges once again is here is how we understand the relationship between the interpretations/truth claims of the researcher and the interpretations/truth claims of the people he/she researches. On what grounds can the researcher claim that his/her theories are epistemologically superior to the people he/she researches? This relationship between ideological effects and audience interpretation becomes even more complicated when we look at countries such as India with often significantly different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. Can we really assume that these ideological effects are the same between, say, the US and India? And do we not, once again, risk over-interpreting differences (as simulacra) by postulating ideological effects on other parts of the world without taking into account these differences we encounter in how ideology operates in different cultural contexts?

(f) Media and cultural studies approaches

With these questions in mind, if critical theory approaches help us understand the socio-political conditions surrounding media production and processes, what it thus lacks is a clear methodological framework through which to conduct empirical research to substantiate the theoretical assumptions made. Media and cultural studies approaches fare better in this respect insofar as they try to take into account the *situated practices of audiences and media practitioners* involved with the mass media (or international news) in different parts of the world. Empirical research on audiences has a long history in media and cultural studies. The question underlying this body of research has revolved largely around how we can establish the media effects or influence of mass media representations on the audiences who consume them. Different models have emerged that have tried to theorise this relationship from the "hypodermic needle model" of the early mass communication research to the "uses and gratification" model to more recent work around active and polysemic audiences. This body of research has also provided a rich body of empirical research on effects of propaganda in the US to British television audiences in the (Morley and Brunson 1996) to the influences of American TV programmes such as Dallas on different parts of the world (Ang 1985) to more contemporary work on new media audiences (Jenkins 2012). As this history has been extensively discussed by Ang (1991, 1995) and Nightingale (1996, 2003, 2011), the specifics of these debates do not need to be addressed in length here.

Where Laclau's work on ideology is relevant for my thesis is that he inverts the concept in a way that helps foreground the theoretical contradictions, tensions and

problems underlying it. His post-structuralist reading of ideology forces us to shift focus from examining what the "real" ideological effects of media (or international news) are on the masses/audiences to examining where such claims to closure have been made. Moreover, this links his anti-essentialist approach to a strand of audience theory that has looked critically at some of the assumptions made of audience research. Ang writes about its problems the following way:

Our curiosity about the audience is never innocent. Specific interest and orientations, material and intellectual, generally shape the perspective from which we come to define our object of study, and the kinds of knowledge - their form and content, their scope and substance - we pursue. There is now clearly a sense of crisis in the study of media audiences ... the crisis is neither purely theoretical nor purely methodological ... it is, rather, both deeply epistemological and thoroughly political. The current popularity of cultural studies approaches to the audience has not only produced considerable epistemological confusion over the status of the concept of the 'audience' as an analytical object, but has also reanimated the persistent critical preoccupation with the political standing of scholarship: what does it mean to do 'audience research', and why do it in the first place? (1995: 66).

Ang represents a body of work in media and cultural studies and audience theory that has critically questioned the theoretical validity of the category of audience itself. Hartley writes similarly that "audiences are not just constructs; they are invisible fictions produced institutionally in order for various institutions to take charge of the mechanisms of their own survival. Audiences may be imagined empirically, theoretically or politically, but in all cases the product is a fiction that serves the need of the imagining institutions (1987: 105)." This critical reversal of what audiences are (now as epistemological or discursive constructs rather than ontological categories) links this tradition of audience theory to the problem of cultural translation developed in this thesis. In other words, seeing audiences as discursively constructed categories moves the focus of our analysis away from what the "real effects" of international

news are towards looking more closely at the *practices through which the relevance of international news on audiences has been imagined as something in countries such as India*. The critical question is thus not about *what* the ideological effect of the dominance of Western news organisations in international news is, but rather *when and where* has this effect been articulated *as* something in both academic and public debates and what are the political implications of such articulations? In other words, why has one understanding of audiences been foregrounded over other ways of imaging the problem and what has this understanding potentially disarticulated? Hartley further writes that

there is no 'actual' audience that lies beyond its production as a category, which is merely to say that *audiences are only ever encountered per se as representations*. They are so rarely self-represented that they are almost always absent, making [them] perhaps the largest 'community' in the world that is subject to what Edward Said has dubbed the discourse of 'orientalism', whereby disorganized communities which have never developed or won adequate means of self-representation, and which exist almost wholly within the imagination or rhetoric of those who speak on their behalf, become the 'other' of powerful, imperial discourses (1987: 105; my emphasis)

So underlying the discourse that international news has ideological effects on countries such as India is perhaps a longer and more complicated genealogy through which groups of people have been represented *as* something. As Butch (2000) has noted, audiences have been historically imagined as passive placeholders controlled by outside forces, as passive subjects of propaganda, as consumers seeking self-fulfilment, as alienated masses interpellated by capitalist ideology, and perhaps most recently as active interpreters of meanings that are communicated to them. But seldom have these theories necessary dealt with "real" groups of people outside how they have been

represented by somebody else.¹¹

(g) Towards a doubly critical approach

This critical understanding of audiences brings media and cultural studies closer to critical theory approaches. Here the problem has less to do with cultural populism and more about the different socio-political circumstances through which audiences have been represented as something for a given purpose. This also requires us to make a shift in critical analysis away from trying to theorise ideological effects (such as theories of cultural imperialism in international news) towards a closer examination of the discourse of international news itself *in which both academics and practitioners are implicated in equally, lacking an outside position from which to provide criticism from*. With this "paradox of conservatism" in mind, I therefore suggest in the thesis that a dialogue between these two ways of being critical outlined in this chapter - critical theory and media and cultural studies - can potentially help me develop the doubly critical or bifocal research approach and methodology used in this thesis. In other words, by foregrounding questions of media power and politics, critical theory

11. Baudrillard (1985) has argued that when we look at the relationship between the mass media and its influence on the people who consume it, we are dealing already here with a theoretical impossibility. He argues that in order for us to construct a notion of an audience/mass, we have to combine two different frameworks of reference that are incommensurable. He writes that "this results from the fact that there is a compound, a mixture of two heterogeneous systems whose data cannot be transferred to one and another. An operational system which is statistical, information based, and simulational is projected onto a traditional value system, onto a system of representation, will and opinion. This collage, this collusion between the two, gives rise to an indefinite and useless polemic. We should agree neither with those who praise the beneficial use of media, nor with those who scream about manipulation - for the simple reason that there is no relationship between a system of meaning and a system of simulation ... (1985: 579)."

approaches are useful insofar as they allow me to take into account the social conditions of knowledge surrounding any practice of research. The media and cultural studies approaches, in turn, are useful as they allow me to better take into account the situated interests of the participants involved. The critical question thus becomes less about understanding how international news influences people in different parts of the world, or how they interpret international news, and more about the practices and discourse through which our object of study has been imagined as something over other ways of imagining the problem. In other words, what are the politics underlying the different ways international news (and the differences underlying it) have been discursively mediated in different parts of the world? As Laclau has noted, the ideological consists of the misrecognition of the impossibility of any final closure. Similarly, the methodology developed in this thesis aims to also be ultimately critical of any final claims to closure, whether this takes place in academic theories or in the institutional practices and political discourse in countries such as India.

4. Re-imagining my object of study

The previous section argued that approaches from critical theory are useful insofar as they involve a critical analysis of the social conditions surrounding any claim to knowledge. Media and cultural studies approaches, in turn, are useful insofar as they focus on understanding the situated practices of the participants involved. A critical dialogue between these two approaches can thus help me now develop the methods used in this thesis. Moreover, theory acquires a different status: it stops being

about the *representation* of a particular state of affairs or underlying reality and becomes more a *conceptual tool* that can be used for a particular purpose. This kind of pragmatic approach to theory has been called by names such as standpoint theory (Harding 2003) and intervention analysis (Hartley 1995). I am, however, indebted here in particular to a post-structuralist reading of *theory as a form of practice* found in the works of Foucault and Deleuze (1980). In particular, in "Intellectuals and Power" Foucault and Deleuze described a new relationship between theory and practice. They wrote (in dialogue) that

theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice ... *A theory is exactly like a box of tools. It has nothing to do with the signifier. It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoreticians himself ... then the theory is worthless or the moment is inappropriate* (1980: 208; my emphasis).

The next section looks at the research toolbox developed in this thesis. In particular, I explicate three methodological concepts developed throughout the thesis: theories of practice, theories of articulation and theories of assemblages. Each of these, I argue, potentially provides an alternative to the earlier representation-based approaches to international news. These theoretical tools are then specified in dialogue with the empirical chapters that follow, each providing a different point of entry into this problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

(a) Theories of practice or media-related practices

The first methodological tool developed in the thesis revolves around the concept of practice. Such theories of practice have gained popularity in the recent

years as a way to understand media practices and processes without resorting to older representation-based models of global media. In a recent anthology of media practices analysed from an anthropological perspective, Bräuchler and Postill argue that there is multiple ways media has been imagined as practice. They write that there is no unified theory of practice but rather a "body of diverse writers and thinkers who adopt a loosely defined "practice" approach (2010: 6)."¹² The first generation of practice theorists, according to Bräuchler and Postill, used the concept of practice as a way of theorising a middle ground between "methodological individualism - explaining social phenomena as a result of individual actions - and those of its logical opposite - the explanation of phenomena by means of structures and wholes (2010: 9)."¹³ The second generation of practice theorists, in turn, used practice as a way of emphasising the "centrality of the human body while paying close attention to questions of culture and history (2010: 9)."¹⁴ Theories of practice have thus been used widely as a theoretical framework for addressing some of the difficulties involved in explaining individual action within social collectives such as news organisations (see Bourdieu 1977).

Given these various accounts of the theory of practice in circulation, a useful way to look at practice-based approaches to international news is a recent debate between Nick Couldry and Mark Hobart around what Couldry called "media-

12. These include "philosophers (such as Wittgenstein, Dreyfus, Taylor), social theorists (such as Bourdieu, Giddens), cultural theorists (Foucault, Lyotard) and theorists of science and technology (Latour, Rouse, Pickering) (Bräuchler and Postill 2010: 6)."

13. Postill notes that there are broadly three lines of thought within such practice theory. These include Bourdieu, Foucault and Giddens (Bräuchler and Postill; 2010: 5-9).

14. Postill include thinkers such as Ortner, Schatzki, Swidler, Couldry and Reckwitz into this second generation of practice theorists (Bräuchler and Postill; 2010: 5-9).

oriented practices" and Hobart has called "media-related practices."¹⁵ Couldry (2010) argued that such a practice-based approach could potentially provide a new object of study for media studies. He writes that the existing approaches are the residue of at least five different historical strands of theorising. The first is the "US mass communications research (Merton, Lazarsfeld, Katz) which was set firmly in the tradition of the experimental social sciences, but took its cue from wider intellectual debates on mass media and their consequences for democracy and social order (2010: 35)." The second is "critical Marxist commentary (Benjamin, Adorno) which also took its cue from mass culture debates, but within an agenda based on the critique of capitalism (this in turn developed into the political economy tradition) (2010: 35-36)." The third is the "semiotic analysis which in its dominant form developed in the context of European structuralism and post-structuralism and applied the most radical theoretical innovations of post-World-War-II literary theory to media texts (2010: 35)." The fourth strand is "the critical research, particularly on media audiences (Hall, Morley, Ang), that emerged in Britain in close association with semiotics and Marxism, but quickly developed into a broader empirical tradition which has continued through the 1990s (2010: 35-36)." And the fifth is the "line of anthropological research into media that has emerged out of postmodern versions of symbolic anthropology (2010: 35-36)." These diverging frameworks of analysis have not, according to Couldry, been able to agree on what the theoretical frameworks media studies should adopt or even what its object of study should be. Couldry thus

15. This exposition is based on a debate these two media theorists had recently about how we can understand the notion of practice. This debate was summarised in Postil 2010 and a more extended version of it can be found in <http://www.criticalia.org/Source%20Materials/Media%20as%20practice%20-%20the%20Couldry-Hobart%20exchange.pdf> [as accessed on July 31, 2012]

writes that "these traditions disagree of course as to their primary theoretical focus: for the first, it is problems of large-scale social effects; for the second, processes of commodification; for the third, the polysemy of the text; for the fourth, the process of interpretation, and for the fifth, open-ended practices of media production, circulation, and consumption (2010: 36)." Against these approaches, Couldry proposes a new framework for research around what he calls "media-oriented practices". What Couldry thus suggests is that focusing on such media-oriented practices can help us move beyond the earlier preoccupations of media and cultural studies and its over-determination of its object of study. In Couldry's approach, analysis of media would be seen as more loose and open-ended: the focus would be on what "people are doing in relation to media across a whole range of situations and contexts (2010: 39)."

Hobart (2010), however, argues for a more critical account of practice. While he accepts Couldry's criticism of the different moments of closure in media and cultural studies, he also asks what do we specifically mean by such media practices: that is, what is the object of study we are referring to when we research media in especially other parts of the world? According to Hobart, any account to practice has to address two difficulties. The first is how we "address the relationship between academic models and actuality (whatever this is) (2010: 56)?" The second is "how do we address the practices of which media production, distribution, reception and commentary arguably consist (2010: 56)?" Hobart thus asks that "is it is possible to devise an account of practice that will meet the intellectual requirements of media studies and reflect recognizably the activities of the practitioners? And, as Western scholars often imagine that their notional intellectual radicalism mysteriously frees

them from potential Euro-centrism, does such an account make sense beyond the narrow confines of anglophone academia? (2010: 56)." In Hobart's account, any theory of practice needs to become double: it has to include both the practices of our object of study as well as the researcher's practice of theorising. With such a critical understanding of practice, Hobart continues, "the knower can no longer claim superiority to and separateness from the known but becomes part of the known with all the attendant problems. So a theory or practice which fails to include the researcher and practices of theorising research and writing integral to it reiterates the presuppositions it claims to reject (2010: 57)." In response to this problem, Hobart urges that we rework the theories of media practice around what he calls "media-related practices." While accepting Couldry's criticism of the different moments of theoretical closure prevalent in media studies and the need for an open-ended account of practice, Hobart nonetheless argues that his practice differs from Couldry's as it gives no *a priori* definition as to what these practices are and how we should understand them. Rather, practice, in his account, is just panoply of "rival ways of understanding complex events and actions (2010: 60)" and a "frame of reference we use to interrogate a complex reality (2010: 62)."

Practice as method should thus not over-determine or naturalise what the object of study in media and cultural studies is. Rather, this object of study is itself the outcome of different practices of articulation through which it has been given its identity in different parts of the world, often in contradictory ways.

(b) Articulation

The second methodological tool developed in the thesis revolves around the concept of articulation. Slack writes that the concept of articulation has emerged as one of the most generative "concepts" in cultural studies through which researchers can approach their objects of study "without falling into the twin trap of reductionism and essentialism (1996: 113)." Theories of articulation, Slack argues, work on different levels: the theoretical, the epistemological and the political. Theoretically, it provides an alternative framework to older models of communication focusing primarily on representation and interpretation. It also provides a methodological framework for understanding "what a cultural study does ... and strategies for undertaking a cultural study, a way of contextualising' the object of one's analysis (1996: 113)." Epistemologically, articulation provides a way of thinking about how social structures (such as international news) have been formed from "play of correspondences, non-correspondences and contradictions, as fragments in the constitution of what we take to be unities (1996: 113). And politically, articulation provides a way of looking at how power enters into the discursive mediation of social structures and, potentially, a "mechanism for shaping intervention within a particular social formation, conjuncture or context (1996: 113)." Articulation, thus, as a methodological tool, places academic research on an equal epistemological footing with the subjects he/she researchers. Theory becomes another form of articulation that does not exist outside the particular social formations that it aims to analyse and possibly intervene in.

In this thesis, however, I will focus specifically on theories of articulation as developed in the work of post-Marxist philosophers Laclau and Mouffe. Laclau and

Mouffe defined articulation as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identities are modified as a result of the articulatory practice (1985: 105)." What is significant about this model of articulation is that it explicitly steers away from any essential explanations that would pre-exist this articulation. Seeing the relationships underlying international news as the outcome of different practices of articulation thus helps me shift focus from what these relationships are to looking at the different moments where these relationships have been discursively mediated, in both public debates in India and in academic theorizing. Laclau and Mouffe write that once this "essentialist assumption is abandoned, the category of articulation acquire(s) a different theoretical status: articulation is now a discursive practice which does not have a plane of constitution prior to, or outside, the dispersion of articulated elements (1985: 109)." According to Laclau and Mouffe what we call any system or structure itself never pre-exists its discursive mediation,¹⁶ rather these are the outcomes of different attempts at closure that try to domesticate the play of differences that characterises the social world. Laclau and Mouffe elaborate that

since all identity is relational - even if the system of relations does not reach the point of being fixed as a stable system of difference - since, too, all discourse is subverted by a field of discursivity which overflows it ... if we accept the non-complete character of all discursive fixation and, at the same time, affirm the relational character of every identity, the ambiguous character of the signifier, its non-fixation to any signified, can exist only insofar as there is a proliferation of signified. It is not the poverty of signified but, on the contrary, polysemy that

16. Technically speaking, Laclau and Mouffe admit that there are things that pre-exist this articulation but it makes no sense to talk about these prior to their discursive mediation. Terms such as "antagonism" or "quasi-transcendental horizon" have been used in their work to describe this limit of discourse, which exists but cannot be discussed outside discourse. This theme of the "outside" is also a very common theme in continental philosophy but, in its complexity, beyond the discussion here. My point here is that - while potentially pre-existing their articulation - in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of articulation it makes no sense of looking at such relationships prior to their discursive mediation.

disarticulates a discursive structure ... (1985: 113).

Any theoretical framework is thus always exceeded by a surplus of meaning (differences) that does not neatly fit into its framework. The focus of research thus moves away from the application of theory as a representation of a given state of affairs towards foregrounding the politics behind different attempts at closure. Laclau and Mouffe write that such practices of articulation "*partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, its turn of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity* (1985: 113; emphasis in the original)."

Seeing the problem of cultural translation as articulation changes how we approach my object of study. Here the relationships underlying international news cannot be explained outside the different ways this relationship itself has been discursively mediated in different parts of the world. They are the outcome of practices of articulation. This must now also include the researcher's own theoretical frames of reference as a part of the analysis. That is, if this relationship is always the outcome of some prior practices of articulation, research itself becomes just among the many practices through which such closures are produced. Theory acquires a different modality. As Slack writes

'Theory' is a term that often connotes an objective, formal tool, or even a 'value-free' heuristic device. Cultural studies resists thinking in terms of the 'application' of theory in this sense, where theory is used to 'let you off the hook, providing answers which are always known in advance or endlessly deferring any answer into the field of its endless reflections and reflexivity ... in place of that conception of theory, cultural studies works with the notion of theory as a 'detour' to help ground our engagement with what newly confronts us and to let that engagement provide the ground for retheorizing. Theory is

thus a practice in a double sense: it is a formal conceptual tool as well as a practising or 'trying out' of a way of theorizing. In joining these two senses of practice, we commit to working with momentarily, temporarily 'objectified' theories, moments of 'arbitrary closure', recognizing that in the ongoing analysis of the concrete, theory must be challenged and revised (1996: 114)."

With this in mind, when I look at international news as the outcome of practices of articulation, I am, in fact, dealing here with articulation over multiple discourses. In the case of the English-language print and online news media in India, I need to thus take into account both the articulations of Euro-American academics as well as the articulations of news producers and political discourse in India and the relationship between them. The problem of cultural translation in this thesis thus becomes as much about a critical self-reflection and experimentation into the theoretical frames of reference I use to negotiate between these different discourses: between my positioning as an Euro-American researcher and the translation of this to the discourse of Indian news producers and political debates and vice versa.

(c) International news as assemblages

A final methodological tool developed in this thesis revolves around what is called assemblage theory. Different versions of assemblage theory have been proposed in anthropology, in sociology and in literary studies as an attempt to provide an anti-essentialist explanation of social systems and the differential relationships behind them (Ong and Collier 2004). For my purposes here, however, the most useful theory of assemblages comes from DeLanda (2006) and his reading of Deleuze's understanding of systems as assemblages. DeLanda argues that the fundamental problem in

understanding social action is how we theorise the different relationships that form any system (such as international news). According to DeLanda, many of the earlier theories that have theorised systems and the relationships that form such systems have presupposed an "organic unity" that exists within its component parts. The basic presupposition in these approaches has been what DeLanda calls "relations of interiority." DeLanda writes that

This version involves not an analogy but a general theory about the relations between parts and wholes, wholes that constitute a seamless totality or that display an organic unity. The basic concept in this theory is what we may call *relations of interiority*: the component parts are constituted by the very relations that they have to other parts in the whole. A part detached from a whole ceases to be what it is, since being this particular part is one of its constitutive properties. A whole in which the component parts are self-subsistent and their relations are external does not constitute an organic unity (2006: 9; italics in the original).

The problem with such explanations is that they make it difficult to account for change. They are closed systems where the parts and the whole interact without making it possible to add anything new to the system or account for difference. DeLanda writes "allowing the possibility of complex interactions between components parts is crucial to define mechanisms of emergence, but this possibility disappears if the parts are fused into a seamless web (2006: 10)." As an alternative to such theories of relationships based on a closed totality, DeLanda therefore proposes an alternative understanding of a system as *assemblages*. DeLanda writes that

today, the main theoretical alternative to organic totalities is what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze calls assemblages, wholes characterized by relations of exteriority. These relations imply, first of all, that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different. In other words, the exteriority of relations implies a certain autonomy for the terms they relate, or as Deleuze puts it, "a relation may change without the terms changing." Relations of exteriority also

imply that that properties of the component parts can never explains the relations which constitute a whole, that is 'relations do not have as their causes the properties of the component parts between which they are established ... although they may be caused by the exercise of a components capabilities. (2006: 10-11)

Such assemblages are thus composed of the differential relationships that temporarily form any system. The parts involved in this assemblage remain autonomous of the other parts while interacting with them and forming loose boundaries around them. Thus, if we look at international news on such a broad theoretical level, the different kinds of relationships formed between news producers (such as between the US, UK and India) can be seen as kinds of assemblages that are formed. Yet these assemblages - as sets of relationships that are formed - are always contingent and can change without affecting the other assemblages or relationships they are a part of. This is because in the earlier understandings of systems as totalities, the relationships were conceived as *logically necessary* but with assemblage theory these relationships are always *contingently obligatory* instead. That is, they are always historically changing and have to be empirically researched rather than logically postulated. DeLanda writes that "a seamless whole is inconceivable except as a synthesis of these very parts, that is, the linkages between its components form logically necessary relations, which make the whole what it is. But in an assemblage these relation may be only contingently obligatory (2006: 11)." This is a crucial distinction according to DeLanda because "logically necessary relations may be investigated by thought alone, contingently obligatory ones involves a consideration of empirical questions (2006: 11)."

Finally, within such assemblages, we can find practices that create homogeneity in the relationships that exists as well as practices that create

heterogeneity or change. DeLanda calls these processes territorialisation and de-territorialisation. He writes that

The concept of territorialisation must be first of all understood literally. Face-to-face conversations always occur in a particular place (a street-corner, a pub, a church), and once the participants have rarified one another the conversation acquires well-defined spatial boundaries. Similarly, many interpersonal networks define communities inhabiting spatial territories, whether ethnic neighbourhoods or small towns, with well-defined borders ... so, in the first place, processes of territorialization are processes that define or sharpen the spatial boundaries of actual territories [or] increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage (2006: 13)

On the contrary, de-territorialisation consists of the kinds of practices and processes where established relationships break apart into new kinds of relationships. DeLanda continues that

any process which either destabilizes spatial boundaries or increases internal heterogeneity is considered deterritorializing. A good example is communication technology, ranging from writing and a reliable postal service, to telegraphs, telephones and computers, all of which blur the boundaries of social entities by eliminating the need for co-presence: they enable conversations to take place at a distance, allow interpersonal networks to form via regular correspondence, phone call or computer communications, and give organisations the means to operate in different countries at the same time (2006: 13).

And while changing historically, such assemblages can also create semi-stable formations that persist over time. DeLanda calls these formations "diagrams." Diagrams are the kinds of potentials that exist within these assemblages through which certain kinds of relationships are made more probable and others more difficult. DeLanda writes that such "assemblages are characterized by a diagram, a universal set of singularities that would be the equivalent of a body-plan, or more precisely, that would structure the space of possibilities associated with the assemblage

(2006: 30)."¹⁷ As we will see in Chapter 5, what new digital technologies of communication potentially allow for are new kinds of deterritorialising forces in the international news environment where old assemblages break and part and new ones get formed, however temporarily.

What such assemblage theory thus finally provides is a different way to approach the problem of cultural translation in international news. Without presupposing a totalising system, it allows us to look at the differential relationships that are formed in what we loosely call the system of international news. What we get here are contingent relationships - sometimes more homogenous or territorialised and sometimes more deterritorialised (or virtual) - that are formed between news producers and audiences in different parts of the world. The question therefore that needs to be asked is: When are assemblages relatively stable (territorialized) and when are they relatively unstable (territorialized)? How are these shifting assemblages given political significance in different parts of the world? And what has been the role of changing technologies of mediation in territorializing and de-territorializing certain kinds of assemblages over others? Moreover, as these sets of relationships are always historically changing, they need to be empirically researched on a case-by-case basis.

17. Deleuze (1998) has also called these 'strata', diagrams' or 'abstract machines' – historical constellations of relationships and forces that can be used to explain persisting and repeating assemblages. In his analysis of such diagrams of power in Foucault's analysis, Deleuze writes that "The diagram or abstract machine is the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds primarily by primary non-localizable relations and at every moment passes through every point, 'or rather in relation from one point to another.' Of course, this has nothing to do with an transcendent idea or with an ideological superstructure, or even with an economic infrastructure, which is already qualified by its substance and defined by its form an use. Nonetheless, the diagram acts as a non-unifying immanent cause that is co-extensive with the whole social field: the abstract machine is like the cause of the concrete assemblages that execute its relations; and these relations between forces take place 'not above' but within the very tissue of the assemblages they produce (1998: 36-37)."

The research question thus changes from seeing international news as an abstraction to the actual practices through which such shifting assemblages are historically formed in international news and then given retroactive meaning in academic theory and public debates in India.

5. Conclusion

The second theory chapter, the methodology chapter, looked at different traditions in critical theory and in media and cultural studies. I argued that critical theory approaches are useful for my thesis insofar as they take into account the socio-political conditions of knowledge surrounding practices of research. I also argued that media and cultural studies approaches, in turn, are useful as they take into account the situated practices of the participants involved in mass media. Through a critical dialogue between these two different approaches of being critical, the chapter argued for a doubly critical or bi-focal methodology: an approach that is critical both of the theories we use to research other parts of the world as well as our object of study. Finally, the chapter concluded by elaborating the three concepts developed in this thesis: namely, theories of practice, articulation and assemblages. With this in mind, the thesis will next turn away from the theoretical concerns of the two first chapters to examine case studies where this problem of cultural translation is refracted in different ways in the English-language print and online news media in India.

4. A HISTORY OF A RELATIONSHIP

For years, third world politicians droned on about a New World Information Order. They even set up such bogus contrivances as NAMEDIA. Well, the new information order is upon us, and its come courtesy technology, globalisation and, oh that terrible thing, capitalism. (Indian Express, Mali 2005).

Introduction | Ontology of the present | Politics of international news (part I) | Conclusion

1. Introduction

The previous two chapters provided the theoretical framework and the methods used in the thesis. This chapter now turns to look at the first point of entry into this problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India. It examines how the relationship between Indian news media and international news (in the broadest sense possible) has been historically imagined in academic and historical accounts. The first of these accounts is the history of the press in India and the explicitly political role given to it in the post-colonial struggle for Indian independence. The second is the history of international news in India from its colonial origins onwards until the debates around cultural imperialism and the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in which India played an

important part. The chapter asks what has been presupposed by such historical approaches? And how do these historical accounts of international news in India inform current debates and theories through which we understand international news today?

The aim of this chapter is to position my research within the broader literature that has looked at international news in India (in the broadest sense possible) in order to provide what Foucault (1984a) called a critical analysis "ontology of the present." Such a historical approach allows me to be both critical of what has been presupposed by the current debates on international news in India as well as how these debates have been theoretically approached in international news research and media and cultural studies. These points of closure will be then examined in the following chapters.

2. Framing the problem

(a) Two arguments about change

In 1991, during the First Persian Gulf War, *Business India* claimed that journalist from major Indian newspapers were booking rooms at 5 star hotels in Mumbai and Delhi. The article noted that "publications, like the Indian Express and the Times of India found it worthwhile to take rooms in the Oberoi and Taj respectively ... these hotels have their internal cable TV-systems wired into *CNN*, the now-famous US news channel (Ethiraj 1991)." Because of existing government monopoly on international news in India where *Doordashan* had been the only

television news channel for decades and much of international news had been filtered through *Press Trust International (PTI)* and *United News of India (UNI)*, journalists found it necessary to stay in these hotels to access timely news about the war. When we compare this historical anecdote with recent research on news in India, the contrast is striking. In 2010, according some estimates, there were hundreds of satellite television channels in India from which international news could be accessed.¹⁸ All major foreign news channels such as the *BBC World Service*, *CNN*, *ABC*, *NBC*, *Al Jazeera* and *Star News* are now available through satellite subscription, local cable operators or streamed online from their websites (see Page 2001, Mehta 2008). Where there were only a handful of government-mediated sources 20 years ago, there are now hundreds of potential news sources from which international news can be now accessed.

These changes have been linked to a discourse of economic liberalisation that began in India in 1991, when it opened up its economy to foreign competition. The argument is that the changes brought about by the double forces of capitalism and technological change have eroded the old government monopoly on international news that has been in place, in one form or another, since independence (see Rao 2010). Yet while it is commonly agreed that something has changed in the international news environment in India, what the political implications of these changes are, is still under heated debate.¹⁹ In fact, we can find two conflicting

18. For instance, the number of television channels in India increases rapidly and is hard to keep up-to-date. The following figures are from 2010, when it was at 515 over-the-air and satellite television stations. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_television_stations_in_India [last accessed on June 10, 2012].

19. Looking at the different ways Indian mass media has been implicated in such articulations of change, Batabyal et al (2011) argue that this idea of change in India itself is always linked to different political attempts to suture the contingency and unpredictability of historical change and what causes it. Change itself is never a neutral category; it needs to be critically examined in order to see the political forces behind its

arguments as to what their political significance has been. The first of these articulations paints a positive picture of a dynamic and thriving news industry. Rao writes that

Before 1991, Indian viewers had received only two channels but, by 2007, they were receiving more than 90 channels. Before the reforms, Indian audiences had depended solely on the state-owned public broadcasting entity Doordarshan, to provide news; after the reforms Indian audiences could choose between several 24-hour news channels ... All such changes in the media landscape have also impacted and redefined journalism practices and news content (2010: 478).

According to this argument, where there were only a handful of international news channels available before economic liberalisation, now there is an abundance of alternatives available. This has led some commentators to note that, because of these changes, the older paradigms of Western dominance such as cultural imperialism need to be re-examined in order to take into account this rapid growth of the news industry in India. Sinclair and Harrison (2004) note that the competition following liberalisation has been mostly won by "those channels that have developed programs based on Indian popular culture, particularly film and film music, and have generally been able to indigenize the global forms of commercial television (2004: 47)." Sonwalkar (2001b) argues that, because of these changes, India is now able to exert influence on its neighbouring countries in what he calls "little cultural imperialism (Sonwalkar 2001b; see also Chadha and Kavoori 2000)." As a consequence, older west-centric approaches to international news do not apply as such anymore when we look at the dynamic news environment in India. Sonwalkar writes that

articulation.

at the wider level, the 'West-to-Rest' linearity implicit in the discourse of media imperialism clearly needs to be revised to incorporate regional hegemons such as India. Trajectories of international communication are increasingly asymmetric, reflecting a post-modern matrix of local and global influences even in traditional South Asian societies (2001b: 123).

The second of these articulations, on the contrary, paints a critical picture of the changes that have taken place. Instead of a pluralisation of news sources, such critical accounts see a diminished space for public debate in India and an absence of diversity in its international news delivery. Thussu (2007a) argues that - despite the proliferation of potential news channels available - there is, in fact, less international news now available in India. He writes that

as India integrates into global capitalism, its window on the outside world appears to becoming smaller ... *many of its citizens are receiving less foreign news than was the case under state monopoly broadcasting, when foreign news was integral to the evening news bulletin.* It is not surprising, then, that in a competitive news market, broadcasters are increasingly focusing on the familiar and the saleable rather than the distant and the difficult, leading to the almost total disappearance of international reports ... (2007b: 605; my emphasis).

These negative changes to the Indian news environment more broadly have been described by terms such as "rape of the news" (Poolani 2004) or the "murdhochization of the Indian press" (Thussu 2007b) - terms that describe changes to the journalistic ethos from an earlier politically-motivated news industry to a more commercial news environment catering to the "three C's of commercial news: crime, celebrity and cinema (Batabyal 2012)."

(b) Historicising the debates

I will argue in this chapter that both these articulations share the assumption that international news should be first approached through its political significance. In other words, in both arguments utopian and dystopian impositions of political value have been placed on how international news is imagined in India. Mattelart (1994, 1996) notes that media and cultural studies have a "historical amnesia" towards its theoretical foundations. This forgetfulness of history, Mattelart continues, helps explain why the debates in the recent years have been polarised between "apocalyptic intellectuals," who denounce the media as bearers for the "end of culture," and the "integrated intellectuals, who celebrated the same media for their "modernizing virtues (1994: 243)." The same tension is also present in how the changes to the news environment in India have been discussed in the contemporary debates. Recent work in media and cultural studies has suggested for a more historical approach in order to achieve necessary critical distance to some of the powerful theoretical closures in the contemporary debates (see Parikka 2012). What unites these divergent historical approaches is their engagement with post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault and the applicability of his historico-critical method for media research (see Kittler 1992, 1999). Foucault argued that the aim of critical research should not be to unearth the truth behind the current situation.²⁰ Rather, research should first begin with an

20. Because it is impossible to get in detail into the complexities of Foucault's historico-critical method here, I have provided only a brief description of his work as found in "What is Enlightenment?" Here Foucault defined some of the motivation and inspiration behind his work - whether this is the "archaeological" method of his earlier work or his "genealogical" or micro-political methods of his later work. Also we could argue more strictly whether such criticism of what Foucault called the "philosophical ethos of Enlightenment" or modernity with its Western origins is applicable to other parts of the world without some kind of cultural translation involves. This, however, is not the point here. Rather, the point here is to look historically at some of the current debates and what they have presupposed. A more post-colonial analysis about the politics of such historiography can be found, for instance, in Chakrabarty (2007). For a good analysis of

analysis of the historical conditions of possibility that has made the present possible in the first place. Such an approach, Foucault wrote, "entails an obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying (1984a: 46; see also Descombes 1993: 3-22)."²¹ One of the benefits of this historical approach is that it allows us to step back and examine the historical changes that inform our object of study and, as importantly, allows for critical distance from our established research practices and methods (see Collingwood 2002).²² In

Foucault's philosophical project see Deleuze (1998).

21. In a delightful little book on how philosophy tries to understand current events in newspapers, Descombes provides a long analysis of Foucault's method. According to Descombes, Foucault contrasts two different traditions in contemporary philosophy. Descombes writes that "Foucault contrast two "critical traditions" derived from Kant between which, he says, philosophy has been divided. The first is the neo-Kantian tradition of epistemology, which asserts that philosophy should reflect on the conditions of science. The other tradition, to which Foucault claims to subscribe, is the tradition of reflecting on our history through questions such as "what is our *actualité*?" According to Foucault, this tradition is exemplified by illustrious figures such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Weber, and the Frankfurt Marxists. Such a philosophy proposes to offer what Foucault calls variously an "ontology of the present", and "ontology of ourselves", or an "ontology of *actualité*" (1993: 10)" In my reading, such an account looks at the historical conditions of forces that have made the present possible rather than accepting the present as given.
22. Collingwood (2002) argued that behind any claim to knowledge, we can always find two sorts of presuppositions. The first kinds of presuppositions are what Collingwood called relative presuppositions. These are the kinds of presuppositions that act as answers to particular questions. This second kind of presupposition is what Collingwood called *absolute presuppositions*. In other words, such absolute presuppositions - in contrast to relative ones - cannot be verified or require further presuppositions/questions to validate them. Instead, they must only be accepted as such for any such statement or claim to knowledge to make sense. Deleuze makes a similar argument in *Difference and Repetition* (1994). He argues that there are two kinds of presuppositions behind any statement, philosophical or otherwise. He calls these objective and subjective presuppositions. According to Deleuze, the mistake behind many philosophical approaches has been to try to eliminate objective presuppositions (explicit assumptions of a concept) while neglecting subjective presuppositions (a certain feeling that must be assumed usually taking place in the form of "everybody knows"). Deleuze writes that: "Many people have an interest in saying that everybody knows 'this', that everybody recognises this, or that nobody can deny it. ... this element consists only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the presuppositions that

other words, it provides what Foucault called an "historical ontology of ourselves:" a critical understanding of both the historical debates (and the inconsistencies and disjunctures in these accounts) and the presuppositions we rely on to understand these changes. Foucault wrote that such a "critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which critique of what we are is at one and the same time a historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (1984a: 49)."

Such a doubly critical or bi-focal approach requires me therefore to historicise my object of study in order to critically address some of these closures around it. With this in mind, this chapter will provide a reading of one critical "ontology of the present" behind how the relationship between Indian news media and international has been historically imagined in academic and public accounts. Moreover, by historicising these debates, two assumptions about international news in Mumbai, India, will be examined: (1) that international news should be first and foremost approached through its political significance; and (2) international news should be approached through markers of difference that are drawn between what is considered Indian/*swadeshi* and what is considered Western/foreign/*videshi* in international news coverage in India. The aim of this analysis is to thus provide a critical distance to the current debates in order to be able to better examine the media-related practices and

there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a good will on the part of the thinker and an upright nature on the part of thought. It is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think (2004: 139)."

the discourse of international news in India in the following chapters.

2. Ontology of the present

(a) Politics of difference in international news

But how does one understand a historical relationship on which very little has been written about? In other words, given the scarcity of historical accounts on international news in India, what is the best way to trace the contours of this ontology of present that informs current debates? What historical sources are available? Indeed one of the difficulties in revisiting this history is that our understanding of international news cannot be disentangled from the post-colonial criticism of how the very differences that underlie this relationship have been historically constructed. Inden writes that

Euro-American selves and Indian Others have not simply interacted as entities that remain fundamentally the same. They have dialectically constituted each other. Once one realizes truth of this, he or she will begin to see that India has played a part in the making of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship Europe (and America) much greater than the 'we' of scholarship, journalism, and officialdom would normally wish to allow ... because of the mutually constituting relations of Western Selves and their Others, it also follows that it is not possible to change our intellectual practices directed at Others without changing the practices applied to the Self as well (1990: 3).

Post-colonial historians such as Chatterjee have argued similarly that the construction of the Indian identity against the British colonial rule took place by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains: the material and the spiritual (see also Foster 1991). He writes that "the material is the domain of the "outside," of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had

proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated (1993:6)." And "the spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture (1993: 6)." Chatterjee further notes that certain nodal points were constructed as markers of difference from the British colonial rule. These were usually symbols such as religion, gendered bodies of women, family. Hansen (1999) has argued that this process amounted to a form of "inversion of orientalist epistemology" whereby Indian reformers, intellectuals, and politicians "internalized the orientalist constructions of the East and the West as essentially different, but reversed the valuation so that difference became a source of cultural and moral superiority (1999: 60). Spiritual India - defined in opposition to a material West - became a key trope through which the "essence" of modern India was imagined from early intellectuals and nationalists such as Chattopadhyaya and Vivekanda, to the father figures of the nation itself, Gandhi and Nehru, and all the way to the modern day.

What is considered Indian and what is not in international news in India cannot thus be seen as neutral or naturalised categories. On the contrary, these constitutive differences are the outcome of practices of articulation through which this relationship has been historically imagined. When we look at this history of a relationship, the definition of international news in India needs to be thus seen as a part of a longer post-colonial ambivalence around the construction of Indian identity. And while post-colonial historians have not looked specifically at how markers of

difference have been constructed in international news, we can nonetheless find refractions of them in contemporary debates about the changing media environment in India. Juluri (1999, 2002), McMillin (2001), Kumar and Curtin (2002), Asthana (2003) and Kaur (2002), for instance, have noted that the reception of western media products in India have revolved around a similar negotiation around what the changing Indian identity is in the globalising world. Similar to the postcolonial arguments, what is considered essentially "Indian" is linked in this research closely to values such as family, tradition and religion whereas what falls "outside" this definition of the essential core of India is linked to westernization and to material value. While such debates in post-colonial historiography can be only touched upon in this thesis, we can nonetheless find similar tropes in our examples of the history of international news in India.

(b) A brief history of the press in India

Perhaps illustrative of the difficulty in achieving closure about what is Indian and what is not in international news in India, is the colonial history of the press in India. In the historical accounts, we can find, in fact, two different accounts of what the origins of the press in India are. The first of these historical accounts gives the credit for the first newspaper in India not to an Indian - but to an Englishman. This is usually attributed to a newspaper launched by James Hicky in 1790. In her history of the Indian press, for instance, Kohli describes its bifurcated beginnings the following way: "James August Hicky, a 'rambunctious and irreverent Englishman' gave India its first newspaper in January, 1780. The weekly *Bengal Gazette*, also known as *Hicky's*

Gazette, was a rag of sorts with gossip about English society in Bengal, the centre of British East India Company's existence at the time (Kohli 2003: 10; see also Kumar 2000: 61)." The second of origins, on the contrary, gives the honour of the first "Indian" newspaper to a reformer by the name of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who launched three news journals in 1821: the *Sambad Kaumidi* (in Bengali), *Mirat-ul-akhbra* (in Persian) and *The Brahmanical Magazine* (in English) (Kumar 2000; for other accounts of the Indian press see Rau 1974, Ghost 1998). Rao, for instance, comments on the origin of the press in India the following way:

India's journalism throughout its history has been a *hybrid product of Western and indigenous styles and content* ... The rapid spread of English education in the nineteenth century had generated ideas of "public spirit, internationalism, and patriotism," born of increasing familiarity with the writings of English poets and philosophers (Jayal, 2001, p. 367). It is against a background of religious excitement, of economic and political discontent, of a steady growth of education and public opinion, and of an increasing desire for unification of the country, that the idea of a "pan-Indian consciousness" was born (2010: 277; my emphasis)

As we can see from these historical accounts of the press in India, a defining characteristic of the history of international news is this ambiguous but important role given to newspapers in the anti-colonial struggle and the construction of Indian identity. Another example of this ambiguity is the clear division given to the English-language and vernacular newspapers. As the news industry developed during the colonial era in India, the press became quickly divided into the English-language and vernacular publications, each positioned somewhat differently within the matrix of anti-colonial struggle. In these historical accounts, the English-language press, being the language of colonial rule, had a more ambivalent attitude towards the colonial struggle whereas the vernacular newspapers became more important in the struggle

for independence. English also emerged as the sole language that could be used across the language barriers across the country and the English-language press became the choice for the financial, political and cultural elites of India (Sonwalkar 2002; also see Jeffrey 2000).²³

Moreover, what is also relevant to note from these historical accounts is that these early newspapers were not launched to make money but rather were launched for political causes, whether to spread the message of independence, or to promote a social good. As Kohli suggests

The Times of India (TOI), Mumbai Samachar, Malayalam Manorama, Ananda Bazaar Patrika (ABP); and the Hindu, among others, are all veterans of the Indian freedom struggle. Ironically enough, across the length and breath of a largely illiterate country, there cropped up vehicles which would play a huge role in the bringing down of the British Empire. Most of these were financed by benevolent or patriotic businessmen or through donations. Even after independence most had a cause, to see the birth of a nation and its growth. Wealthy businessmen continued to keep running these papers, most of them at a loss, because of the influence and power they brought to them (2003: 16-18).

This political role of the press, in fact, did not begin to change until early 1980s when a younger generation of managers began to experiment with different ways of making money with newspapers. Kumar (2000) and Kohli (2003) argue that it was the experience of the Emergency, which began the slow transformation of the Indian press from its colonial political origins towards the debates about its commercialisation

23. While the estimates of the English speakers in India today is only between 60-90 million, they still control the domains of economic and cultural prestige (see Rajgopal 2001: 158-169). And because of this elite status, since the beginning, the English-language press is still said to represent the “priorities of the country and condition the expectations of the most powerful segments of the Indian population: the political, intellectual and business elite (Sonwalkar 2002: 831).” It also is, and has always been, the language of the more outwards-facing elites and the loci where news about the rest of the world were most developed.

today. Following the news blackout during the Emergency, people were desperate to find out what had happened. As a consequence, they bought more newspapers. Ironically, the experience of state power at its most visible led to the contrary result: India's news media started becoming less political and more commercial. This increased demand for newspapers led to the launching of the first successful tabloid in India, *Mid-Day*, which then became later a poster boy for new successful commercially-driven journalism in India. Kohli notes that

It was successes like *Mid-Day's* ... that pushed other investors to invest in offset technology, satellite editions and distributions to push up circulation. So, the old set of proprietors started looking at the business seriously, while the newer ones looked at it as pure business and nothing else. It seems rather obvious today, but remember we are talking about a time when editorial, marketing and circulation operated on different dimensions. There was seemingly no connection between people wanted to read and how the product was to be marketed or sold or even whether it should be (2003: 24).

This trend was then finally pushed to the extreme when Samir Jain took over the *Times of India (TOI)* and began to implement aggressive business strategies. Fernandes (2011) describes these historical changes the following way:

Jain's enormously profitable publication has set an example that many other newspapers have followed. Many of India's English-language newspapers have abandoned the responsibility of being the fourth pillar of democracy (a role that they had first begun to embrace during the struggle for independence against the British) (2011: 212). As a consequence of this, newspapers today in India claim that they are mere content providers devoted to delivering to advertisers the largest number of eyeballs possible ... Yet despite the obvious problems, large sections of the country's English-language press operate as though they are allies of the state in a national project to convince citizens that India is predestined to soar to global supremacy (2011: 212).

The history of the Indian press is of course much more complicated than I can give

credit for in this brief account here.²⁴ There are also significant differences between English-language and vernacular presses here where more developmental and political journalism arguably still continues at the grassroots level. In my reading, there are parallel stages in India's news industry because of social stratification within the country reflected in the language division between the English-language and vernacular presses. My focus here, however, is on its outward press, which means mostly its English-language publications where these presuppositions are most relevant. More importantly, from this reading of the history of the English-language print news in India, two things should be thus noted that are relevant to the argument developed. First of all, there is a post-colonial ambiguity about what is considered Indian and what is not in the history of the Indian press. Secondly, these markers of difference have been closely linked to the active role the Indian press had politically in the anti-colonial struggle and the role the press had in constructing the Indian identity. As a consequence, the history of the press has been articulated, at least in part, through these two historical conjectures: on the one hand, as an important part of the Indian identity because of its role in the anti-colonial struggle; and, on the other hand, politically because of the role it has played in the anti-colonial struggle. As we will show in the following chapters, these presuppositions still inform, the discourse of international news in India.

24. Jeffrey (2000), for instance, has argued that the more business-oriented newspaper industry we see today in India has been a result of three coinciding factors in India: (1) the growth of literacy; (2) the rise of capitalism and more business-oriented models of the press; (3) and the spread of new technology making the industry more profitable.

(c) A brief history of international news in India

Even less has been written about international news in India than the history of its press. In the few accounts that do exist, Ghost, for instance, has argued that what we call international news in India during the colonial period consisted primarily of business information meant for the British colonial elites (1998: 343). What is interesting to note, however, in these early historical accounts of international news in India is that, similar to the history of the press, the history of international news in India has been articulated through these double tropes: the political role it had in the anti-colonial struggle and through markers of difference drawn around what is Indian identity and what is not. In these historical accounts, news agencies such as *Reuters*, who provided early forms of international news to India, were closely connected to the British colonial rule and so was the resistance towards them. According to Shrivastava, for instance,

governments soon became involved in agency newsgathering and dissemination ... many news agencies that were commonly regarded as private had close connections with their respective governments. *Reuters is a case in point: the London-based agency enjoyed significant government support throughout much of the twentieth century. In India Reuters acted as an imperial agency and got government support to eliminate competitions* (2007: 6-7; my emphasis).

Because of this political significance attributed to foreign news agencies alternative agencies were set up in India with the explicit goal of providing an Indian viewpoint to international news. The motivation behind these alternative news agencies, as Ghost notes, was the "persisting awareness of the inability of an externally-controlled news agency to reflect the Indian viewpoint (1998: 345)." An Indian perspective was thus considered crucial to the independence struggle even if most of the original news material had to be sourced from the same foreign news agencies due to the lack of

resources. At least the editorial control was in Indian hands.

The first Indian-owned news agency was the *Associated Press of India* (API) launched in 1910. Reuters bought this in 1911 and the founder of API formed another rival agency, the *Press Bureau*. The third indigenous news agency, the *Free Press Agency* (FPA), was established in 1927. Around the same time *Samachar* was also launched catering more to the vernacular press. According to historical accounts, there were political motives for setting up alternative news agencies: they were intended as political actors in the struggle for independence. Shrivastava makes this political link clear when he writes that

if Gandhi was a freedom fighter, journalist Swaminath Sadanand was a journalist freedom fighter. He fought for the freedom of the press not only when British were ruling India but also after independence when he could warn about the dangers of dominance of the world news by a few news agencies. He did not invent the phrase "new world and communication order" but he could see the problem from which the world is suffering even today (2007: 40).

The motivation behind these Indian news agencies was again not to make money. Rather, it was to "mould the public opinion" by providing an "Indian" viewpoint to international news. As Shrivastava further comments:

S. Sadanand launched Free Press Agency (FPA) in 1927. He said in his statement of objects and reasons *that public opinion was molded entirely by news supplied day by day and it was 'difficult if not impossible to mould healthy public opinion owing to the monopoly held in the news by subsidized news agencies ... cable of some of the leading news agencies of the world were selected and pooled by the London office and sent out to India. Reuters often lost this race ... The full weight of the imperial authority was deployed to thwart this enterprise. (2007: 39-40; my emphasis).*"

This political significance given to international news continued after independence.

Yadava (1982), in turn, notes that in 1955 the Indian government decided that international news was too important to be left to foreign competition and thus "no foreign news agency would be allowed to operate independently in India ... they would route their copy through an Indian news agency (1982: 265)." Following the forced expulsion of *Reuters* and other news agencies from the Indian market, some of their services were thus transferred over to domestic Indian news agencies such as the *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, *United Press of India (UPI)* and the *United News of India (UNI)* and vernacular news feeds such as *Samachar*. Kumar (2000) similarly describes the political significance attributed to international news the following way:

Once independence was won, the struggle became a part of the effort to follow the path of non-alignment and self-reliant development. Indeed, information was valued, from the beginning, as a public resource and a "social good" linked to development. The transnational agencies were, therefore, replaced by national agencies; not all of them under direct government control, though in most cases subsidized by new governments. The transnationals did not go gracefully. Reuters, for instance, refused to let go of its profitable market in India until the Prime Minister himself forced it to withdraw (2000: 113-114).

India also played a central role in the UNESCO debates around the New World and Information and Communication Order (NWICO) as well as in the many efforts to create alternative news agencies for non-aligned countries (see Yadava 1982: 265). Among the many efforts to politicise debates around international news, one of the UNESCO conferences was held in New Delhi where information ministers and news agencies' representatives from 62 countries debated alternatives to the existing system of international news. The politicised nature of international news can be once again found in the commentaries during the UNESCO debates in India at the time. Mehta, for instance, echoes (paraphrasing to a policy piece written at the time) many of the theoretical debates about media and cultural imperialism prevalent at the time in

academic research as well as in political debates in India. Mehta writes

the four western news agencies, namely, *Associated Press* and *United Press International* of USA, *Reuters* of Britain and *Agence France Presse* of France hold the monopoly on world news. The news sent out about developing countries by these transnational agencies gives a prejudicial image of the developing countries. The developing countries hardly get any regional news and the world news received by them is qualitatively as well as quantitatively western in content and angle. This is understandable as these agencies primarily gather, compose and edit news for their home markets. *The newspaper readers in developing countries often find such news out of tune and irrelevant or unsympathetic and woefully inaccurate or prejudicial and destructive* (1980: 286; my emphasis).

International news is thus articulated here primarily as a political agent with significant influence, often negative, to the political process in India. Mehta (again paraphrasing the policy piece) further comments that

it is important step to correct certain imbalances, deficiencies, or communication gaps in the field of information in the developing world. The 'imbalances' are of three kinds: (i) 'Inward file' that is in respect of content, quality and to some extent volume of news received by the developing countries from the outside world through western news agencies. *The quality and content of news received at times is destructive and irrelevant, if not harmful.* (ii) Lack of flow of news within a region, between neighboring developing countries. Even when western news agencies cover regional news from developing countries, *the story is western angle and out of tune with the requirements of the region.* (iii) 'Outward' file that is transmitted to the outside world from developing countries by western news agencies. *It is often distorted, prejudicial and frivolous.* News is seen through unsympathetic western eyes and written, edited, and selected to cater primarily to the needs of the home markets (1980: 287; my emphasis)."

According to these accounts, Western news media is thus incapable of providing a perspective to international news that is appropriate for the Indian audience because the representations produced outside Indian political control are somehow "out of tune," "unsympathetic" and "woefully inaccurate" to the needs of Indian audiences. Their effects are thus "destructive", "irrelevant" or "harmful" to the political process in India.

These commentaries of course make sense within the broader context of debates on international news in the 1970s and 1980s. Similar to the changing paradigms of international news research, this discourse of "developmental journalism" popular in India post-independence also began to change in the 1980s when Soviet Union collapsed. A new model emerged, brought about by the twin forces of capitalism and technological change (Rao 2010: 477). Yet as we can see here in these fragmented accounts, this relationship between Indian news media and international news has been largely reified through its political significance and through markers of difference that demarcate what is Indian and what is not within this relationship. As we will see in the later chapters, these closures also still continue to inform our understanding of international news practices and debates in India.

3. Politics of international news (part I)

The previous section looked at the history of international news in India. I argued that we could trace two presuppositions from this postcolonial history that still informs the current "ontology of the present." These are: (1) international news in India has been articulated predominantly through its political significance; and (2) this political articulation has taken place through markers of difference between what is considered Indian and what is not in these historical accounts. These points of closure need to be now critically looked at. In particular, by looking at how news has been constructed as an object of study in Anglo-American academic research, the section asks what might be the risks of reifying my object of study through these double

articulations? And what alternative ways could we imagine this problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India?

(a) Towards the messy world of media-related practices

Fiske (1998) argues that news has been historically granted a special role as that genre of media production, which has been most closely linked to the political processes in democratic societies (see also Schudson 1981). Fiske also asks whether this naturalised metaphor through which news has been historically understood is not also the same one that has been used by the news industry to defend its own practices. Fiske writes "news is a high-status genre. Its claimed objectivity and independence from political or government agencies is argued to be essential for the working of democracy (1988: 281)." This, he argues, gives us only a part of the story. The other part of the story is that "news is also a commodity. It is expensive to gather and to distribute and must produce an audience that is of the right size and composition to be sold to the advertisers (1988: 281)." Fiske therefore warns us that when media scholars and the industry frame their objects of research the same way, this does not leave us room for critical distance.²⁵ He continues that

news has, potentially at least, all the elements of popularity built into it, and it fights against them in order to conform to a professional ideology that it is essentially literate, homogenizing and textually authoritarian - and therefore inappropriate. Central to this ideology is objectivity. Objectivity is authority in disguise: "objective" facts always support particular points of view and their

25. Fiske, in fact, argues that news resembles more "masculine soap opera" than it does the serious, factual, objective political activity it is commonly articulated as. He writes that "a wider and more self-confident recognition of this essential fictionality of news might lead its masculine viewers to treat its texts with the same socially motivated creativity as do feminine viewers of soap operas (Fiske 1988: 307-308).

"objectivity" can exist only as part of the play of power. But, more important, objective facts cannot be challenged: objectivity discourages audience activity and participation (2010: 158).

Fiske has provided a critical analysis of the power/knowledge relationship implicated in how news has been historically constructed as an object of analysis especially in the Anglophone research tradition. Behind this construction of news as a political significant activity is a tautology: (1) despite being a commercial activity like any other genre of media production, news is nonetheless considered the most political of these because of the service it provides for audiences in a democratic society; (2) and this must be the case because these audiences need such "objective" and "factual" information provided by the news industry to perform their expected role in the political processes in democratic societies. This argument, according to Fiske, however, is linked to power in two ways. The first is "to control the real, to reduce reality to knowability, which entails producing it as a discursive construct whose arbitrariness and inadequacy are disguised as far as possible (1989: 149)." And the second is to "have this discursively (and therefore sociopolitically) constructed reality accepted as truth by those whose interests may not necessarily be served by accepting it. Discursive power involves a struggle both to construct a (sense of) reality and to circulate it as widely and smoothly as possible throughout society (1989: 149-150)."

Fiske's criticism is useful as it helps me approach some of the closures through which international news has been historically imagined in India. A set of questions is thus raised here in this chapter concerning this "ontology of the present" of international news in India. First of all, to which degree has this political articulation of news informed how we understand the history of international news in India?

Moreover, what is the relationship between the different genealogies through which international news has been theorised in different parts of the world, such as, for instance, the comparative differences between the Anglo-American commercial news industry and India's post-colonial news industry? Can these historical accounts be disentangled from each other in the first place?²⁶ As we have already seen in Chapter 2, the theories used to articulate international news through its political significance have a long history in the Anglo-American academic debates. What kinds of cultural translation do these theories therefore require when applied to the specific Indian historical context discussed in this chapter? Secondly, what have these presuppositions potentially *disarticulated* from other possible ways to imagine this relationship? What alternative histories do we have available that would not automatically suture this relationship through its political significance or through the markers of difference drawn between what is considered Indian and what is not in this history? As such historical research into international news in India is largely absent (and cannot be done here within the constraints of this thesis) we can thus only speculate about what some of the possible moments of closure have been. More importantly, however, this historical reading allows me to ask critical questions about these presuppositions when I examined examples from news production practices in Mumbai, India. The problem with these presuppositions is that they make little sense when we look at the practices that I observed during fieldwork in India. Behind these points of closure is the complex and messy world of media-related practices (Hobart 2011) that I will turn to

26. Journalistic norms and practices do of course have cross-fertilisation and overlapping between countries in the world such significant similarities between the UK and India, but these just have to be historically researched case-by-case in different countries with different social, cultural and political histories. For more American histories see (Schudson 1981).

next.

4. Conclusion

This chapter provided a historical reading of the relationship between Indian news media and international news. In particular, by examining the fragmented historical accounts of international news in India, the chapter looked critically at what has been presupposed by the contemporary debates. In these historical accounts, the chapter argued, we can find two points of closure through which my object of study has been imagined. The first is the articulation of international news through its political significance. The second is the articulation of international news through the markers of difference constructed around what is considered Indian and what is not in these accounts. Through a critical examination of this "ontology of the present," the aim of this chapter was thus to open up some of the closures around my object study in order to be able to better examined some of the media-related practices informing international news production in India in the present era. The next chapter will now turn to the second point of entry into the problem of cultural translation: an analysis of newsroom practices at the biggest tabloid in India, Mumbai-based *Mid-Day*.

5. ROUTINE RELATIONSHIPS

Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.

(Deleuze and Foucault: 1980: 206)

Introduction | Framing the Problem | Statements and visibilities
Territorialised relationships | International news heterotopias |
Conclusion

1. Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the "ontology of the present" behind how international news has been historically imagined in India. I argued that there are two moments of closure that need to be critically examined in this thesis: the first being that international news should be approached through its political significance; and the second being that international news should be approached through markers of difference drawn between what is Indian and what is not in international news in

India. The second "point of entry" into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India, will now examine the newsroom practices at the biggest English-language tabloid in India, *Mid-Day*. In particular, the chapter provides three "theoretical detours" from conventional ways of imagining international news through its political significance and theories premised on theories of representation/interpretation.

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, by looking at the media-related practices behind how international news is re-used in India, I hope to critically interrogate some of the closures historically made about international news in India. Secondly, by providing a critical examination of newsroom practices at the biggest English-language tabloid in India I hope to propose alternative ways we can understand the differential relationships underlying international news in India, and in international news more broadly.

2. Framing the problem

When I began my fieldwork, I chose *Mid-Day* as a site of research as I wanted to focus on examples of international news production that did not conform to the conventional narrative of international news as serious political activity. *Mid-Day* was ideally positioned for this kind of research. Not only was it the oldest and most established tabloid in India; it was also famous for its popular culture and local news. *Mid-Day* also had the second largest overall readership of all the English-language newspapers in Mumbai, as well as the broadest socio-economic reach, catering both

to the English-speaking elites, the burgeoning middle classes as well as aspiring English speakers.²⁷ *Mid-Day* is a newspaper published in Mumbai since 1979, when it started as a family-owned business. Its predecessor, like of many other Indian newspapers, was *Inquilab*, a newspaper that started as an underground pamphlet propagating the cause of the Independent movement in India during the colonial era. *Mid-Day* self-describes its activities the following way:

India's most engaging local newspaper, MID DAY, has become the quintessential physical connect for the uber-social generation to consume their local city news today. Over the last couple of years, the newspaper has been on a mission to up its engagement quotient with these social netizens. Whether it is local news, career guidance, dream homes, a look at what's on in the city or best of bollywood gossip, MID DAY's sections have it all, alongside staple news and amusers like comics and crosswords

(www.mid-day.com/about).

Mid-Day calls its target audience YUMPI - Young Urban Mobile Professionals across India - and its slogan is to "make work fun." *Mid-Day* is also considered quintessentially a Mumbai-based newspaper (even if they have published edition in other cities) catering primarily to the upwardly mobile and outward-facing new Indian consumer in the city. *Mid-Day* thus inhabits an interesting position in the English-language print news environment in India.²⁸ It is at the same time considered a tabloid

27. Readership in Mumbai, India, is always hard to determine. The readership statistics compiled by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) in 2004 statistics showed that *Mid-Day* had a circulation of over 1.4 lakhs (140,000) in the Mumbai market – and is growing at 30 per cent every year. This is also the amount given by Manojit Ghosval, the CFO of Mid-Day Multimedia, in a recent controversy between the readership between *Mid-Day* and *Mumbai Mirror*. *Mid Day* also has the highest per copy readership of the English-language readers in Mumbai, something that is very important in determining advertising in India and another source of controversy. Every issue of *Mid-Day* has an average of 5.9 readers making the circulation much higher than the number of papers printed. This is of course a major concern for how to price advertising in the newspaper. These statistics are from the time of my fieldwork in 2004-2005. *Mid-Day* average readership statistics are from (2002 ABC).

28. Vaibhav Purnanare, the assistant editor at *Mid-Day*, commented the following way on

whose international news coverage should not be taken as seriously as those of the major newspapers such as the *Indian Express*, *Times of India* or *The Hindu*. Yet, at the same time, *Mid-Day* is considered an example of the new kinds of commercial journalistic practices that have come to India as a part of the changes brought about by liberalisation and technological development (See Kohli 2003: 23-25). *Mid-Day's* example provides a good example of the broader changes that have taken place to the India's news environment in the recent years that have been debated widely in academic and public debates in India.

Behind my interest at *Mid-Day* was thus a desire for a critical examination of some of the closures through which we understand international news in India. As argued in the previous chapter, international news has been usually articulated as the more "serious" part of global media production, different from, for example, "popular" media forms such as sports or entertainment television. Recent work, however, has critically questioned these genre divisions that have historically characterised media and cultural studies. As Sparks et al note, underlying these debates has been historically the "need to make distinctions between high and low culture [and] journalism is no exception to this rule (Sparks et al 2000: ix). Sparks et al continue that

the readership. "People get educated. There are two kinds of people. The educated broaden their horizons and look wider including the outside world. Awareness increases of what is happening in the wider world. Youngsters who have watched Hindi cinema develop a similar interest to the Hollywood cinema. Some people read the stuff purely for status. They do it because they want to let the world know that they read the stuff. Anything to do with the West is considered to be educated. These two also meet. For the newspaper vendor, a common market, recent converts to English journalism and to English TV channels (interview, Vaibhav Puranpare)."

the high-low argument has permeated discussions about journalism in different ways. Distinctions between high and low, information and entertainment, substance and style, responsibility and sensationalism all have motivated the elevation of a slew of "desirable" journalistic practices and the simultaneous degradation of others: word over image, expository prose over sound-bite, black-and-white photography over color still shot. The excommunication of certain practices is an act that bears a certain fluid quality ... in other words, there is always some member of the journalistic neighbourhood to look down upon ... in each case, the need to identify a lowlife in journalism, in all its forms, underscores a very basic fact about journalism itself (2000: ix).

As I also argued in the previous chapter, similar normative divisions can be found in how the changes to the international news environment have been discussed in the ongoing debates in India. Thussu (2007) and Batabyal (2011), for instance, have criticised the Indian news media for becoming a commercially driven and entertainment-led industry, symbolised by a kind of a "murdochization" of the Indian press (Thussu 2007: 104; see also Batabyal 2011). Poolani et al (2004) have also argued that the line between "serious" broadsheets and "popular" tabloids does not exist as such anymore in India today. *Mid-Day* thus holds a unique position through which we can critically address these binary divisions between news/entertainment, broadsheet/tabloid, and politics/popular underlying international news in India. As a popular tabloid seeped deep in local context, *Mid-Day* thus provided me with an unconventional mix of international news, popular culture and Mumbai-specific topics such as crime and Bollywood celebrities. What kinds of new insights could research at a popular tabloid in India thus give to the broader problem of cultural translation that I was interested in my thesis?

(a) "Dear Mr. President ...you suck!"

In order to illustrate the theoretical discussions raised in this chapter, I begin with an example from my fieldwork. For two weeks prior to the US presidential elections in 2004, *Mid-Day* published a series of feature articles explaining the idiosyncrasies of the US elections to its readers. The series was titled "Countdown to the elections." It took place in the international news section of *Mid-Day*. See the following article titled "Dear Mr. President, you suck" published on October 22, 2004, as an example of some of the different and sometimes offbeat ways the political significance of the US elections were covered by *Mid-Day*:

Picture 1: Full page of Mid-Day published on October 22, 2004.

news

COUNTDOWN TO THE US ELECTION: Is the world's most powerful man also the most hated?

'Dear Mr President, you suck'

Democratic Senator Joe Biden, at a John Kerry campaign yesterday, referred to President George Bush as 'brain dead'. Arguably the most divisive and contentious US president ever, Dubya has another dubious distinction — he's perhaps endured more personal attacks than any president in recent history. Thankfully, though, a lot of it probably went over his head...

 **This is a guy who could not find oil in Texas.**
— Al Franken, US comedian and political commentator

 **I've been disappointed in almost everything he's done.**
— Jimmy Carter, former US president

 **What is his accomplishment? That he's no longer an obnoxious drunk?**
— Ronald Reagan Jr

 **As President Bush so eloquently put it in his address to Congress: 'Mathematics are one of the fundamentals of educationalising our youths.' I could not have said it better with a 10-foot pole.**
— Dave Barry, comedian

 **Logically unsound, confused and unprincipled, unwise to the extreme.**
— Jiang Zemin, former Chinese premier

 **Hopefully, he is not as stupid as he seems, nor as Mafia-like as his predecessors were.**
— Fidel Castro, Cuban president

 **George Bush is like a bad comic working the crowd, a moron, if you'll pardon the expression.**
— Martin Sheen, actor

 **In the Clinton administration we worried the president would open his zipper. In the Bush administration, they worry the president will open his mouth.**
— James Carville, Democratic strategist

 **Did I mention that Bush is a lying bag of crap?**
— Bill Maher, comedian

HALL OF FAME: Bush-Bashers extraordinaire

Michael Moore, filmmaker & author


- You've been a drunk, a thief, a possible felon, an convicted deserter and a cry baby...
- I would like to apologise for referring to George Bush as a 'deserter'. What I meant to say is that George Bush is a deserter, an election thief, a drunk driver, a WMD liar, and a functional illiterate. And he poops his pants.

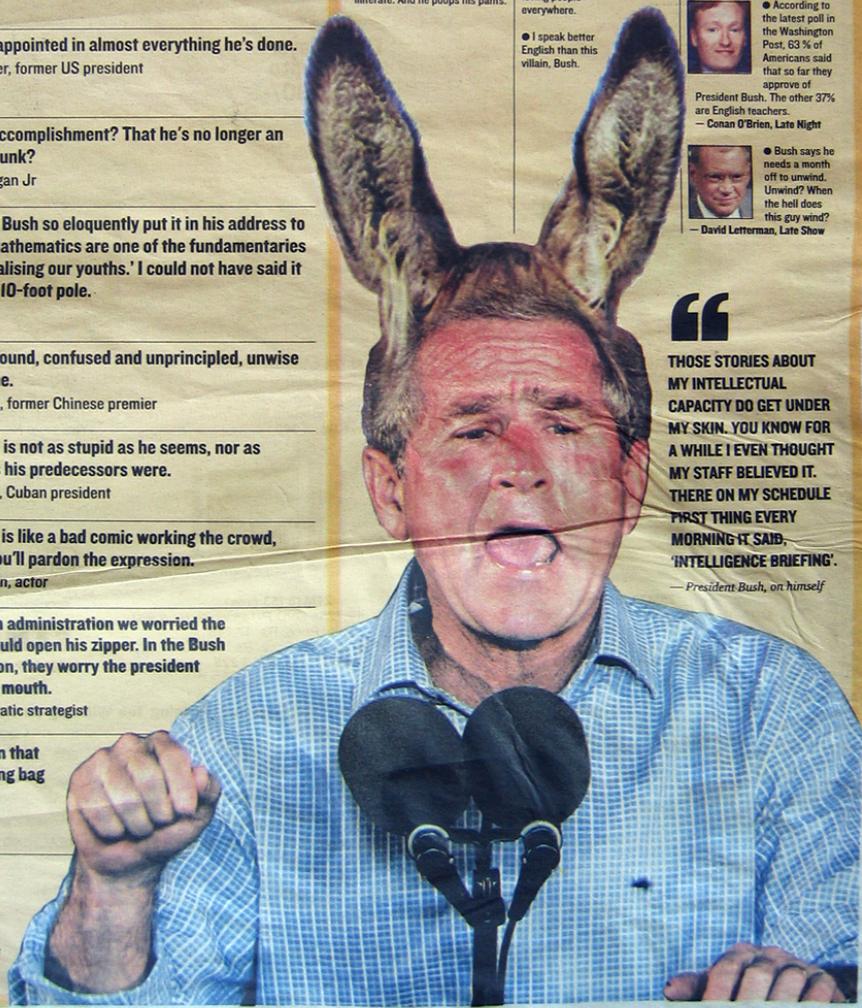
Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, former Iraqi info minister


- The leader of the international criminal gang of bastards.
- The insane little dwarf, Bush.
- The midgot, Bush, and that Rumfield (sic) deserve only to be beaten with shoes by freedom-loving people everywhere.
- I speak better English than this villain, Bush.

Late night TV


As American as hot dogs and apple pie, late night TV is a prolific source of first-rate Bush-bashing.

- Actually, Bush says being in Europe isn't much of an adjustment for him. In a lot of these countries they drink a lot and drive on the other side of the road, just like he used to do. — Jay Leno, *The Tonight Show*
- According to the latest poll in the Washington Post, 63% of Americans said that so far they approve of President Bush. The other 37% are English teachers. — Conan O'Brien, *Late Night*
- Bush says he needs a month off to unwind. Unwind? When the hell does this guy wind? — David Letterman, *Late Show*



“
THOSE STORIES ABOUT MY INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY DO GET UNDER MY SKIN. YOU KNOW FOR A WHILE I EVEN THOUGHT MY STAFF BELIEVED IT. THERE ON MY SCHEDULE FIRST THING EVERY MORNING IT SAID: 'INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING'.
 — President Bush, on himself

DEGREES OF DISLIKE:
 Ironically, Bush is the first MBA (Harvard, 1975) and the first former CEO to become president of the United States

As was common practice in the international news coverage at *Mid-Day*, this particular representation framed the "political significance" of the American elections to its readers in humorous ways. First of all, at the top of the page we can see main headline which frames the tone in the article: "COUNTDOWN TO THE US ELECTIONS: is the world's most powerful man also the most hated?" The large bold-size text below it then reads: "Dear Mr. President, you suck." The same irreverent tone continues throughout the article. The lead paragraph chronicles the different ways the character of President Bush has been ridiculed by world leaders and celebrities. It says:

Democratic Senator Joe Biden, at a John Kerry campaign yesterday, referred to President George Bush as "brain dead". Arguably the most divisive and contentious US president ever, Dubya has another dubious distinction – he's perhaps endured more personal attacks than any president in recent history. Thankfully, though, a lot of it probably went over his head

(Mid-Day 2002)

The article then provides panoply of quotes from people who have made fun of President Bush. This includes Jimmy Carter, the prime minister of China, Jianh Xemin, and the Cuban President Fidel Castro. Towards the left of the page, we can also see a boxed-in section titled "HALL OF FAME: Bush-Bashers extraordinaire." This includes more detailed comments from the likes of Michael Moore, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf (the former Iraqi info minister) as well as comedians such as Jay Leno in the US, who have each made jokes about President Bush.

More significantly, however, when we look at this page more closely, we can see that perhaps the most visible feature on the page is a picture of President Bush - *digitally morphed with donkey ears on his head*. A quote by President Bush next to this

picture drives home the point the article is making both textually and visually. It quotes the president saying "those stories about my intellectual capacity do get under my skin. You know for a while I even thought my staff believed in it. There on my schedule first thing every morning it said, 'intelligence briefing' (Mid-Day 2004)." See below the digitally altered picture that I have extracted from the article to emphasize its effect:

Picture 2: Picture of President Bush with donkey ears from the Mid-Day article



This humorous picture was, of course, one among many such examples through which the US presidential elections were covered by *Mid-Day*. This page in particular was produced through the re-use of original news material taken from various news sources in the US. When I asked Zaheer Merchant, the assistant news editor at *Mid-Day* about how this article was produced, he told me that the quotes were sourced through a series of searches on the Internet. The picture was selected from one of the pictures available on the news agency "ticker" and then digitally morphed with donkey ears by the graphic designer at *Mid-Day*. Hartley called redaction any practice that involves the "rearrangement, revision and adaptation of existing materials (text, stories, images, ideas) to produce new forms and meanings (2004: 136)." By re-using text (quotes, commentary) and visual material (pictures, digitally modified picture) from different sources, the original picture of President Bush has been redacted here together to signify the controversial albeit humorous stereotype of President Bush that was popular in India during my fieldwork.

This particular representation of President Bush with donkey ears thus provides a good example of what we called a *simulacrum* in Chapter 2. That is, it is arguably that kind of a copy that cannot be directly linked back to an original representation. Indeed, when I asked the editor who has been in charge of producing this particular representation where he had found the original picture of President Bush, he told me this was sourced from news agency archives. After doing an extensive Internet search of different pictures of President Bush published around the time of the US elections, I finally came to the conclusion that this particular picture of President Bush was originally taken during a speech that he gave at his Texas ranch. In other words, if we look at the relationship between these two representations - a

picture of President Bush originally at his Texas ranch and a picture of President Bush at an Indian tabloid morphed with donkey ears on - can it be assumed any more here that one of these representations is the original and the other one is a copy? Can we assume that there is some meaning that has been communicated between the two instances of production, whether through some transmission or interpretation of messages? Or are there alternative ways we could understand the relationships between the original and its re-use/copy (or the lack thereof) underlying this example?

With such examples in mind, I wanted to examine during my fieldwork at *Mid-Day* how such articles were produced at the level of news production. How could I best understand the media-related practices through which such representations were produced from various international news sources available? And moreover, if international news has been historically imagined through its political significance, what other ways could we now understand the relevance of this kind of international news coverage at *Mid-Day*. This example thus illustrates a series of questions I wanted to research about the broader problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India, at *Mid-Day*:

1. *Practices of re-use*. First of all, what strategies and/or techniques did news producers have available for re-using existing international news material for local audiences? Under what circumstances were such text and pictures re-used together as well as separately? And how was this reflected in the day-to-day newsroom practices, including questions of design and layout?
2. *Relationships underlying international news*. Secondly, if international news at *Mid-Day* was routinely produced by redacting together a bricolage of text and pictures from

various sources in different parts of the world, through what kinds of practices were these relationships/assemblages formed that made this re-use possible? When and under what kind of circumstances did these relationships/assemblages get formed from all the possible kinds of relationships possible in the international news environment? And what technologies of communication did news producers rely on to access and mediate the original news material (TV, print, internet, wire feeds)?

3. *Public debates in India*: Finally, what could such practices of re-use tell us more broadly about the markers of difference that are drawn between what is considered Indian and what is not in the international news coverage at *Mid-Day*? What kinds of international topics and themes did news producers at *Mid-Day* imagine to engage different kinds of audiences/readers in India and with what kinds of consequences? And what influence, if any, did the news producers at *Mid-Day* imagine that their practices had both to the readers as well as to the broader debates about the politics of international news in India?

This chapter provides the second entry point into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India. By looking at "media-related practices" of news production at *Mid-Day*, it focuses on these questions by examining three different "theoretical detours" (Slack 1996: 114) from conventional approaches to international news premised on representation/interpretation.

3. Statements and visibilities

The first detour has to do with what I call intralinguistic and intersemiotic translations. In order to clarify what I mean by these kinds of translations in this thesis, I will argue, following Jakobson's (1971) typologies of translation, that it makes sense to analytically divide practices of re-use of international news according to three different kinds of modalities of translations that are possible:

1. The first of these are what Jakobson called *interlingual translations* (1971: 261). These refer to translations that take place across different languages. These have already been discussed in reasonable detail in research looking at the politics of translation in international news and they will not be addressed in this thesis as they are not applicable to the English-language print and online news media in India;
2. The second kinds of translations are what Jakobson called *intralingual translations* (1971: 261). These are the kinds of translations that take place when news material is translated within contexts that are different yet nonetheless share a language (such as between Euro-American news agencies and *Mid-Day*). While such practices of rewriting or re-wording (sub-editing, copy editing etc.) have been researched in news analysis before, these have usually looked at examples that take place within a presupposed cultural homogeneity. Less research has looked in detail at the kinds of translations that take place between countries that share a language yet have heterogeneous cultural, political and social histories and media environments. Looking at the re-use of original international news material at *Mid-Day* as a form of intralinguistic translation is thus useful as a conceptual tool as this helps foreground the fact that, even if the language may be ostensibly

similar, we are still looking at some practice of translation that takes place;

3. Finally, the third kinds of translations are what Jakobson called *intersemiotic translations*. These are the kinds of translations that take place not only between news texts - whether in the same language or not - but also across different media forms. These kinds of intersemiotic translations foreground questions of design, which are arguably becoming increasingly important in international news production today as media technologies and forms converge. These kinds of translations are also perhaps closer to the kinds of practices involved in Hartley's use of the term "redaction (2004)" or Hedbidge's use of the term "bricolage (1979: 102-104)," that is, translations that involve elements of visual style and design as equally important parts of news production. Some existing research on such intersemiotic translations has looked at, for instance, practices of art where the linguistic code is translated into a musical or visual one, or design where a textual idea is translated into a visual logo or a brand (see Acguiar and Queiroz 2009). Another way to approach intersemiotic translations is to look at theories of convergence of media forms in contemporary media culture (Jenkins 2008) where one media form (for instance, print news media) converges into another media form (visual and inter-textual online news media such as blogs) with arguably different modalities of representation (Hayles 2002). Bolter and Grusin (2000) argue that the impact of older media forms on newer ones happens through a process whereby the new media remediates the representational logic of the older media forms. Therefore, in order to understand new digital media forms, we need to look carefully at how it re-mediates the older media forms that precede it: photography re-mediates painting, newspapers the book, TV re-mediates film,

web pages are a hybrid of perhaps many of the preceding forms. When looking at such re-use of international news in different parts of the world (such as the relationship between Euro-American news organizations and *Mid-Day*), we need thus also understand those kinds of translations that take place primarily through means of non-textual or visual representations (see Shapiro 2003). As research has shown, such visual representations in different parts of the world can also have radically different histories (see Pinney 1998).

(a) The design diagram

These theories are relevant because during my fieldwork at *Mid-Day* I quickly found out pictures were often as important as the text that was used. On any given day, news stories at *Mid-Day* were created the following way. Unless there was some important international news event overriding routine news production practices, the international news stories were first written (or mostly reworded from existing text found on the internet and through news agencies' feeds) by sub-editors in charge of writing and designing the stories. Depending on the day and the overall importance of the news story in question, this task shifted among different young journalists. The sub-editors had the freedom to write/design these stories with little editorial control, as long as the stories fit the layout requirements of the style sheets that determine the visual consistency throughout *Mid-Day*. In order to describe an average newsroom day/evening at *Mid-Day* here is an impressionistic account from my fieldwork notes to describe how international news stories were produced on any given day:

Editor in Chief Aakar Patel decides the news. The junior people compose the visual of the pages and write the stories within certain constraints. What are used are the Internet and the already-existing image databases. Pictures are chosen for the effect, they can be ripped out of context and edited freely.

Aakar Patel calls the late-night offices at some point to decide on the prospective menu of stories. After which all the other people decide/polish the news as it goes. The newsroom operates quite non-hierarchically with the people who work on particular sections having some power to decide how the layout and the end result will look.

The layout decisions take place with news editor ... and two other section heads.

(Fieldwork notes).

Because of this centrality of layout design in the selection and production of international news, I became interested in questions of design. When I asked some of the young sub-editors and designers about what they considered to be the most relevant media-related practices in international news production, Acquin George, a young sub-editor in charge of the Page 3 popular culture news told me that for a young person to succeed in journalism in India, there were three skills needed:

1. The first of these was what he called *base-design*. This was the ability to produce good layouts for *Mid-Day* with the Quark software programme. This was a skill required by all new people working on the international news stories at *Mid-Day*;
2. The second was the ability to write and report on articles in the classical journalistic sense. This applied primarily to local news and less to international news;
3. The third skill was the ability to do what Acquin George called *sub-write*. This meant taking existing stories (either by staff or from external sources) and then re-wording them to fit the existing layout. Sub-writing was the task of the sub-editors who seldom wrote their own material but instead re-used pre-existing material

and adapting them into the layout by combining images and text. This was especially common in international news stories where there is no ability to produce original news material or reporting.

In other words, what international news production consisted of was mostly of practices of re-wording text and editing images to fit into the design requirements at *Mid-Day*. I also found out that that there were two kinds of translations reflected in these accounts. The first were what Acquin George called practices of "base design" (intersemiotic translations) that consisted of making an attractive layout by re-using both text and pictures. The second of these were what Acquin George called "sub-writing" (intralinguistic translation) that consisted of rewording existing text to fit the layout requirements of *Mid-Day*. At no point did any of the editors or sub-editors mention here the ability to interpret the content or the meaning of the international news selected in order to make this news material relevant for local audiences and local political discourse.

Moreover, when I investigated this question of design layout more closely, I found out that the current visual look in place at *Mid-Day* (during my fieldwork in 2004/2005) was relatively new. The old layout that had been in place for almost 20 years was changed on June 26, 2001, following changes to design trends in India and internationally. As a part of the new visual style, *Mid-Day* shifted from the older text-heavy look to a more picture-oriented style design with more white space and bigger pictures. See below a comparison between the old and new design at *Mid-Day* before and after this re-design on June 25, 2001 and June 27, 2001 (no edition came out in between when test runs were made).

Picture 3: Comparison of old and new layout of Mid-Day before and after its new layout design on June 25, 2001 and June 27, 2001



This new look was the outcome of work done by an Australian newspaper designer, Peter Ong. Prior to *Mid-Day*, Ong had also worked on four other newspapers in India: *the Malayalam Manorama*, *The Week* and *Times of India* and the *Hindustan Times*.²⁹ In order to find out how Ong himself commented on the changes he proposed for the look at *Mid-Day*, I interviewed him to ask what his reasons were. He told me that

29. Ong also designed the layouts for other papers in South and South East Asia: Straits - a free paper in Singapore, Jakarta Post - in Indonesia, The Nation - Bangkok, Thailand, Kompas - In Jakarta, Indonesia, The Age - Melbourne, Mid-Day, Times of India, Hindustan Times, Malayalam Manoram - India, The Press - Christchurch, New Zealand (Ong 2005)

as more and more Indian newspaper owners began to attend newspaper conferences around the world, and are exposed to newspapers either online or personally, they have become more aware of how dated and old-fashioned their newspapers look.

(Ong 2005)

Furthermore, when I asked him about what was special about *Mid-Day* as a Mumbai-based tabloid (as compared to the other newspapers he had worked with before in India and elsewhere) he commented that

the reality in a city such as Bombay is that mid day is largely a street-sales paper. Most of mid day's readers travel on trains.

you should ride on one to experience the morning rush. Then you will discover that there is not much room to open up a newspaper such as the TOI. Mid day has a very defined niche in the market.

In addition, mumbai readers are very busy. They spend up to two to three hours travelling to and from work. All they want is a newspaper and/or magazine that doesn't tax their minds too much at the end of the day.

They just want to get on with the news, to get a moving-TV effect in their newspaper.

So I designed mid day to reflect that busy-ness, and to help readers get as much information as possible in the shortest possible time (*italics mine*)

(Ong 2005)

What is especially interesting in Ong's comments is how he imagined the relationship between global design trends and the needs of audiences of *Mid-Day*. What is crucial to note here are that, according to Ong, news producers at *Mid-Day* have to stay up to date to the latest global newspaper design trends to stay competitive. These, in turn, have to be translated to the needs of the audiences at *Mid-Day* who are (imagined as) busy commuters traveling on public trains (their Mumbai-specific niche). To achieve this translation of global design trends to local commuters, Ong called his design the "moving-TV effect in their newspapers," that is the kind of an intersemiotic

remediation of the visual logic of the television into the printed tabloid form by emphasising pictures over textual content. In order to cater to these imagined requirements of the busy commuter-audiences, the visual look of *Mid-Day* was thus re-designed to reduce the amount of text used and to increase the size of the pictures used. The resulting bricolage of text and picture provided the stylistic consistency throughout the paper. The kind of a visual-textual diagram that resulted is then what quasi-determines how international news stories are produced by re-using text and pictures available on any given topic. The re-use of international news at *Mid-Day* is thus informed both by the re-use of text (intralingual translations) as well as by the relationship formed visual and textual elements found in design (intersemiotic translations).

In order to further research these questions of design, I semi-formally interviewed all the editors, sub-editors and designers at *Mid-Day* who worked with international news. Here is how they commented on the importance of design to *Mid-Day*. Sandra Almieda, a sub-editor, commented on this relationship the following way:

Mid-Day is something that you read as you travel. You do not have to be political, just read something as you are standing up.

Pictures say a lot more than text. And because it is a commuter paper, pictures say more. We are using pictures more than before.

(Almeida 2005)

Swarupa Dutt, another sub-editor commented about the relationship between text and pictures:

The ideal word count is about 300-350 words. 500 is plus. The ideas are spoon-fed to the reader. That is why there are subheads and box heads for easy consumption. Remember the reader is the commuter. In contrast to the Daily Mail and the Sun, it is the layout and the headings that are influenced, and the role of the pictures. The form.

(Dutt 2005)

Zaheer Merchant, the assistant editor often in charge of international news coverage at *Mid-Day*, commented similarly:

Earlier there was ... a complete mess. There was a design overall at 2001. Has changed a lot in becoming more tabloid. The original style sheet was less tabloid. It has been obviously modified, become more tabloid, headlines, thick boxes, black

(Merchant 2005)

Merchant also continued on the importance of design and its relevance for both local and international news at *Mid-Day*:

Mid-Day always has tried to be picture-oriented. It does not always show up in practice ... only because of the quality of the pictures. The biggest challenge is to come up with the page design. There is only one girl who does only copy. Others' do both copy and design. Other papers have both. Much more of a challenge for an individual, quality people ... you need both excellent command over English and Quark.

(Merchant 2005)

As we can see from these commentaries, the desires of the "imagined audience" become thus refracted through how the visual-textual requirements of *Mid-Day* are implemented. The needs of this imagined audience (as the non-political commuter) informs how international news stories are produced. This "design diagram" has a history, and it changes with global design standards and conventions.

The point here is not the design history of *Mid-Day*. Rather, what we can see emerge from the above commentary is the first theoretical detour from theories of international news premised on representation/interpretation. Here the media-related practices through which differential relationships are formed in international news are informed as much, if not more, by the design requirements (relationships between text and images) as it is by the content of this news material. This raises an entirely new set of questions about the "politics of international news" that cannot be addressed in this thesis. If such questions of design are foregrounded in international news, through what kinds of practices are then these trends and standards implemented? What does this presuppose about questions of representation and the role visual representations have in different parts of the world? Are there shared histories with this relationship between text and pictures? Do such pictorial representations have different histories in different parts of the world as Pinney (1998) has suggested and how do we understand the possible cultural translation of design and the relationship between text and pictures, between the "statements and visibilities" underlying any discursive formation (see Deleuze 1988)?³⁰

30. I am indebted here to Deleuze's reading of Foucault's theory of discourse where Deleuze argued that, in any given discursive formation, there is the distinction between what can be said (statements) and what can be seen (visibilities). Discourse, Deleuze writes that "An 'age' does not pre-exist the statements which express it, nor the visibilities that fill it. These are two essential aspects: on the one hand each stratum or historical formation implies a distribution of the visible and the articulable which acts upon itself; on the other, from one stratum to the next there is variation in the distribution, because the visible itself changes in style, while the statements themselves change in their system ... the primacy of the statements will never impede the historical irreducible of visibility (1988: 49-49)."

4. Territorialised relationships

The previous section provided the first theoretical detour into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India. I argued that questions of design - the relationship between text and pictures - is as important, if not more, than the representations communicated and interpreted. Given the importance of this relationship between text and images, as I continued research at *Mid-Day*, I wanted to thus better understand the kinds of practices through which news material was found by news editors, sub-editors and designers working on international news stories at *Mid-Day*. In particular, I was interested in the broader question of through what kinds of sources were these text and pictures found from all the sources available. As shown in Chapter 3, it was widely argued during my fieldwork that new relationships had become possible in India through which to source international news because of new technologies of communication. That is, in addition to the news agency feeds that had dominated the literature, there were now, at least in theory, a panoply of other sources to find news from: international satellite television, cable channels and websites of newspapers and other online news. Given this existence of new potential news sources available, I was thus interested in exploring the broader questions of why were certain sources used over others at *Mid-Day*. In particular, I was interested in the following questions: (1) why did news producers seem still rely on the news material sourced from the three major Euro-American news agencies when other sources were widely available? And, in particular, why were certain relationships chosen over others through which this news material was found? (2) And how did the editors, sub-editors and designers at *Mid-Day* comment on what they considered to be the most relevant tools and technologies for accessing international news? Moreover, what

could this tell us about the broader theories of media power and the dependency given to Euro-American news sources in international news?

(a) Communication as probable relationships

I argued in Chapter 2 that underlying representation-based approaches to international news was a transmission model of communication. This model became used widely in media and cultural studies as a way to explain the "effects" mass media has on audiences in different parts of the world. In order to provide a different understanding of the kinds of international news practices through which original international news material was sourced at *Mid-Day* that I observed during my fieldwork, I will start this section with an alternative reading of communication theory that focuses on the kinds relationships formed rather the messages exchanged/interpreted. In particular, through an analysis of Terranova's re-reading of communication theory, I will argue that the way international news is re-used at *Mid-Day* should not be defined according to the content or meanings communication/interpreted but rather through the kinds of relationships that are possible in international news production.

In her re-reading of communication theory, Terranova argues that in the initial sender-receiver model (Mathematical Theory of Communication) communication was originally not defined according to the meanings produced but rather as a mathematical ratio between signal and noise through which signals could be differentiated from the noise around it. This approach thus differs significantly from the more established view communication as the transmission or interpretation

of meanings. Here communication is understood more as a representation of the probability of signals (relationships between sender and receiver) that can differentiate within the field of communication surrounded by noise. Terranova writes "within the mathematical theory of communication, information represents an uncertain and probabilistic milieu by reducing it to sets of alternatives that determine more or less likely sets of possibilities on the basis of a given distribution of probabilities (2004a: x)." In Terranova's re-reading, the theoretical stakes underlying communication have thus less to do with the communication of meanings, political or not, but rather with the kinds of practices through which different kinds of relationships are formed in communication in the first place. Here the *phatic* (Jakobson 1966) function of communication - that is, those kind of practices whose purpose is to maintain a relationship in the first place - emerges as important for understanding how communication takes place. Terranova writes "the political technology of information societies is crucially concerned with the organisation of the field of probable or the likely. It thus produces a sensibility to social change (and forms of subjectivity) that are informed by the relation between the real and the possible - where the real remains while all other competing possibilities are excluded (2004a: 25)." With this re-reading of communication theory, the analytical focus in international news shifts away from the content that is produced and to the media-related practices through which these different kinds of relationships are formed and maintained between news producers in different parts of the world. Moreover, the focus turns to the kinds of relationships that become more probable through such practices, that is, those assemblages that are *territorialised* in international news over other assemblages that are not. The focus shifts towards the kinds of media-related practices that facilitate certain kinds of

assemblages/relationship while making others less probable and the political significance of the question why certain relationships are formed over others?

(b) "Google is God."

I have started this section with this brief re-reading of communication theory as it helps me explain the kinds of media-related practices that I observed during fieldwork at *Mid-Day*. During my fieldwork, I was in the position to participate and to observe in the production of a number of international news stories from beginning to end. I provide here one example that helps illustrate my argument about why certain kinds of relationships/assemblages underlying international news were formed at *Mid-Day*. On December 1, 2004, a feature story titled "The Smartest American loses after winning RS11 Crore" was published. See below the full-page image of the article:

Picture 4: A full-page from Mid-Day on December 1, 2004

8 Thursday • December 2, 2004 • Mid Day, Mumbai | Whassup? Get breaking news on your desktop. Download now from WHASSUP.MID-DAY.COM

Smartest American loses after winning Rs 11 crore

Longest winning streak in TV game show history ends as Jeopardy! champion Ken Jennings is finally beaten after he collected more than \$2.5 million over five months

\$2,522,700
Ken's total prize money (Rs 11.35 crore)

\$33,636
Average daily winnings (Rs 15 lakh)

\$33,636
Number of episodes for which he remained champion (see 'Rules of Jeopardy')

2,664
Correct answers



Ken you match him?

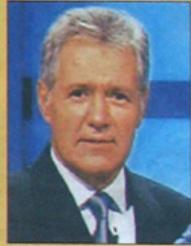
THESE 10 questions are among the thousands Jennings answered correctly. Can you match him? (Remember, the 'questions' are in the form of answers. Your response has to be in the form of a question)

- **Category: Country time**
Clue: Nepal's western, eastern & southern boundaries are with this country.
- **Category: 'Extra' helpings**
Clue: The handing over of a criminal to another country or state.
- **Category: 'Bo'-psauri**
Clue: In a nursery rhyme, she loses her sheep.
- **Category: 'Yellow' fever**
Clue: It's used by a soccer referee to caution a player against further rough play.
- **Category: Who's your daddy?**
Clue: Lord of the Rings co-star Liv.
- **Category: The cinema**
Clue: The 1999 film with the line "The answer is out there, Neo. And it's looking for you, and it will find you if you want it to."
- **Category: The big Bangladesh**
Clue: Over 90% of those in Bangladesh follow this religion.
- **Category: Authors**
Clue: His father was also a Count; his mother was Princess Volkonskaya.
- **Category: If you're going to do it**
Clue: You mix, then heat, lime, silica, alumina & iron oxide with gypsum to create the Portland type of this.
- **Category: Geographic salets**
Clue: The Diavolezza & the Piz Corvatsch are famous ski areas near this Swiss resort.
- **Category: Maps**
Clue: In about 150 AD this Greek astronomer in Egypt published 'Geography', an 8-volume guide to mapmaking.
- **Category: Awards**
Clue: Rickenbacker & Sikorsky were 2 of the first group who were each named "Elder Statesmen of" this field in 1955.
- **ANSWERS:**
 - Who is Lee Telesty?
 - What is cement?
 - What is St Moritz?
 - Who is Ptolemy?
 - What is aviation?

Bet you can't answer these!

WE'RE sure you know the answers to most of the 10 questions on the left. But if you know the answers to any of these five, (yes, Ken got them all) we'll be REALLY impressed.

WHAT IS JEOPARDY?



Alex Trebek, host of Jeopardy!

- It is a game of trivia (like Kaun Banega Crorepati, but much tougher)
- It debuted in the US on March 30, 1964
- Three people compete by answering questions about topics that can range from history to literature to pop culture
- The twist is that each response must be spoken in the form of a question to which the clue given is the answer. (For example, if the clue was, "This city is the capital of the United States," the correct response would be, "What is Washington, DC?")

Rules of Jeopardy

There are three contestants each day, one of whom is the winner from the previous show. The show consists of three rounds.

ROUND 1: JEOPARDY

- The game focuses on a game board containing six columns and five rows of trivia 'answers' or 'clues'
- Each column is a topical category, and categories change on each show
- Each category has five questions, which are worth, depending on their difficulty, \$200, \$400, \$600, \$800 or \$1,000
- If a contestant answers a question correctly, he wins this amount; if his answer is wrong, he loses that amount (hence the 'Jeopardy')
- Negative scores can and do happen often

ROUND 2: DOUBLE JEOPARDY

- Double Jeopardy works like the first round, except with new categories and double the amount of money up for grabs

ROUND 3: FINAL JEOPARDY

- Contestants with zero or negative scores are not allowed to participate
- The host first announces the category, and the contestants risk any amount of money within what they have accumulated, by writing it down. The clue is revealed.
- Contestants have 30 seconds to write down a response
- The contestant who wins the most money is the day's champion and returns the next day

The mad scientist...

Jennings is known for his quirky behaviour:

- He writes his name differently every day, ranging from simple cursive script to block letters or even artistic renderings of his name made out of dots
- He always carries a good luck charm in his pocket. This is a 'Totora' toy from the movie My Neighbor Totoro
- Jennings pronounces -- or at least tries to -- foreign words and places with the proper accent
- He always rounds off his wager so that the amount will bring his win to a multiple of \$500 or, in rare cases, to a multiple of \$1,000
- He used to shake his head in disbelief when his total wins were announced in the start of each game. He later stopped this habit
- His website lists his top 2,000 'avourite movies
- He has inspired a T-shirt sold on E-bay. It reads: "There are now three constants in life: death, taxes and Ken Jennings"

... and the woman who beat him



THE final Jeopardy! clue on November 30 was: Most of this firm's 70,000 seasonal white-collar employees work only 4 months a year. California realtor Nancy Zerg got it right (What is H&R Block?) Jennings's guess was "What is FedEx?"

Who is Ken Jennings?

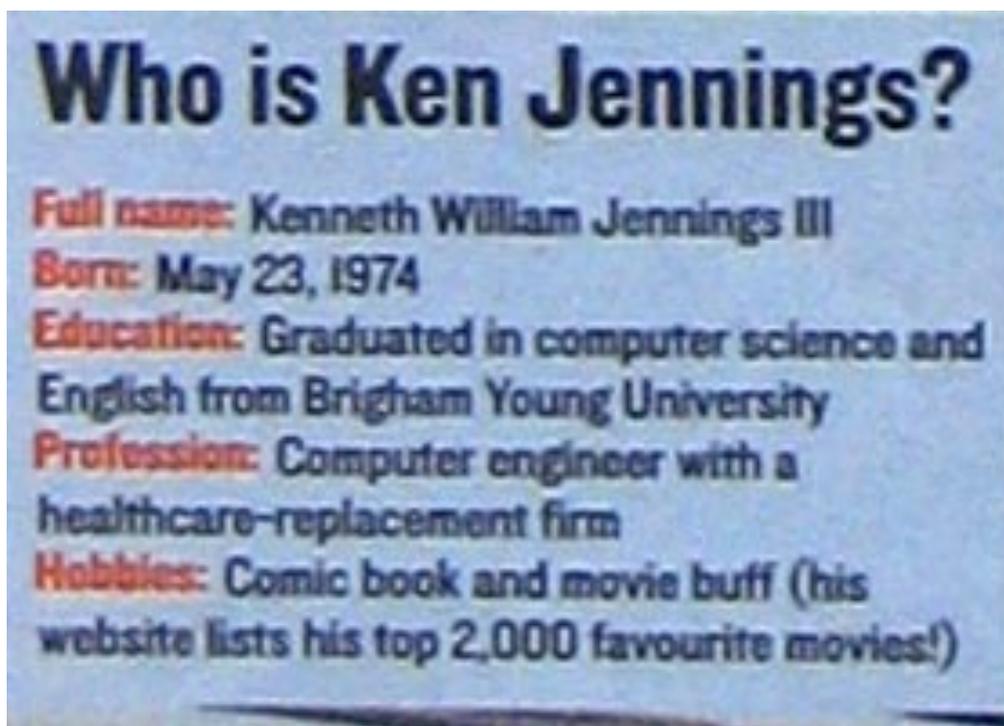
Full name: Kenneth William Jennings III
Born: May 23, 1974
Education: Graduated in computer science and English from Brigham Young University
Profession: Computer engineer with a healthcare-replacement firm
Hobbies: Comic book and movie buff (his website lists his top 2,000 favourite movies!)

Ken's hot streak

June 2, 2004 Makes his first appearance	June 7 Total prize money crosses \$1,00,000 on his fourth day	June 10 On day 7, he crosses \$2,00,000	June 23 Day 16, and the champ has raked in over half a million dollars	July 13 Jennings is now a Jeopardy millionaire	October 25 It's day 59, and Ken breaches the \$2 million mark	November 30 On day 75, the law of averages catches up with Ken at last
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This article itself is about the longest-running participant in an US game show *Jeopardy*, Ken Jennings, who was finally ousted from the show after a long-winning streak. Why this article is relevant is that all of the text and pictures were sourced from the Internet in somewhat unconventional ways. See below, for instance, a closeup of some text used. This was taken from *Wikipedia*, found through the *Google* search engine.

Picture 5: Text taken from Wikipedia, found through Google text search



Also see below a low-resolution picture of the woman who finally ousted Ken Jennings from *Jeopardy* show

Picture 6: Picture found on the online website of the Canadian Globe and Mail, found through Google Image search.



This article is thus particularly poignant not for its mundane content but for the difficulty assistant news editor Zaheer Merchant had in finding the appropriate text and pictures needed to design it. The pictures were especially difficult to find. After conducting an extensive *Google Image* search for the right picture, Zaheer was finally able to locate the picture above from the online news edition of the *Canadian Globe and Mail*. This picture - despite its low-resolution - was then re-used in its original form to accompany the story, including some problems of resolution that emerged when it had to be fit into the layout requirements for the page. The rest of the text on the page was found also through *Google* on various sites such as *ABC News*, the *CBS News* and, also, the *Indianapolis Star*. None of the text or pictures that were re-used was given

credit.

A full-page international news story was thus made up of a redaction of text and pictures found from a diversity of news sources around the world primarily through the use of *Google* to mediate the relationships through which this material was found. The text and pictures was then intralinguistically (reworded text) and intersemiotically (edited picture) translated to fit the layout requirements. This example therefore clearly illustrates what emerged during my fieldwork as one of the most important media-related practice through which international news was re-used at *Mid-Day*. This had little to do with the production and interpretation of representations or the communication of political meanings. Rather, what emerged as one of the most important ways such international news material was found was the use of the *Google* search engine.³¹

As I was interested in understanding how the use of Google informed the formation of different relationships/assemblages underlying international news, I again semi-formally interviewed all the people involved with international news stories. Below are some of their commentaries. When I asked Shibali Chatterjee, a sub-editor at *Mid-Day*, she commented on the use of *Google* the following way.

Of course! Google is saviour. Every single page uses Google.
(Chatterjee 2005)

31. Recent work has begun to look critically at the politics of how such algorithmic search happens through determinants such as the Google PageRank. For good critical discussions on this, see for instance *Mediamorphis* <http://dwmw.wordpress.com/tag/political-economy-of-google/> [as accessed on 27.7.2012].

Similar exultant tones about *Google* were present in the other interviews also. Sandra Almieda, a senior sub-editor at *Mid-Day* commented similarly on how the Internet and, especially *Google*, had become key tools in journalism in India.³² She said:

Google is like the most important thing. We are lost without Google. Of course you can bring out a paper without Google but the paper would be more boring. We use it for padding up copy. Lifting up a boring copy. For verifying facts such as historical facts. Past 3 years it has assumed a lot of importance ... especially for the news desk. This gradually evolved. Ticker is as important. brings you the latest news as it happens. Google is to get a more broader background to the news.

(Almieda 2005).

Sandra Almieda further commented on how the Internet has become useful as you can access freely different sources internationally, which were not available before.

She explained:

Pictures would not be anywhere else. But you would find it on Google. There are higher chances on finding it on Google. Very good source of pictures, news, information.

No attribution usually needs to be given. Because most sites that are connected are random sites. If it is news site. yes. If it is an Indian news site then definitely yes. Otherwise no.

(Almieda 2005).

According to her, attribution or copyright had not become an issue in India. When I interviewed the assistant news editor, Vaibhav Puranpare, about this he commented similarly that

32. A friend of mine told an anecdote where Google was called the "chief reporter" in Indian newsrooms.

the Internet has become the most important source of news. All news are on the Internet. In-depth reports. Internet is crucial to our reporting. *For us Google is god.* Both local and international news. Something as basic as allowing so many doubts to be clarified and rechecked immediately

(Puranpare 2005; my emphasis).

Vaihhav Puranpare further described the changes that had taken place newsroom practices in India the following way:

There are two issues. One is legitimate; the other is free for all.

We have official tieups with the *Daily Mail*, *Getty Images*, *AP*, *REUTERS*, *AFP*, *PTI*, UPI (through the ticker).

Then there is the net which is free. You just pick your stuff from there. The copyright, the attribution has just not become an issue. A free for all. The culture of copyright does not exist in India the same way as it does in the West.

(Puranpare 2005).”

In other words, the older relationships through which news material was sourced on the internet still exist (standard news agencies feeds accessed through the ticker) but there is now, in addition to these, a free-for-all method for accessing original text and pictures from other parts of the world. The relationship through which this material is accessed requires the use of *Google* to mediate them.³³

What emerges from the above commentaries is the second theoretical detour to classical understandings of international news. In place of theories premised on the representation/interpretation of political meanings, I argue instead that the *Google* search engine has become one of the most important tools for mediating the

33. Indicative of this is perhaps the fact that on the wall of the *Mid-Day* newsroom was a poster during my fieldwork that read: "for pictures nicked from the net, do not increase size."

relationships underlying international news, and in India, in specific. This practice has little to do with the political meanings that are communicated but rather with the different algorithmic criteria through which *Google* mediates these relationships. While such conclusions are of course tentative, it thus seems that two media-related practices factor in when we look at the re-use of international news at *Mid-Day*. Firstly, the use of *Google* allows for new kinds relationships in international news for accessing text and pictures based on certain search criteria that help mediate these relationships. Often this news material is found on news sites that have nothing officially to do with *Mid-Day* or the news sources it relies on. Secondly, this news material is routinely re-used without attribution (especially on the international news stories where the chances of discovery are slim) as long as it can be intralinguistically and intersemiotically translated to fit the layout requirements of *Mid-Day*. These practices then form some of the "probable relationships" (Terranova 2004a) or "territorialised assemblages" (DeLanda 2008) that make up international news on any given day. The outcome of these are news representations at *Mid-Day* that are seen by hundreds of thousands of young Mumbai-based residents on a daily basis, giving the busy readers often their only daily contact with the Western/international world.

5. International news heterotopias

I argued in Chapter 4 that behind the history of international news is a complicated post-colonial ambivalence through which the markers of difference between what is considered Indian/*swadeshi* and what was considered Western/foreign/international/*videshi* have been constructed. As I was concluding my

fieldwork, the final thing I was interested in how such markers of difference were drawn at a tabloid that focused often on Western popular culture news in its international news coverage. How was this "politics of difference" then refracted in the newsroom practices at *Mid-Day*? How and where (and if) was it discussed? And did this make any relevance to how the editors, sub-editors and designers imagined the significance of their own practices? These questions were motivated by a series of observations I had made during my fieldwork. A significant part of what we loosely called international news at *Mid-Day* consisted of so-called Page 3 entertainment stories where celebrity gossip from especially the US and the UK was provided for the readers. This routinely included lightly clad women and pictures of celebrity couples in compromising positions. See for instance, the following page taken as an example of some of these stories. The article titled "Steaming hot" was published on October 14, 2004, and it contained pictures of tennis star Anna Kournikova wearing in a bikini while romantically engaging with her boyfriend, Enrique Iglesias.

Picture 7: Picture of Page 3 coverage at Mid-Day.



What was interesting about this story is that, when I discussed the notion of Western influence on Indian news practices with the editors, sub-editors and designers, UK-based tabloid such as *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* were mentioned on a number of occasions. For instance, assistant editor Zaheer Merchant told me that young reporters are often told that "do a good job, do a *Daily Mail* story (Merchant 2005)." Copies of *The Sun* could also be found stacked on the newsroom of *Mid-Day* as references from which especially the visual form of the stories could be consulted.

The problem I faced was thus two-fold. First of all, when I looked at examples of popular culture/entertainment stories, on the surface, there seemed to be nothing Indian about these stories. These "virtually identical pictures or words" re-used by

Mid-Day could be the same anywhere, that is, on the surface there were no markers of difference that could help me identify them as Indian as opposed to being anywhere else in the English-speaking world. Secondly, when I looked at newsroom practices at *Mid-Day* more broadly - and not just its international news coverage - I was nonetheless repeatedly told how strong the influence of UK-based tabloids such as the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* were for how *Mid-Day* imagines itself as a tabloid in India. When I discussed these issues with editor Vaibhav Puranpare, he commented the following way:

The influence of British tabloids is far too heavy. There is a lot of things to learn from the British tabloids in terms of layout (design/picture) as well as the crispness in writing. But it is almost as we need to fall in line. Cultural reasons for this. A perception that the West does things better. But this should not mean we blindly follow them and be a poor photocopy of them Sun and the Daily Mail. We should take what we need and reject what we don't. For instance, we cannot write like the Brits do. A lot to be learned from their crispness ... things have to be learned.

(Puranpare 2005)

What I found interesting about the commentary on the influence of British tabloid was how this "politics of difference" was commented on. While there are similarities between British and Indian tabloids, these are nonetheless always culturally translated to the Indian context. Given this problem of cultural translation looked at in this thesis, I was therefore interested in how these markers of difference were drawn and how they were transgressed: what was Indian in international news coverage and what was Western in Indian news? When I discussed this issue further with editor Vaibhav Puranpare, he gave two such examples where this conflicting relationship could be seen. He noted that

...The Dear Diana page. A classic example of how pure imitation takes place. Kareena Kapoor case another example how we are following the lead ... The whole narrative of a British white skin has more acceptability. But it is a major draw for the newspaper. The thing is that the Diary Page (page 2) has been designed like this. Full of examples like this.

(Puranpare 2005)

In order to investigate these broader questions around the "politics of difference" underlying international news at *Mid-Day*, I will conclude this chapter by looking at these two examples more closely - the examples of Dear Diana and Kareena Kapoor - and what they can tell us about the politics of difference at the international news production at *Mid-Day*.

(a) But who is Dear Diana?

The *Dear Diana* page was an extremely popular part of the tabloid during my fieldwork there.³⁴ See below an example of the Dear Diana page published on January 14, 2005.

34. In 2012 at the time of writing this, Dear Diana was still going strong. See some examples of it here <http://www.mid-day.com/relationships/deardiana/> [last accessed on 27.7.2012]

Picture 8: Dear Diana "agony aunt" page from Mid-Day published on January 14, 2005



As is common with the "agony aunt" genre in tabloid across the world, the Dear Diana section at *Mid-Day* gives advice to its readers primarily on questions concerning sex and relationships. For instance, in this particular example, questions such as the following are asked by readers (the grammatical and spelling mistakes are left as is):

Hey Diana:

I am 27 years old and unmarried. I masturbate regularly, as I enjoy it. Will that affect my health or the capacity to have good sex with my future wife? Will I be able to satisfy my a woman physically. Please reply. I am very eager to know.

Girish

With the response from Diana being the following:

Dear Girish. Masturbation has not been proven to be detrimental to anyone's health. There's no reason for you to believe that it'll affect your future sexual encounters. In fact, it is often recommended as an exercise that lets you release your sexual frustrations. Go ahead and enjoy it.

(Anon 2005)

These sex and relationship-based questions are typical in tabloids across the world (see Rubery 2009: 47-83; also Horrie 2003). However, what I found interesting about the Dear Diana page at *Mid-Day* was the use of the picture used to accompanying it. The picture is not of an Indian woman but of a Western looking woman. See below a close-up of the picture below.

Picture 9: Close-up of Dear Diana



When I asked the editors and sub-editors whom Diana was I was told she does not exist. This is also quite common in tabloid practice as such agony aunts are not necessarily the person that the newspaper/tabloid claims they are. However, what I found interesting about the Dear Diana example was that fact that the picture of the

woman who was giving advice of sexual and relationship matters in Mumbai, India, was a Western-looking woman and not an Indian person as one would expect in a Mumbai-based tabloid. She also had a Western name: Diana. In fact, when I asked more about who Diana was, nobody could give me a conclusive answer who she was or who whose picture was now on *Mid-Day*. I was told on a few informal occasions that this picture was found on the Internet and Dear Diana was just another young journalist answering to these questions. But as I was not able verify these facts independently before fieldwork ended, I will keep these questions open. What, however, is important to note here is the question of why should the agony aunt in Mumbai, India, be a Western person? Why not an Indian person?

These questions began to make more sense to me when *Mid-Day* published another story where the boundaries between what is Indian and what is not were blurred. On December 15, 2004, *Mid-Day* published a series of semi-graphic images of the Indian actress Kareena Kapoor tongue-kissing her boyfriend, Shahid Kapur. The images were clandestinely filmed through a mobile phone camera at Rain, a popular high-end restaurant in Mumbai. The editor-in-chief of *Mid-Day*, Aakar Patel, was able to get access to this video and decided to publish stills from it. See below the front-page section for the story published on December 15, 2004.

Picture 10: The controversial image in Mid-Day of two Indian actors kissing.



The actual story was in the "Hit-List" section of Mid-Day, which contained articles primarily about Indian celebrity gossip.³⁵ What was interesting about this example - more than its tongue-kissing actors - was the controversy the decision to publish these pictures of Indian movie stars kissing stirred nationwide in India.³⁶ The so-called

35. The text that accompanies the pictures of the two Bollywood actors kissing reads "Feels like Love" with the text below it reading "PERFECT KISS: Hindi film stars normally don't smooch well on screen. But this couple defies that theory ... off-screen, that is. Here are glimpses of THE KISS!" The main text of the story itself read "Bollywood's hottest young couple have evidently decided, *Jab pyaar kiya dar na kya* (when I have loved, what do I then have to fear). We found Kapur and Kapoor lip-locked at a party at Rain the other night. Kareen, who once threatened to "kill any woman who eyes Shahid" should have no cause for worry (Mid-Day 2004)."

36. See, for instance, the article "Sex and the Media" in *India Today*. <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/sex-and-naked-ambition-will-be-the-mantras-for-2005-shobhaa-de/1/194516.html> (accessed on July 27, 2012.)

"Kareena Kapoor-case" raised heated debates in the media in India once again whether the commercialisation of its newspapers had gone too far. For instance, a Times of India article titled "Love in the time of mobile cameras" published on the 17th of December, 2004, commented on the story the following way:

One such 'orally welded' couple was on national television all of Thursday, their headline-making kiss repeated ad nauseam on news channels. But although the unfortunate twosome-film stars Shahid Kapur and Kareena Kapoor have claimed that their images were morphed, and threatened the city tabloid that originally splashed them with legal action, Mumbai is still agog with the alleged PDA.

Public Display of Affection or the crisper PDA, which encompasses a range of amorous activities from kissing to snuggling in public, *is a staple of western society-although even the liberal West regularly has debates on where one should draw the line. What's worrying conservatives is that it has now washed up at the shores of Indian metros.*

(Times of India 2004; my emphasis)

Why then did this article raise such controversy when *Mid-Day* routinely (as we saw in the previous example) published much more explicit images of Western celebrities? What was so controversial about a relatively tame bad resolution image of two Bollywood celebrities kissing each other? The controversy around this example showed the complex ways the markers of difference between what is considered Indian and what is Western were drawn at the tabloid practices in India and, perhaps, more broadly in the news media in India. The debates around this controversy largely circumambulated around the broader political debate about whether the Kareena Kapoor examples showed how there is now *too much Western influence* in the Indian newspapers that allows such pictures to be published.

(b) International news as heterotopia

In fact, when I asked the editors, sub-editors and designers at *Mid-Day* about the feedback they had received about the Kareena Kapoor case most of this feedback had been negative. While *Mid-Day* stayed unapologetic in the face of lawsuits and the allegations of doctoring the images, I was nonetheless told that because of this negative feedback, such articles would not be published in the future. As I was interested especially in how the people editors, sub-editors and designers working at *Mid-Day* commented on what they considered to be the politics of difference behind this example, I again semi-formally interviewed them about it. Here are commentaries about how the markers of difference and their relevance to the newsroom practices at *Mid-Day* was commented on. Sandra Almieda told me that while British tabloids are often copied in form, the Kareena Kapoor case demonstrated there are nonetheless limits to what can be done in India. She said:

Sun would publish a half-class women to help a dreary story. Daily Mail: we pick style. Like having pictures and large text. The Sun do not have any conservative news. Mid-Day also

Now is the Sun, which influences. Diary, centerspread, more gossipy. People are a lot more interested in entertainment, gossip about filmstars. You love to know what the rich and famous are doing ... an aspirational form that is borrowed.

You disassociate you from ... you tend to get moral of your own kind. We would have a huge outcry like in the case of Kareena Kapoor. We can be moral and conservative.

(Almieda 2005)

As we can see, the differences between what is Indian and what is not is commented on here in a way that identifies certain practices as Western (non-conservative). When

they are commented on as Indian, more moral and conservative standards apply.

Swarupa Dutt, when asked about these differences, commented similarly:

The foreign pop culture is extremely relevant to big cities in India, the metropolitan areas. Whatever people say, the stories are very aspirational everybody reads them. People in India look to the West for lifestyle, ideas, aesthetics. The notion of cool is shaped by the West. Mid-Day provides a platform (for three rupees). Everybody does not have access to the more expensive magazines such as Cosmopolitan ... also it is easier to talk about foreigners as they have different standards through which to go by. The Indians have much stricter standards. *The foreigners on the contrary allow things to be talked about that circumvent the self-censorship relating to Indians themselves.*

(Dutt 2005; my emphasis)

What is interesting about some of these commentaries is the significance given to Western popular culture as a place where things can be talked about that are not allowed to be talked in India except when foreigners are concerned. As Dutt said, "the foreigners on the contrary allow things to be talked about that circumvent the self-censorship relating to Indians themselves (Dutt 2005)." What thus emerges from these commentaries is that Western popular culture and examples such as the Dear Diana page potentially serve a kind of a *heterotopic* function in news production in India (at least during fieldwork in 2004/2005) where certain topics can be freely discussed (nudity, kissing etc.) when articulated as Western but different rules applied when they were articulated as Indian.

Foucault argued (2004b) that certain kinds of spaces/places exist where things are allowed which are forbidden in hegemonic discourse. Foucault called them *heterotopias*. These heterotopias can serve multiple functions in society. They can act as a kind of crisis spaces/places; as spaces/places where rituals such as honeymoon can occur; as spaces/places where acts of deviation can take place (asylum, red light

district); as spaces/places that juxtapose multiple meanings in one location (gardens); as spaces/places that exist outside of time (museums); and as spaces/places of ritual purification that one needs permission to access (temples) (Foucault 1984b: 46-37).

Foucault wrote that

places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy (1984b: 46-47)

What characterises heterotopias is that these spaces/places act as kind of mirrors through which multiple meanings can be refracted about the society that constructs them. I suggest here, therefore, in conclusion to this chapter that what the controversial examples from *Mid-Day* show is that international news, and especially Western popular culture news, serves a kind of heterotopic function within Indian discourse. In other words, if we accept that spaces and places do not necessarily have to be made up of real geographical spaces but themselves are discursively mediated (see Soja 1996, 2001; Lefebvre 1992), then international news, and the relationships underlying it, achieve a different theoretical status. International news in India becomes as much as how such heterotopic spaces are imagined in India as it does about international news itself. This shifts our analytical focus from theories of representation/interpretation towards how the very construction of the category of international news - and the unstable markers of difference between what is Indian

and what is not - is articulated in the international news coverage, sometimes in antagonistic ways, and the politics of difference presupposed by this relationship.

The Kareena Kapoor case thus caused controversy as it transgressed the line behind how these markers of difference have been constructed, showing ruptures in them and within the changing discourse in Indian society. Thus, while British tabloid standards are copied in form at *Mid-Day*, and Western popular culture news are important to *Mid-Day's* international news coverage, these are still distinguished from what are considered Indian news practices. These postcolonial markers of difference, ultimately, also influence the kinds of relationships that are formed between *Mid-Day* and international news (in the broadest sense possible) and how such practices of re-use of original news material takes place. We will look at these more in detail in Chapter 7.

6. Conclusion

This chapter examined different media-related practices at the biggest English-language tabloid in India, Mumbai-based *Mid-Day*. In particular, in the chapter I examined critically two assumptions made about international news in India: that is should be approached through its political significance and through the markers of difference constructed around what is Indian and what is not its international news coverage. By examining the media-related practices through which international news is re-used at *Mid-Day* at the level of the newsroom, the chapter thus provided a critical

reading of representation-based approaches to international news. In place of approaches that foreground the representations/interpretation of political meanings in international news coverage, the chapter therefore provided three theoretical detours through which we can potentially understand the relationship between Indian print news media and international news. The first of these was through the changing visual-text diagram that mediates how international news is re-used; the second is through the use of *Google* that mediates the probable or territorialised relationships/assemblages that are formed; and the last one is the understanding of international news as potentially inhabiting what Foucault called a heterotopic space/place in the discursive construction of what is considered Indian and what is not in international news coverage at *Mid-Day*.

6. VIRTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

For the seven last days the only people I've really met are my two maids - the cook and the cleaning lady. I've been telling them about the tsunami, and they've been telling me about the vegetables. its amazing to hear the world filtered through their world. we have so far to go and yet nowhere to go to. I'll be waiting for your post.

(An email sent by Rohit Gupta/Fadereu during the Asian tsunami)

Introduction | Framing the Problem | Deterritorialised relationships | Question of technology | Metaphysics of Communication (part II) | Conclusion

1. Introduction

The previous chapter looked at news production practices at the biggest tabloid in India. By examining media-related practices behind the re-use of international news at *Mid-Day*, that chapter suggested three theoretical detours from representation-based approaches to international news: the visual-textual diagram; the role of *Google*; and international news as a heterotopic space. This chapter, in turn, provides the third point of entry into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India. In particular, it looks at the media-related

practices at *Desimediabitch*, a Mumbai-based collective blog that gained global visibility during the Asian tsunami in 2004 when it published SMS text messages and eyewitness posts from the crisis-struck areas in Sri Lanka. These messages were, in turn, widely re-used and commented on by the mainstream media such as *The Guardian* and *The BBC Online* as examples of new kinds of relationships that have become possible in the international news environment because of changes brought about by new digital technologies of communication. The chapter thus asks: when we look at this celebrated example of citizen journalism, how do we best understand the relevance of new digital technologies for the international news environment? And if new digital technology has been given such a central role in mediating these relationships/assemblages, what kinds of cultural translation do debates on technology require when we look at countries such as India with different cultural, political, social histories and media environments?

The chapter has two aims. The first aim of this chapter is to situate the problem of cultural translation within the broader debates about the relevance of new digital technologies to the international news environment. The second aim is to further develop an alternative way to understand international news by situating my examples within a critical understanding of technology in media and cultural studies.

2. Framing the problem

On the morning of the 26th of December, 2004, a massive earthquake with the Richter magnitude of 9.1 - 9.3 occurred off the East coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. This was the third largest earthquake ever recorded. It lasted between 8 to 10

minutes, and triggered a series of waves that spread along the Indian Ocean basin. As the water lashed coastal communities in countries surrounding the Indian Ocean, the tsunami caused a series of waves that were at times over 30 meters high. Over 200,000 people were killed. See below the countries affected.³⁷

Picture 11: The countries affected by the Asian tsunami of 2004.



The Asian tsunami attracted an abundance of media commentary. It became especially known for its eyewitness accounts published on blogs and in other online media.³⁸ In research looking at alternative forms of international news, the Asian

37. The picture is from Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake_-_affected_countries.png [as consulted on the 27th of July, 2012).

38. There were course country-specific variations in such "citizen journalism" during the Asian tsunami. Aceh in Indonesia was so badly damaged that nothing came out from

tsunami of 2004 has also been commonly pinpointed as a key moment in the development of these alternative journalistic practices. Allan and Thorsten write that

while there is little danger that consensus is about to emerge any time soon ... more often than not, commentators will point to the gradual unfolding of an over-arching narrative that began to consolidate in the immediate aftermath of the South Asian tsunami of December 2004. This was a decisive moment, they contend, when citizen journalism became a prominent feature of the journalistic landscape. The remarkable range of first person accounts, camcorder video footage, mobile and digital camera snapshots – many of which were posted online through blogs and personal webpages – being generated by ordinary citizens on the scene ... was widely heralded for making a unique contribution to mainstream journalism's coverage. One newspaper headline after the next declared citizen journalism to be yet another startling upheaval, if not outright revolution, being ushered in by internet technology. News organisations, it was readily conceded, were in the awkward position of being dependent on this "amateur" material in order to tell the story of what was transpiring on the ground ... (2009: 18).

In another commentary, Outing suggest similarly that

the earthquake and tsunamis in South Asia and their aftermath represent a tipping point in so-called "citizen journalism." What September 11, 2001, was to setting off the growth and enhanced reputation of blogs, the December 2004 tsunamis are to the larger notion of citizen journalism (of which blogs are a part) ... Digital technologies - the Web, e-mail, blogs, digital cameras, camera phones - have evolved to the point where people on the scene share with professional journalists the ability to reach a wide audience, to tell and show the world what they saw and experienced. Where once disaster eyewitness photographs and videos turned up for widespread viewing only on news programs and in newspapers, today through e-mail, blogs, and a blogging infrastructure that spreads amateur news quickly and efficiently, they often find large audiences without the help or need of mainstream news outlets (2005: 1).

there because of complete devastation to the infrastructure. Thailand received a lot of Western coverage and especially video coverage because of the massive tourist industry there and the presence of many foreigners. Sri Lanka and, less so, South India were kind of in-between these two. The coverage in India and Sri Lanka was more local yet nonetheless written in English because of the English-speaking Sri Lankan journalists who worked there. Interestingly, when we measure the casualties of the Asian tsunami by the deaths per capita, some the worst affected countries were Sweden and Finland. This perhaps explains partially why the tsunami was so widely covered in the Western media. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countries_affected_by_the_2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake#Countries_suffering_major_casualties_and_damage [as accessed on July 31, 2012].

In this narrative, popular both in academic theorising and public commentary, the emergence of digital technologies (such as email, blogs and low-cost cameras and mobile phones) has enabled new ways international news is produced across the world. These alternative journalistic practices have been called by various names such as "grassroots journalism (Gilmor 2006)," "participatory journalism (Domingo et al 2008)", "networked journalism (Beckett and Mansell 2008)" or "user-generated content (Jenkins 2008)." Given that it has been given such significance as illustrative of the changes that have taken place in the international news environment, this chapter examines in detail one celebrated case of citizen journalism that took place during the Asian tsunami in 2004. This was the case of *Desimediabitch*, a Mumbai-based blog that gained global visibility when it published SMS text messages and blog posts from the crisis-struck areas in Sri Lanka and South India. These eyewitness accounts were widely re-used by the mainstream media across the world and commented on as examples of the emerging power of citizen journalism in providing alternatives to how international news is produced across the world.

I begin this chapter with two different stories about this example to illustrate some of the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems underlying how we understand the relevance of technologies of mediation to the international news environment and the relationships/assemblages that compose it.

(a) First story: A young journalist from Sri Lanka

On December 26, 2004, Sanjaya Senanayake, a young Sri Lankan journalist was working as a TV anchorman in Colombo, Sri Lanka.³⁹ He spent the first few hours following the Asian tsunami making phone interviews with TV and radio stations mostly in India where he had gone to college. This frustrated him. As the extent of the destruction dawned on him, he wanted to do more to help. He had friends unaccounted for and his grandmother's house had been converted into a makeshift refugee camp for hundreds of people left homeless by the waves. His grandmother had called and was in desperate need of food and supplies. The following morning, he and his friend, Isuru Pereira, a photojournalist from Colombo, loaded a van full of supplies and left towards Sanjaya's grandmother's house. On the way there, the two friends stopped in the city of *Galle* to see if any of their missing friends could be found in the hospital. As the *Karapitya* hospital was full of people and extremely chaotic, the two friends decided to split up in order to make the search quicker. After not finding anybody, Sanjaya wanted to call Isuru so that the two could meet outside and continue driving. When he did this, he noticed that the phone lines were down. He tried again - no connection. He then tried to send a SMS message to see if this worked instead. It did.

“I knew nothing about telecommunications” Sanjay recalled thinking at the moment.

39. This account is based on my email interview with Sanjaya Senanayake carried out on the 15th of May, 2006, as well as informal discussions with other members of *Desimediabitch*. I have edited it for readability from the email interviews and other discussions I have collected this account from.

“But I figured it requires less effort to send a SMS message than to connect a voice call.”

As the two continued driving, they realised that the coastal road had been badly damaged. As they were in a rush to drop off the supplies, they took the inland road. But when returning back to Colombo, the two decided to take the coastal road instead to see for themselves what the extent of the damage had been. They were shocked by what they saw.

“It was only then that we could see how bad things were,” Sanjay said.

“In most places we had to drive over the debris that had fallen across the road. Most areas were deserted and the smell of dead people just starting to decompose followed all along.”

Sanjaya wanted to tell his friends what he was seeing. But as he had found out earlier, phone lines were down. Only SMS messages went through. So Sanjaya collected a list of his closest friends in India and Sri Lanka on his mobile phone and started sending messages describing what he was seeing.

“So I wrote messages,” he remembers how it all started.

“I made a sending list on my phone and added people from Colombo as well as college friends from India to it. Some sent replies asking for more information. Some sent replies offering me their condolences, as if we all hadn't lost someone.”

One of his college friends from India, a journalist by the name of Sharon Fernandes, received these messages. Sharon had recently begun collaborating on a

Mumbai-based group blog, *Desimediabitch*, which was quickly gaining popularity amongst young tech-savvy Indian and South Asian journalists. Receiving these SMS messages, Sharon wanted to see if these could be published online for other people to see. She asked the founder-editor of the blog, a Mumbai-based journalist and writer by the name of Rohit Gupta, if the messages could be published. Rohit agreed. And for the next few days, Sanjaya and Isuru kept on traveling across the tsunami-struck areas in Sri Lanka and sending SMS text messages and writing longer blog posts whenever internet was available.

“Sharon (aka Scribbleamus) asked me if she could post them. I said OK. And she did. And I kept sending them to her, and to everyone else. It wasn't planned," Sanjaya recalls what motivated him to publish these stories.

"I just had to tell someone what I was seeing. It was too overwhelming to not talk about. Where it went from there, well, you know the story."

(b) Story two: BBC News Online

On the 30th of December, 2004, four days after the Asian tsunami, *BBC News Online* published an article titled "Web logs aid Disaster Recovery."⁴⁰ Below is a screenshot of the article as it appeared on December 30, 2004, at 17:00 GMT.

Picture 12: Screenshot of the BBC News Online article

40. The full article can be accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4135687.stm> [last accessed on July 24, 2012]. It was also a radio programme on the *BBC Radio*. The article is by the BBC Technology correspondent, Clark Boyd.

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Last Updated: Thursday, 30 December, 2004, 17:00 GMT

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Web logs aid disaster recovery

By Clark Boyd
Technology correspondent

Some of the most vivid descriptions of the devastation in southern Asia are on the internet - in the form of web logs or blogs.

Bloggers have been offering snapshots of information from around the region and are also providing some useful information for those who want to help.

Indian writer Rohit Gupta edits a group blog called Dogs without Borders.

When he created it, the site was supposed to be a forum to discuss relations between India and Pakistan.

But in the wake of Sunday's tsunami, Mr Gupta and his fellow bloggers switched gears.

Text report

They wanted to blog the tsunami and its aftermath.

One Sri Lankan blogger in the group goes by the online name Morquendi.

The South-East Asia Earth

The SEA-EAT blog for short, news and information about

Thursday, December 30, 2004

North East Srilanka - Relief Efforts

-- From a Blog Reader --
(North East Srilanka is not under Government Control)

Urgent Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance
8000 Dead and 500,000 Displaced in northeast of the Island

Blogs are proving useful to people wanting to help

TSUNAMI DISASTER In Depth

KEY STORIES

- 'Scant help' for tsunami victims
- Mourners mark anniversary
- India remembers victims
- Swedes hold ceremonies
- Somalia's slow recovery

ONE YEAR ON

Still struggling
Sri Lanka's fishing industry remains in disarray a year after the tsunami



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HAVE YOUR SAY

Tsunami: One year later

This *BBC News Online* article described the relevance of alternative forms of international news such as blogs during the Asian tsunami. It begins by telling the readers how "some of the most vivid descriptions of destruction in southern Asia are on the Internet - in the form of weblogs or blogs (Boyd 2004)." It then continues by describing the new kinds of relationships these blogs are facilitating in the international news environment. A blog based in Mumbai, India, is specifically mentioned as an example in the article:

Indian writer Rohit Gupta edits a group blog called Dogs without Borders.⁴¹

When he created it, the site was supposed to be a forum to discuss relations between India and Pakistan.

... But in the wake of Sunday's tsunami, Mr Gupta and his fellow bloggers switched gears.

One Sri Lankan blogger goes by the online name Morquendi.

With internet services disrupted by the tsunami, Morquendi started sending SMS text messages via cell from the affected areas of Sri Lanka.

"We started publishing the SMSes, says Mr. Gupta

"Morquendi was describing scenes like 1600 bodies washes up on a shore and people burying, and burying and burying them. People digging holes with their hands. And this was coming through a SMS message."

"We didn't have visual accounts in the radio, on TV or on the print media."

(Boyd 2004).

In the article, the writer Mr. Gupta attributes the popularity of these SMS messages and eyewitness accounts to two factors. The first was the immediacy and power of these accounts. The second was the lack of mainstream news material - especially visual accounts - from the crisis-struck areas. This lack of mainstream media coverage, he comments, caused readers to look for alternatives online. Quoting Mr. Gupta again, the article then gives some more examples of such "first hand accounts" that became widely read during the Asian tsunami. The article says:

Soon, thousands of web users from around the world were logging on to read

41. I will call Dogs Without Borders by the name *Desimediabitch* if not specially referred to as something else. This was the name the people behind the blog called the site (among the many other variations such as CSF, Chiennes Sans Frontiers). It was also reflected in its blog address using the free Blogger publishing platform: desimediabitch.blogspot.com. The site is defunct since August 2005 and I, as far as I know, have the only archival copy of it.

Morquendi's first hand accounts.

...Mr Gupta says the power of Morquendi's text messages blogs was palpable.

"He was running around, looking for friends, burying bodies, carrying bodies,"
Mr Gupta says of Morquendi.

"I can't even begin to imagine the psychological state he was in when he was
sending us reports, and doing the relief work at the same time.

"He was caught between being a journalist and being a human being."

(Boyd 2004)

The BBC News Online article also provided further links to other blogs where people could access the original news material that is cited in the article online, including a direct link to *Desimediabitch*. Finally, the article concludes by providing overall commentary on why such new relationships have become possible in the international news environment. The article says that "news spread quickly on weblogs, a phenomenon that helps bloggers expand their audience and scope (Boyd 2004)."

(c) "I'm just the average Joe actually ..."

Starting this chapter with a comparison between two different stories of the same event illustrates the kinds of closures given to contingent media-related practices during crises such as the Asian tsunami. When I asked Sanjaya/Morquendi about his relationship to the mainstream international news media that widely re-used his SMS messages and blog posts during the time of the Asian tsunami, he commented the following way:

I did not talk to anyone from the *Guardian* or *NYT*. That was Rohit blowing my image up :) He's responsible for the image makeover. I'm just the average joe actually. *Times of India* plagiarised from the blog and misquoted. Bastards.

Anyways, the *BBC* (BBC radio mostly) were interested in talking about alternative communication and SMS and blogging. Had a few very interesting interviews with them. One Canadian radio show did a discussion with me on alternative communication. Those were the only ones that mattered.

Fox TV from the USA kept me on the line for 10 minutes to ask me one really stupid question. NDTV (India) still seems to think I'm some kind of expert on Sri Lanka. The moment something big happens here they ask me for my comment (I just think my friend at NDTV is too bored to find real experts and just passes around my phone number). (My relationship with NDTV, Headlines Today and CNBC in India, in terms of doing phone ins, has been as a journalist and has little do with the SMS or the blogging.)

A Jamaican radio station found my number online and did an interview. A bit about what it was like, a bit about what I felt like. Semi-personal, semi-spiritual. I remember this one because of the way the RJ kept telling me how sorry she was every two minutes and the gasping each time I threw in a figure.

That's about all I remember. It was a bit of a blur those first few weeks. I only took calls in the night. Refused to give any interviews to anyone on the phone

(Gutanake 2005)

This chapter looks in detail at this much-discussed example of citizen journalism that took place during the Asian tsunami. Moreover, given the debates around the political significance of new digital media technologies and online forms of news (see Shirky 2009; Morozov 2012), the chapter asks how we can best avoid over-interpreting importance given to new digital technologies when we look at these examples of alternative news practice in the international news environment in countries such as India and Sri Lanka? In other words, how do we avoid these alternative journalistic practices from becoming another simulacrum in our analysis: something that potentially bears more resemblance to the discourse of technology popular in the academic and public debates in the West rather than the different and often

contingent media-related practices that I observed during the Asian tsunami?

Chapter 3 suggested that the concept of "media-related practices (Hobart 2010)" provided a possible method to look critically at the problem of cultural translation discussed in this thesis. This is because this concept takes seriously both the researcher's as well as the practitioner's understandings of any given set of activities. In his account of media-related practices, Hobart asks that on

what grounds do we have for assuming the understandings of the subjects of study are commensurate with the researcher's, when anthropological research suggests this is usually not the case? And how is the researcher to know the significance to participants of their practices (2010: 60)?

As I was in the position during fieldwork to observe what went on behind-the-scenes at the Mumbai-based blog, *Desimediabitch*, this chapter examines different ways this "question of technology" is given meaning both in academic accounts as well as by the participants involved. The first section of the chapter provides a descriptive account of the kinds of "virtual" or "deterritorialised" relationships/assemblages through which SMS messages and blog posts produced in Sri Lanka were first mediated by a blog in India and then re-used by the mainstream media in the US and the UK. In the second section, I then position this example within the broader theoretical discussions about the relevance of new digital technologies for the international news environment. In the final section, I look at some alternative ways we can understand the cultural translation of digital technology in Mumbai, India.

3. Deterritorialised relationships

The first section provides a chronological account of the relationships/assemblages that were formed during the Asian tsunami and the media-related practices that made these possible. On the evening of the Asian Tsunami, at 9:16 PM (Mumbai time), 26th of December, 2004, the first post on the tsunami appeared on the Mumbai-based collective blog *Desimediabitch*. The post titled “Asia Quake: Morquendi in Sri Lanka” said the following (cited here in full):

Asia Quake: Morquendi in Sri Lanka.

Don't have much time online. Been running around like a madman. Running from rising waters (carrying a dog!), trying to file stories minute by minute, doing phonos for NDTV and 2 local channels, finding out about friends, keeping an SMS news service going etc...The phones were down for most of the day. (SMS switchers were working, hence the SMS news service)

A part of me wants to say fuck you to being a journalist and go out there and get involved in the aid work. Carry bags of food to the people who need it. But another part keeps saying my work is here. Making calls and making sure people stay informed.

Seen things today I never thought I'd see. Seen things I don't ever want to see. How do you ask a question from a father who saw his 4 year old child being dragged off into the sea and be sensitive about it? Do you say sorry? Does that cut it?

2 friends dead. They were on a romantic beach holiday. I like to believe they died holding each other's hands. 2 more missing. Presumed dead. Find a vehicle in about an hour and head off down South to look for them, or identify their bodies.

If anyone had told me the day was going to be like this maybe I'd have stayed in bed.

Fuckall situation huh? Wonder if I'm doing the right thing.

posted by Morquendi at 9:16 PM | 30 comments

This blog post described the activities of a journalist with the online name of *Morquendi*. It described how *Morquendi* had been trying to help people while also trying

to fulfil his journalistic obligations after the waves had struck Sri Lanka. It also described his efforts to set up a SMS news service through which he could inform his friends about what was going on. As the phone lines were down this was the only way to get information across quickly in Sri Lanka.

This blog post was just one of many published about the tsunami by this Mumbai-based blog. The following morning, the second post was published at 10:29 AM (Mumbai time), on the 27th of December, 2004. Titled "SMSes from Sri Lanka" it said the following:⁴²

SMSes from Sri Lanka

Scribbleamus received these SMSes from Sanjay (Morquendi) last night:

I'm standing on the Galle road in Aluthgama looking at 5 ton trawlers tossed onto the road. Scary shit.

Found 5 of my friends. 2 dead. Of the 5, 4 are back in Colombo. The last one is stranded because of a broken bridge. Broken his leg. But he's alive. Made ...

..contact. He got swept away but swam ashore. Said he's been burying people all day. Just dragging them off the beach and digging holes with his hands. Go..

..ing with gear to get him tomorrow morning. He sounded disturbed. Guess grave digging does that to you.

Fadereu | 10:29AM | 0 comments

42. I have kept the formatting and the length of the post the same here as was in the original posting. The name of Sanjaya is misspelled. What is interesting is that this same spelling mistake was reproduced by all later re-uses of these SMS messages.

This post, in turn, was by a blogger named *Fadereu* who described a series of SMS text messages that had been sent to the blog the previous evening. In the post, these SMS messages were quoted *ad verbatim* with the original formatting kept in place. As we can see above, these SMS messages, once again, provided descriptions of what has been taking place in the worst struck areas in Sri Lanka.

Following these initial posts, more than 50 posts and SMS messages were published at *Desimediabitch* about the Asian tsunami. I will focus here only on these two first posts as they became the most widely re-used across the world. For instance, soon after the initial posts on *Desimediabich*, on December 27, 2004, at 08:56 AM (San Francisco time) *BoingBoing*, a popular US-based blog, published its first post about the Asian tsunami.⁴³ This post titled "Bloggers in SE Asia cover quake and tsunami disaster" looked at the different responses online to the Asian tsunami.⁴⁴ In this post, *BoingBoing* provides commentary and links to the different online coverage of the Asian tsunami that was emerging in the aftermath of the tragedy. As was the convention with blogs such as *BoingBoing* during my fieldwork, the readers are also able to give recommendations of links to other relevant online sources in the *BoingBoing* posts. Further down the post, the following link has been recommended about where to find more online news about the Asian tsunami:⁴⁵

43. During the time of my fieldwork in Mumbai, India, in 2004/2005, *BoingBoing* (www.boingboing.net) was the most popular weblog. It had won all the awards given to blogs at the time such as the *Bloggies* (2004/2005) awards. According to its own open statistics page, at the time of fieldwork it has anywhere from between 500,000 to 6,000,000 page views on its site daily. This made it one of the most popular online sites during fieldwork.

44. You can see the original post (with a different look) here <http://boingboing.net/2004/12/27/bloggers-in-se-asia.html> [as accessed on 27.07.2012].

45. Note: Whenever a word is underlined here when citing blog posts here, this refers to a

Cameron Sinclair of the non-profit group Architecture of Humanity tells BoingBoing, “Two members of the WorldChanging.org crew live close by the tsunami disaster and are reporting on whats going on: [Link](#)

(Jardin 2004a).

Another commonplace practice in blogs during my fieldwork was that the text of the post was routinely updated whenever new information became available. This was done by providing some reference points to where the page has been updated. When we look further down the initial *BoingBoing* post, we can see an update has been provided here. This includes links that a reader has submitted where more news can be accessed. The update says:

Update: Alex Steffen of [worldchanging.com](#) says,

“Some South Asian bloggers, including a couple of my colleagues from Worldchanging, have set up a blog tracking relief efforts and how folks can contribute: [tsunamhelp.blogspot.com](#). We're also going to be posting more throughout the day on [Worldchanging](#). This is not “just” one of the worst disasters of the decade, one where every bit of help will be needed to save lives and rebuild, it's also a call to change the way access to basic science is shared on our planet. Most of the tens of thousands of people who died yesterday might have been saved with better scientific, communications and warning systems.”

(Jardin 2004)

This update and the link that is provided on direct readers of *BoingBoing* to another popular blog called *Worldchanging*.⁴⁶ When we now trace this link back to initial

hyperlink to another page.

46. *Worldchanging* ([www.worldchanging.com](#)), like *BoingBoing* was, during my fieldwork, another popular award winning US-based blog. Like *BoingBoing*, *Worldchanging* was also enormously popular, and – according to its co-founder Alex Steffen - read by around 800,000 people every month around the time of my fieldwork. It had also won numerous online awards such as the *UTNE Independent Press Award* and has been nominated for a *Webby Awards* for best collective blog (losing out to *BoingBoing*), as well as for the *Bloggy Award* (again losing out to *BoingBoing*). It had a global team of about 20 writers based all over the world (including two in India) who focused on themes centred around its name - making the world better in one way or another. Similar to

Worldchanging post, we can see how it has linked to a post published on September 27, 2004, at 04:59 AM (San Francisco time, five hours before the first *BoingBoing* post).⁴⁷ This post has been written by an Indian contributor to the blog by the name of Rohit Gupta. Rohit Gupta has written an overview of the first hours following the tsunami from an Indian perspective. The post titled “Kayakumari Collaborates” starts with the following lines: "While we face tough times ahead, I am glad that some Worldchanging stories can be reported, even in the face of the tsunami tragedy (Gupta 2004a)." More importantly, when we look down the page, we see how the writer of the post, Rohit Gupta, has provided an additional link to an outside blog. This link is introduced with the following words: “one of my media friends is a TV show host, and is writing live accounts of the frenzy on our community blog while rushing around in search of loved ones (Gupta 2004a).” The link that is provided takes the reader to *Desimediabitch*, and especially to the initial posting by *Morquendi* that we have already cited in full.

Furthermore, when we look at this *Worldchanging* post we can now see how the original *BoingBoing* site has re-used a lot of the original news material published on *Worldchanging* ad verbatim on its update. The second post/update on *BoingBoing* about the tsunami, timed 09:02:45 AM (San Francisco time), on the 27th of December, 2004 (a little more than an hour after the first posting) has now re-used the original text and picture by Rohit Gupta on the *Worldchanging* site. Moreover, if we now look at

BoingBoing, a big part of the practices of *Worldchanging* consisted of linking to other weblogs and online resources that explain or work on issues related to its key themes.

47. You can see the original article archived here <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/001806.html> [as accessed last on 27.7.2012].

the new update on *BoingBoing* we can see how Rohit Gupta has been quoted and his collaborative blog has been explicitly mentioned in the post by *BoingBoing*. The update says the following: "Rohit Gupta says 'one of my media friends is a TV show host in Sri Lanka, and is writing live accounts of the frenzy on our community. Morquendi writes ..." In addition, the full text by *Morquendi* (published initially on *Desimediabitch*) has now been re-used ad verbatim on the second *BoingBoing* post. The insert on the update reads:

A part of me wants to say fuck you to being a journalist and go out there and get involved in the aid work. Carry bags of food to the people who need it. But another part of me says my work is here. Making calls and making sure people stay informed. Seen things today I never thought I'd see. Seen things I don't ever want to see. How do you ask a question from a father who saw his 4-year old child being dragged off into the sea and be sensitive about it. Do you say sorry? Does that cut it? 2 friends dead. They were on a romantic beach holiday. I like to believe they died holding each others hands. 2 more missing. Presumed dead. Find a vehicle in about an hour and head down South to look for them, or identify their bodies. If anyone had told me my day was going to be like this maybe I'd have stayed in bed

(Jardin 2004b).

Following these initial posts about the Asian tsunami, both *BoingBoing* and *Worldchanging* kept updating their sites with more links to the online tsunami coverage where the original posts from *Desimediabitch* were mentioned. For instance, at 21:17 PM (San Francisco time), on the 27th of December, about 12 hours after the first post, another post titled "SMSes from Sri Lanka, and a call for help with live bloggers" provided a more detailed descriptions of such eyewitness accounts during the Asian tsunami.⁴⁸ See below a screenshot of the third posting about the Asian tsunami by *BoingBoing* where the original SMS blog posts and text messages published on

48. You can see the original article archived at <http://boingboing.net/2004/12/27/smses-from-sri-lanka.html> [as accessed last on 27.7.2012]

Desimediabitch have now been re-used and commented on in more detail.

Picture 13: Third update on the tsunami on BoingBoing

boingboing
A DIRECTORY OF WONDERFUL THINGS

suggest a link | defeat censorware | rss | archives | store | mark | cory | david | xeni | john

Search Boing Boing

Sponsored by:

- Quikbooks
A DIRECTORY OF WONDERFUL HOTELS
- Boing Boing STORE!
- WIRED
BRINGING BACK THE BRONTOSAURUS
- ART BY MARK F.
- LAB NOTES
Research from Berkeley Engineering
- elle's Searchblo
n the intersection of search

Monday, December 27, 2004

SMSes from Sri Lanka, and a call for help with live blog

Earlier today, we posted [a first-person account](#) from tsunami eyewitness Sanjay (aka "Morquendi"). He's a blogger and TV producer who lives and works in Sri Lanka, one of the areas hardest hit by the disaster. Throughout last night -- as he participated in emergency rescue and relief efforts -- Sanjay text-messaged live observations to his co-editors at the collaborative blog *ChiensSansFronteres*. Snip:

- # I'm standing on the Galle road in Aluthgama and looking at 5 ton trawlers tossed onto the road. Scary shit.
- # Found 5 of my friends, 2 dead. Of the 5, 4 are back in Colombo. The last one is stranded because of a broken bridge. Broken his leg. But he's alive. Made...
- # ..contact. He got swept away but swam ashore. Said he's been burying people all day. Just dragging them off the beach and digging holes with his hands. Go..
- # ..ing with gear to get him tommorrow morning. He sounded disturbed. Guess grave digging does that to you.

[Link](#) (Thank you, [Rohit Gupta](#))

Sponsored by:

- SUICIDEGI
- Tom my f

What has happened here - within the scope of 12 hours - is that the initial links provided by Rohit Gupta have been now re-used as full text by *BoingBoing*. When we read through this update, we can see how a lot of the original news material first published on *Desimediabitch* have now been included here in the update without any changes made.

Given the popularity of both *BoingBoing* and *Worldchanging* among journalists in the US and the UK, these original SMS messages and eyewitness accounts (blog posts) became widely re-used by mainstream media in different parts of the world as examples to describe the online news coverage during the Asia tsunami. When I interviewed the Deputy News Editor Jane Perrone at *The Guardian* about how she had found out about these sites, she said she did not remember specifically how this had happened during but mentioned the popular blogs she was reading at the time. She said that "certainly a lot of the stuff we linked to and quoted on *Guardian Unlimited* was found in the usual manner: Technorati, links from blogs in the region we already knew about, links found on one blog to another blog, Google, blogdex, emails from users etc. (Perrone 2006)." However, when we look at the Tsunami coverage provided by *the Guardian* the material is re-used that we saw in *BoingBoing* and *Worldchanging*. The following article in *The Guardian* titled "Scenes from a disaster" published on the 30th of December, 2004, discussed the online news coverage during the Asian Tsunami:⁴⁹

49. This article appeared on p2 of the G2 section of the Guardian on Thursday, 30 December, 2004. It was published on guardian.co.uk at 11.36 GMT on Thursday 30 December 2004. You can see a copy of it at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/dec/30/tsunami2004.features11> [as accessed last on 27.7.2012]

Picture 14: Guardian tsunami coverage

The screenshot shows the Guardian Unlimited website interface. At the top left is the Guardian Unlimited logo. To its right is a box labeled 'THE LATEST NEWS'. Below the logo are links for 'Read today's paper', 'Sign in', and 'Register'. To the right of these is a search bar with the text 'Go to: Guardian Unlimited home' and a 'Go' button. Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'UK', 'Business', 'Audio', 'World dispatch', 'The Wrap', 'Newsblog', 'Talk', 'Search', 'The Guardian', 'World News guide', 'Arts', 'Special reports', 'Columnists', 'Technology', 'Help', and 'Quiz'. The main content area features a blue box on the left with the text 'Special report Indian Ocean tsunami disaster'. To its right is the main headline 'Scenes from a disaster' with a sub-headline 'Thursday December 30, 2004 The Guardian'. Below this is a paragraph of text: 'In the days since the Asian earthquake and tsunami, many of those affected have turned to the internet to share their very personal stories of survival, helplessness and loss. Here is a selection of accounts from the worst-hit areas'. Below the text is a search bar with the text 'Search this site' and a 'Go' button. To the right of the search bar is a section titled 'Go to ...' with a link to 'Special report: Indian Ocean tsunami' and a link to 'Indian Ocean tsunami: archived articles'. Below this is a section titled 'In this section' with a link to 'America's aid iceberg' and a link to 'Britain demands return of unspent tsunami aid'. To the right of the 'In this section' section is a paragraph of text: 'Don't have much time online. Been running around like a madman. Running from rising waters (carrying a dog!), trying to file stories minute by minute ... finding out about friends, keeping an SMS news service going etc ... The phones were down for most of the day. (SMS switchers were working, hence the SMS news service.)' and another paragraph: 'A part of me wants to say fuck you to being a journalist and go out there and get involved in the aid work. Carry bags of food to the people who need it. But another part keeps saying my work is here. Making calls and making sure people stay informed.'

This article was published both in its print and online versions. It provided examples of what it called "a selection of accounts from the worst-hit areas" during the Asian Tsunami as well as commentary about them. What is interesting about this *Guardian* article is that, when we look at the news material that has been re-used in it, we can see exactly the same SMS text messages and eyewitness accounts that we have already seen in *BoingBoing* and *Worldchanging*.⁵⁰ Five of these examples given are from

50. The Guardian has also included here another paragraph into the post by Morquendi on Desimediabitch that was not in the original posting. The last add-on paragraph actually

Desimediabitch where this original material was first published. The SMSes by *Morquendi* are re-used once again *ad verbatim* (spelling mistakes included). What has thus taken place is the following sequence of re-uses and relationships that made this instance of "citizen journalism" possible:

1. *Morquendi* published blog posts and sends SMS messages;
2. *Desimediabitch* publishes the SMS messages and blog posts;
3. These posts are followed by Rohit Gupta's commentary on the tsunami published on *Worldchanging*. He provides here a link to the original news material on *Desimediabitch*;
4. *Worldchanging* then recommends this post to *BoingBoing* where links to best online news material is being collected;
5. *BoingBoing* then links first to the *Worldchanging* news material about the tsunami and then, in its updates, also to the original posts at *Desimediabitch*, which it then re-uses and provides further links to it;
6. Because of its popularity of these two US-based blogs, especially among tech-savvy journalists, the mainstream media reads about these original posts, re-uses them as well as provides links to the original posts published first on *Desimediabitch*. These links then attract thousands of readers to this Mumbai-based group blog, which

was from the comments through which *Morquendi* replied back to some of the people who had wished him well on the original post. So what the Guardian has done here is edit the original post to add the end paragraph and, in addition to minor grammar changes (2 become two), has edited away two sentences from the original post.

later becomes commented on by the mainstream media, and in academic accounts, as an example of the power of alternative forms of journalism during the Asian tsunami in 2004.

To simplify these media-related practices and relationships I have outlined in this section, the following table puts them into a chronological order explaining the multiple instances of re-use and linking that took place following the Asian tsunami between Sri Lanka, India and the UK and US.

TABLE 1: THE CHRONOLOGY OF POSTINGS DURING THE ASIAN TSUNAMI

DATE	TIME	POST TOPIC	LINK TO	AUTHOR/SITE
26.12	9:16PM (Mumbai time).	“Asia Quake: Morquendi in Sri Lanka” – the first post in Desimediabitch by Morquendi		Morquendi (Desimediabitch)
27.12	10:29 AM (Mumbai time).	“SMSes from Sri Lanka” – first SMS text message post on (Worldchanging)		Fadereu/Rohit Gupta (Desimediabitch)

27.12	4:59 AM (SF time)	“Kanyakumari Collaborates” – the first article by Rohit Gupta with link to Desimediabitch	Desimediabitch	Rohit Gupta (Worldchanging)
27.12	8:06 AM (SF time)	“Bloggers in SE Asia cover quake and tsunami disaster” – the Worldchanging article by Rohit Gupta cited and linked to	Worldchanging	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)
27.12	9:02 AM (SF time)	“Update on Tsunami from bloggers in India and Sri Lanka” – live accounts of Morquendi cited for the first time and a link provided	Worldchanging/ Desimediabitch	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)
27.12	14:12 PM (SF time)	“Tsunami blog coverage: updates” – Worldchanging updates linked to	Worldchanging / Desimediabitch	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)

27.12	21:17 PM (SF time)	“SMSes from Sri Lanka, and a call for help with live blog” – SMS text messages and eyewitness accounts by Morquendi and Lastnode cited and linked to	Desimediabitch	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)
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Furthermore, when I look at some of the behind-the-scenes communication between the three key people from *Desimediabitch*, *BoingBoing* and *Worldchanging*, similar re-use and commentary took place. Below is a chart of the email communication that took place. I have not provide details of the wordings of the emails in order to protect the privacy of the people involved in this exchange (these are all in Indian time as they are taken from Rohit Gupta's private email):⁵¹

51. Given my close collaboration with Rohit Gupta and his belief in openness, when I asked him how he promoted the sites online, he told me "go look yourself." Rohit thus gave me the passwords to his personal email. I have only cited here the broad topics of these emails as I do not want to encroach on the privacy of the other participants in these conversations. There are similar emails also between *New York Times* and *BBC Online News* that involved the same people involved here, albeit in different configurations. These are all in Indian time as they are taken from Rohit Gupta's private email. The time difference in minus 12.5 hours so they closely correspond to the timing of the posts.

TABLE 2: THE SEQUENCE OF EMAILS AND COMMUNICATION BEHIND THE POSTINGS

DATE	TIME	SUBJECT	FROM	TO
December 27	8:56 AM	Suggests site for BoingBoing about Tsunami coverage	Alex Steffen (Worldchanging)	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)
December 27	12:42 PM	Asks for contact information about Morquendi	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)	Alex Steffen (Worldchanging)
December 27	12:45 PM	Sends the contact information email to Rohit Gupta	Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)	Alex Steffen (Worldchanging) Rohit Gupta
December 28	4:31 AM	Rohit responds	Rohit Gupta	Alex Steffen (Worldchanging) Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)

December 28	6:10 AM	Gives more information about what is happening at <i>Desimediabitch</i>	Rohit Gupta	Alex Steffen (Worldchanging) Xeni Jardin (BoingBoing)
December 28	6:11 AM	Thanks Rohit	Xeni Jardin	Rohit Gupta Alex Steffen

4. Question of technology

The previous section provided a descriptive account of the different kinds of media-related practices through which a series of unlikely relationships/assemblages were formed during the Asian tsunami. As noted in Chapter 4, it has been widely argued that developments in digital technologies of communication have enabled new kinds of relationships/assemblages in the international news environment. Cottle (2009), for instance, notes that "today's world news ecology also incorporates established and emergent non-Western news formations and a plethora of alternative news forms and outlets generating news contra-flows and/or circulating oppositional views or voices - from the "rest to the West" (2009: xi)." The examples I have started this chapter with are just one among many examples of such alternative journalistic practices or contra-flows that many argue challenge the earlier Euro-American hegemony on international news. Here journalists from Sri Lanka and India, partially

aided by mobile phones and new online publishing tools such as blogs (new in 2004/2005), provided original news material for the rest of the world to re-use. Given this, how do I then best theoretically approach these kinds of alternative practices in international news that have arguably become possible because of new digital technologies of communication? In other words, when I look at this example from the Asian tsunami more closely, how do I account for this "question of technology" that has been given such an important role as an explanatory agent for the changes that have taken place?

(a) Technological determinism revisited

These questions raise broader theoretical issues about technological determinism. That is, we need to ask whether new digital technologies such as mobile phones or online forms of communications such as blogs have agency in explaining these media-related practices during the Asian tsunami or whether they play some other contributing role? Debates on technological determinism have a long history in media and cultural studies. The argument has been about the degree to which does the form of technology used (such as television or the Internet) possess causal agency in driving its use and social change around it (see McLuhan 1964). The debates have fluctuated between strong determinists granting more agency to the technology itself and others who have foregrounded the social use of technology over the form of the technology itself. For instance, in one of the most influential criticism of the technological determinism thesis, Williams (1993), one of the founding figures of British cultural studies, advocated a more contextualised understanding of the social

settings into which different technologies are embedded. Similarly, anthropological work has criticised technology-driven accounts for not being able to account for the cultural differences in how media technology is used and appropriated in different parts of the world (see Ginsburg and Abu-Lughod 2002; Askew and Wilk 2002). In international news theory this debate has also touched on the technological determinism argument, focusing largely on the question of what has been the significance of new digital technologies of communication to the changes that have taken place. Cottle and Ashton (1999) note that these debates continue rehash the debates around technological determinism. They write

it is understandable that media commentators, and even some academics, can become dazzled by the latest 'high-tech' developments with their ever accelerating speed of supersession and breath-taking communication capabilities - globally, we often hear, such technical capabilities have collapsed both time and space (or at least for some of us). Today it is easy to mistake technology for an independent causal force determining both the pace and form of change rather than as a 'creature of our own making' - a creature, that is, which inhabits, was born out of, remains dependent on, and is 'socialised' and put to work within determinant social environments. (1999: 23).

As these debates around technological determinism have been discussed extensively elsewhere (see Feenberg 1991, 1999) I will not provide a full overview here. Where these debates, however, are relevant to my argument about the alternative relationships/assemblages observed during the Asia tsunami is when we link them together with more post-structuralist readings of technology that have complicated the debates around technological determinism. As these emergent new "materialist" readings of technology are relevant for explaining the media-related practices I observed during the Asian tsunami, I will provide a brief overview of them in order to link them to the theoretical concerns of this chapter.

Media theorists such as Kittler and philosophers of technology such as Stiegler have argued that questions of technology should not be reduced to binary debates between technological determinism or their social use. Rather, they argue, these questions underpin the foundations of Western thought. Kittler (1992, 1998), for instance, has argued (following Foucault) that media technologies always-already form the *a priori* horizon for how knowledge is produced in any given era. Media technologies such as typewriters or computers have always formed the condition of possibility for certain types of knowledges to be produced, and they cannot be thus thought of as separate from human culture. Stiegler, in turn, has argued that a philosophical reading of technology helps deconstructs the simple binaries between what is human and what is inorganic, what is culture and what is material technology, that has underpinned the debates on technology. He argues that questions of technology, or technics, always-already forms the horizon for what it means to be human and the different kinds of ideas and practices this has historically allowed (Stiegler 1998, 2008, 2010). Hansen (2006) comments on this critical tradition of technology the following way:

there is simply no such thing as technical determinism, not because technics don't determine our situation, but because they don't (and cannot) do so from a position that is outside of culture; likewise, there is no such thing as cultural constructivism -understood as a rigid, blanket privileging of ideology or cultural agency - not because culture doesn't construct ideology and experience, but because it doesn't (and cannot) do so without depending on technologies that are beyond the scope of its intentionality, of the very agency of cultural ideology" (2006: 299).

Hansen further argues that the theoretical tensions between these two approaches - what he calls the oscillation between the materiality and phenomenology of media -

breaks apart any easy arguments underpinning the technological determinism thesis or its criticisms. He writes that "this revelation of media's fundamental irreducibility underscores the insufficiency of any theoretical stance that fails to interrogate the oscillation itself, that remains content to treat it solely and simply as a radical challenge to hermeneutics and not as the very configuration of the admittedly complex condition for whatever hermeneutics might be in our world today (Hansen 2006: 28)." This kind of new materialist work on technology thus explicitly moves away from simple binaries between technology and social use into a different theoretical terrain where technology, discourse and construction of subjectivity are intertwined. It also explicitly moves away from simple representations/interpretation-based understandings of media technologies into a more materialist understanding of technology, communication and information and the media-related practices these potentially facilitate.

By positioning the examples from the Asian tsunami in the context of these post-structuralism readings of media technology, I argue in this chapter, this provides me with an alternative way to understand the examples observed during the Asian tsunami. In particular, I will introduce two new materialist readings of media technology that will be used to explain some of the media-related practices observed. The first is the concept of "virtual relationships" developed in Terranova's critical reading of information theory. The second is the appropriation of Deleuze's concept of "machinic phylum" by Fuller in his work on pirate radio. Both of these theories provide ways to explain the viewpoints of the practitioners who were involved with the Asian tsunami in Mumbai, India. Finally, I will argue, that while such accounts reflect the viewpoints of the practitioners involved with the Asian tsunami, these

theories still need to be always culturally translated to the context in which these examples took place in Mumbai, India.

(b) Communication as "virtual" relationships

In Chapter 4, I used the example of *Google* to illustrate how "probable relationships" (Terranova 2004a) or deterritorialised assemblages (DeLanda 2006) were formed at *Mid-Day* through the use of new digital technologies. Using Terranova's re-reading of communication theory, I argued that these were the kinds of relationships whose purpose was to clear the field of communication from noise by providing ways through which international news could be routinely accessed. Terranova notes that such an approach

does not really imply the ultimate influence of a technological determination, but more a return to the minimum condition of communication as such. *The minimum condition for communication is contact* – a temporary suspension of the multitude of tiny and obscure perceptions out of which information emerges as a kind of fleeting clarity, as if a space had been successfully cleared. It does not matter who the sender or receiver are, whether they are machines, animals, bacteria, genetic sequences, or human organisms. Reason and meaning, dialectics and persuasion, truth and falsehood are all temporarily evacuated from the scene. There is no longer an interlocutor or an audience to address, there is no rhetorical play of ideas, but a kind of bare set, where all communication is reduced to a drive to clear out a channel for transmission between two points separated by space and united only by the channel (2004a: 15; my emphasis)."

Moreover, what is important to note about Terranova's relationship-based understanding of communication is that these probable relationships / territorialised assemblages do not exclude the possibility for alternative relationships to be established. On the contrary, Terranova writes that "even if mediated by the space of statistical probability ... *the relationship between the real and the probable does not ontologically exclude the possibility of the extremely improbable (or of the virtual)* (2004a: 26; my emphasis)."

Drawing on the work of Bergson, Simondon, Deleuze and Massumi, Terranova thus develops the concept of the "virtual" to describe these unlikely or disruptive tendencies that any new media technology potentially possesses. In her reading, such "virtual" relationships are the kinds of relationships that cannot be known in advance or that have yet become *objects of representation* insofar as they have not been articulated as coherent practices. They are the kinds of fields of differences, deterritorialised assemblages that exist in any act of communication that can potentially disturb everyday routines and produce change. Terranova elaborates that

the relationship between the real and the possible opens up the relation between the real and the virtual - beyond the metaphysics of truth and appearance of the utopian imagination informing the revolutionary ideas of modernity. What lies beyond the possible, in fact, is not utopian time and space to be realised against the harsh alienation of the present. This improbability that can only be predicted with the benefit of hindsight can be made to the category of the virtual ... the virtualization of a process involves opening up a real understood as devoid of transformative potential to the action of forces that exceed it from all sides ... What lies beyond the possible and the real is thus the openness of the virtual, of the invention and fluctuation, of what cannot be planned or even thought of in advance, of what has no real permanence but only reverberations. Unlike the probable, the virtual can only irrupt and then recede, leaving only traces behind it, but traces that are virtually able to regenerate a reality gangrened by its reduction to a closed set of possibilities. (2004a: 28)."

This concept of the virtual, I will also argue in this chapter, potentially provides a new way to understand the disruptive tendencies of new digital technologies of communication for the international news environment. This is because despite the dominance of probable relationships/assemblages in international news (for instance formed through the widespread use of *Google*) these cannot exclude the formation of unlikely relationships/assemblages that cause change and disruption into systems. Terranova writes that

whether it is about the flash-like appearance and disappearance of the electronic commons (as in the early Internet), of the eruption of a given economic sector of a new technology able to unravel and disrupt its established organisation of production (as in the current explosion of file-sharing systems) or whether it is about the virtuality of another world perceived during a mass demonstration or a workshop or a camp, the cultural politics of information involves a stab at the fabric of possibility, an undoing of the coincidence of the real with the given (2004a: 28).⁵²

Another way to look at these "virtual" relationships or deterritorialised assemblages in international news is by comparing them to Fuller's (2006) reading of Deleuze in his work on pirate radio. Fuller argues similarly that representation-based approaches to media and cultural studies, and especially Hall's model of encoding/decoding, are inadequate for understanding the media-related practices in pirate radio broadcasts as they cannot account for the disruptive use of the media technologies. In Fuller's reading, such models rely on what he calls a "hylomorphic model for describing the mechanisms by which media are articulated (2006: 21)." In other words, by neglecting the possibilities and potentials of the media technologies used (implied by the term hylomorphism) this has resulted in theoretical approaches where the "emphasis on interpretation comes in part as a residual anchoring in literatu and textual practice [and] where the model of form and content floats limply free from what it attempts to describe (2006: 22)." This concept of hylomorphism that Fuller develops to criticise such representation-based approaches to media technology refers to a philosophical idea where the form is seen as superior to matter. Fuller picks

52. The virtual has a long history in post-structuralist philosophy that I cannot get into fully here. A comprehensive description of the philosophy of the virtual can be found in Chapters 3-5 of *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994). For a good discussion also visit <http://larval-subjects.blogspot.fi/2006/08/deleuzes-two-conceptions-of-virtual.html> [as accessed on October 10, 2013].

up this concept from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who, in *Thousand Plateaus* (1984) articulate what Fuller claims is a non-hylomorphic theory of media production. In his reading of Deleuze and Guattari (and especially their chapter on the “Treatise on Nomadology”) this alternative way to look at media production, Fuller argues, allows us to understand media technologies in a way that does not prioritise either the social use of technology or the technologies used. Rather, this approach focuses more on the active relationship media practitioners have with the potentials and possibilities provided by different media technologies for pragmatically producing results. Following Deleuze and Guattari, Fuller calls these possibilities that always exist in any given technology itself the *machinic phylum* (see also DeLanda 1997). This concept refers to the kinds of non-representational qualities that are always present in media technologies (as virtual potentials) but which can not be known in advance before experimentation with the different kinds of practices media technologies allow. They need to be learned through practice. Developing this concept of machinic phylum for media analysis, Fuller therefore articulates an alternative understanding of technological determinism by focusing more on the possibilities different media technologies open up with which the producer/practitioner must always negotiate with through habitual and bodily experience (such as in Fuller's own research into the pirate radio stations where the operator must creatively use and combine different technologies from transmitters to computers to cell phones in order to achieve clandestine radio broadcasts under constant police interference). Fuller elaborates that:

Deleuze and Guattari's introduction of the term “machinic phylum” makes possible its mobilization as a conceptual resource in addressing the constitutions within conflict, that is, within historical time, of technologies and of media.

What shapes-in-motion, what dynamics do these combinations of media instantiate as they come into composition. What of these processes, of those that are actualized and those that remain virtual, are the ways in which the users assemblers of these combinations of technology track, channel, splice and provide multipliers for the emergence of these mutations? ... This other term, the machinic phylum, allows us to sense into the ways in which medial dynamics in combination generate behaviors, qualities, and openings that are more than the sum of their constituent, codified paths (2006: 23-244).

While these alternative accounts of media technology have not looked at international news, I also argue in this chapter that Terranova's and Fuller's accounts allow us to better understand the examples from the Asian tsunami. What Terranova's concept of virtual relationships helps explain is the unlikely relationships/assemblages that are always possible in international news but which can never be known in advance. What new digital technologies therefore allow for, in this reading, are new kinds of media-related practices through which such alternative relationships/assemblages can be formed especially during crises such as the Asian tsunami when routine practices of international news production are disrupted. Yet for these virtual relationships or deterritorialised assemblages to be actualised, this always requires habitual knowledge and experimentation with the different media technological systems (such as online platforms such as blogging) that potentially make such disruptions possible.

(c) "Offline people did not get the event ..."

The reason I have developed this unorthodox approach to the question of technology in this thesis is that it most closely reflects my observation of the practices of the people involved with these examples of citizen journalism during the Asian tsunami. In order to explain why this is the case, I need to first discuss my personal collaboration with the founder of *Desimediabitch*, Rohit Gupta, who was instrumental in

this alternative example of citizen journalism discussed in this chapter. I met Rohit Gupta a few weeks before the Asian tsunami in 2004. As we were both interested in news in India, we started having conversations about the state of the news industry in India. As a way of background, Rohit Gupta was a graduate from the *Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)*, a school many claim is one of the most prestigious technology schools in India. Following graduation, he had moved to Mumbai in 2000 to become a freelance writer. He had published both non-fiction and fiction in different Indian and international newspapers and magazines including more than 200 columns he had written about everyday life in Mumbai for *Mid-Day*. He had also published a number of books and articles, including the collection of short stories *Play On Edward & Other Stories*, *The Doppler Effect* (a comic) and *The Oyster Club* (award-winning e-novel). This double role of being both a writer as well as a graduate in engineering made him interested in topics that combined technology with experimental forms of writing. Before launching *Desimediabitch*, he had already won the E-author price for the first Indian e-novel and he was experimenting with other ways of combining internet-based technology and new writing forms. These included a collaborative game and SMS text-based message novel (*Cloakroom*)⁵³ as well as a new online book structure where quotes and links would be used to sell the writing of the book as an alternative publishing model (*Le Spirale Fantastique*). Rohit had also organised an online writing festival called the *Great Mahakhali Write-a-thalon*, in which 50 writers from 9 countries had gathered together to write a novel or screenplay over one weekend, sharing the experiences online. As a consequence of these activities, he had developed an

53. The archive for this can be still found at <http://cloakroom.blogspot.com> [as accessed on 27.07.2012]

extensive network of online contacts around the world and had also become the second Indian contributor to *Worldchanging*, a popular US-based blog at the time of my fieldwork.

Whenever I asked Rohit to explain why he had acted the way he did during the Asian Tsunami, he only responded that he had just been in the right place at the right time. According to him, it was never a conscious decision or planned. Rather, he had just acted on impulse putting his prior knowledge of internet-based publishing platforms to use.⁵⁴ Below is a short excerpt from our many Yahoo Instant Messaging (IM) conversations we had on a number of topics from technology to philosophy to international news. In this one he explains in particular what motivated him during the Asian Tsunami. I am in this conversation *objetpetitm* and Rohit Gupta goes by his online handle at the time, *micereign* (the chat text has been slightly edited to get rid of unnecessary and unrelated comments for the sake of brevity):

objetpetitm: so, the tsunami happened

micereign: i was sleeping through it, the zigzackly⁵⁵ called me

micereign: i had tv at that time

54. The biggest problem in understanding such virtual relationships during the Asian tsunami was that most of the activity took place either by chatting (IM), by email between the different parties involved and by SMS text messages. Unlike with classical newsroom practices where meetings and discussions are held, during the Asian tsunami and aftermath, most of this activity happened online. The difficulty in understanding these kind of practices is that such communication is transient by nature - it leaves no traces and changes quickly. How do you understand relationships that are formed, however temporarily, only through chats, SMS text messages, and where there is very little observable offline happening or few archival traces.

55. Zigzagly is Peter Griffin, who was involved in the other online collaboration during the time Rohit was working with. This was the online clearing house for information during the Asian tsunami called the SEA-EAT blog. See <http://tsunamihelp.blogspot.fi/> [last accessed on 27.7.2012] I have not mentioned SEA-EAT for lack of space. It would be the topic of another dissertation and thus not mentioned in detail in this thesis.

micereign: and said, watch tv

objetpetitm: and CSF starts getting SMSs from Morquendi and the others (already been participating in CSF)

micereign: i was already running CSF so I knew what happens

micereign: then that night "scribbleamus" who is a friend, said Morq was sending messages with urgency

micereign: they were in college together

micereign: i said, that - tell him to send them to me, and i'll put them online instantly

micereign: he did, and i did

micereign: then it started being linked to everywhere

micereign: and Morq organised a few more sri lankans to send me messages

micereign: BBC, NYT, we were everywhere

micereign: nobody had ever used the urgency of an SMS as urgency

objetpetitm: that is exactly the point that fascinates me about the whole scenario

objetpetitm: there was no structure in place, no plan, no idea what will happen. but it did

micereign: it was going to

micereign: i just happened to be in the right place, psychogeographically

micereign: i didn't know it was going to happen. i just acted on impulse.

objetpetitm: i remember we talked about "singularity"

micereign: i knew it was what i needed to do

micereign: for those few days

micereign: thats it

micereign: and i had tried to write an SMS novel about two months ago

micereign: so i had ulterior motives

objetpetitm: yeah, i remember

micereign: SMS fascinated me

micereign: i thought it meant something

micereign: now i don't think it means that much.

objetpetitm: how did other people react to the sudden emergence of a singularity (outside the mainstream media blogzoo-watchers)

micereign: offline people didn't get the "event"

micereign: they thought it was ...normal. my dad, relatives.

micereign: it needed a lot of explaining

micereign: computers, internet

micereign: then i started not believing it happened myself

objetpetitm: i remember the phonecalls and new years eve

micereign: yeah. but i dont.

objetpetitm: do you remember, how quickly did the blogosphere react to these SMS. visitors skyrocketed etc?

micereign: yeah...

micereign: also because I was associated with Worldchanging, and Boing Boing was continuously updating us.

micereign: i just felt that i knew what to do.

micereign: it needed no thinking on my part

micereign: i sold the tsunami, in a way

objetpetitm: exactly what i felt when i talked to you

micereign: i was very good at it.

micereign: i don't know. it gave me too much publicity which i did not want to live by. i also enjoyed it.

As we can see from the above conversation, Rohit Gupta articulates here what he considered to be the motivation behind his practices during the Asian tsunami. Rohit attributes the popularity of these SMS messages and blog posts to his ability to *use the urgency of SMS as urgency*. This was possible because, he claims, he was able in the right

place at the right time "psychogeographically."⁵⁶ He also explains how his family or "offline" people did not get the event: you needed in-depth knowledge of the Internet technology and computers to understand why what happened was so significant to the people involved. He specifically used the scientific term "singularity" to explain what he thought had happened during the Asian tsunami.⁵⁷ In other words, when asked about what motivated his own actions during the Asian tsunami, Rohit repeatedly commented in our many discussions that he never planned to do what he did. Instead, he said he was only in the right place at the right time and was able to use his knowledge of the Internet to promote the SMS messages and other blog posts he was receiving. Much of what he did was attributed to his habitual knowledge of using internet-based platforms derived from his previous practices and writing experimentations online.

With this discussion in mind, the concept of "virtual relationship" developed by Terranova, or the term "machinic phylum" developed by Fuller, can potentially help explain some of the practices I observed during the Asian tsunami.⁵⁸ According to this reading of the Asian tsunami, what we call international news (in the broadest

56. Rohit and I co-organized, among other activities, the first psychogeographical festival in Mumbai called Algomantra. He refers here especially to the field of art called psychogeography pretty close to its Wikipedia definition. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychogeography> [as accessed on July 30, 2012].

57. The term singularity comes from both mathematics and science fiction where it describes the influence of technology as it leads to a point of change where a new order emerges. Such theories around singularity were quite popular amongst tech-savvy young people in Mumbai and used, often colloquially, to describe the relevance of new technologies such as blogging for the broader news environment.

58. When mentioned this theory to Rohit Gupta he tended to agree that this is a useful way of understanding the event. However, his understanding is more mathematical here so I am not sure if our understandings are entirely commensurable as my understanding of advanced mathematics and physics is limited.

sense possible) is made up of a field of possibilities in which different kinds of relationships/assemblages can be formed. As seen in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, there are two kinds of relationships that are formed. The first are *probable* (or territorialised) relationships/assemblages whose purpose is to routinize the unexpected in how the everyday practice of international news production takes place. The routine use of news agency feeds, or the use of *Google*, can be seen as practices of maintaining such probable relationships/assemblages. Then there are *virtual* (or de-territorialised) relationships/assemblages. These, on the contrary, are the kinds of relationships/assemblages that emerge, for instance, during crises such as the Asian tsunami that reveal new kinds of possibilities in international news production. Such "virtual" relationship/assemblages, however, remain unknown until they become actualised in practice. They are the kinds of differences that exist in any field of possibilities that have not been yet sutured as *objects of representation*. The moment they become objects of analysis, they turn into another set of probable relationships/assemblages thus losing their potentially disruptive character.⁵⁹ Finally, because such "virtual" relationships need to be always actualised in practice for them to be known or represented, how this happens, and how they are given significance, always happens in different social-historical settings. Such "virtual" or de-territorialised relationships are also always also culturally translated between different parts of the world.

59. I have discussed this characteristics of what I call "emerging digital cultures" in length in Paul and Pohjonen (2011).

5. Metaphysics of communication (part II)

With this discussion in mind, I will conclude with two different perspectives to the examples provided from the Asian tsunami. I will first place these examples within the broader context of changes that were taking place in the Indian news environment during my fieldwork; and, secondly, I will look at the writings of Rohit Gupta⁶⁰ where he has most explicitly articulated what he thought was the relevance of new digital technologies for the international news environment more broadly and for his practices during the Asian tsunami. I will then contrast his theoretical understanding with my own to provide a *dialogic* (Bakhtin 1981) perspective to this third entry point to the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

(a) "We'll be your media bitches, amen ..."

A few weeks after the Asian tsunami, on the 16th of January, 2005, *Indian Express* ran a front page story titled "Join the Dots." This story discussed developments in news in India, and especially around the Asian Tsunami. The article begins by describing one of the most prominent bloggers in India who is drunk. It says:

EVERYONE who knows Rohit Gupta, and a good many who don't, is aware that late Sunday night, the 28-year old freelance writer was drunk and

60. I have chosen to focus on Rohit Gupta more than other members from *Desimediabitch* because his activities were instrumental to some of the examples during the Asian tsunami that I had observed. There were other important member loosely associated with *Desimediabitch* such as Soumyadeep Paul (Desoumal), another *Institute of Indian Technology (IIT)* graduate who was focused more on experimenting with video blogging (of Vlogs) at the time and with whom I collaborated. There was also a whole host other writers who collaborated with *Desimediabitch* but I never met these as they mostly collaborated online.

watching Headlines today (or more precisely the pretty newsreader on the channel.)

That's because Gupta's life is on the Internet. As Fadereu, his thoughts, activities and commentary are up for scrutiny, access and interaction on his web log, desimediabitch.blogspot.com. He's a blogger – one of the thousands of Indians, and millions worldwide, who have personal journals on the net.

(Mennon and Rao 2005)

The article continues by discussing the online coverage of the Asian tsunami less than a month ago. It explains how blogs are now becoming mainstream, providing a potential alternative to India's mainstream news media. Blogs, the article claims, allows for new kinds of relationships to be formed online. It claims that "six years ago, there were not two dozen blogs in cyberspace - collections of favourite links and frequently-updated everyday details, visited by friends who in turn linked the site to their own. Today, seemingly anybody who can type with more than two fingers has one. It's as public as you can get privately (Mennon and Rao 2005)." Again, the activities of Rohit Gupta (Fadereu) are given as examples of the kind of online activity made possible by blogs in India. The article continues:

But what is increasingly apparent is the power of his network. After the tsunami, Gupta turned over his blog to providing live SMS updates from affected areas. The response across the world was tremendous, and combined with his contributions to SEA-EAT, the one-stop tsunami blog started by fellow blogger Peter Griffin, Gupta lost a week's sleep (and his girlfriend) keeping the information flowing.

"People are looking for an emotional connection," says the IIT grad and author of *Play on Edward*, who got into blogging just three months ago. "A blog is personal, direct and immediate. It's more human." When leading newspapers and TV channels sourced information from Gupta's site, he knew blogging had finally flexed its muscles in India.

(Mennon and Rao 2005).

This article was one just among the many in India commenting on the practices online during and after the Asian Tsunami. It is worthwhile to note here that in 2004,

citizen journalism (of which blogs are a part of) was still a relatively new development in India.⁶¹ In his analysis of citizen journalism in India, Sonwalkar (2009), for instance, has argued that we cannot understand citizen journalism in India without taking into account the broader political discourse in India that has emerged in 1991 since it began opening up its economy. The tension driving citizen journalism in India, Sonwalkar continues, has to do with the dilemma India faces as a country with "growing prosperity underpinning a burgeoning middle class, the prestige of its information technology sector, and the relative proportion of young people" compared with a "larger reality of deprivation and poverty for the majority of its billion-plus population (Sonwalkar 2009: 75)." Sonwalkar writes that

news media output has been widely criticized for its focus on cricket, crime, celebrities, and the occult, as the quality of journalism and ethics suffer at the altar of fierce competition and ratings. The constant breach of journalism's professional integrity, of the mainstream news media and their capacity to create and sustain public discussion and debate over pressing social issues in positive, responsible ways. It is against this backdrop that the empowering potential of citizen journalism has generated hope that the hitherto insular "global India" will not only enjoy its newfound prosperity, but will also focus attention on the serious difficulties of everyday life facing the majority of the people in the country (2009: 76).

Citizen journalism in India thus emerged out of these two developments in India that we have already touched in Chapter 3. The first was the economic growth and India's growing self-assertion as a regional power combined with the reality of poverty for the vast majority of India. The second was the contradictions journalists encountered

61. Some overviews of blogging in India are provided at Singh (2008) or Sonwalkar (2009). newspapers. In 2004/2005 during my fieldwork in India, blogs were still somewhat nascent as compared to today. They provide an interesting case point of what I have called elsewhere "emerging digital cultures" (Paul and Pohjonen 2011).

within this bipolar reality where mainstream news was becoming increasingly commercial and neglected to cover some of the more critical issues concerning India's economic growth and where alternative news forms such as blogs provided a potential alternative.

It was within this broader discursive background that we also have to place the alternative journalistic practices during the Asian Tsunami. *Desimediabitch* was founded by Rohit Gupta following the cancellation of his column at *Mid-Day* for being critical of its sales department. He launched the blog as a forum to criticise what he considered to be an over-commercialised news industry in India. Rohit thus invited a group of his journalist and writer friends to start "bitching" about the changes that were taking place in the Indian news environment.⁶² *Desimediabitch* emerged out of this juxtaposition of growing accessibility of online platforms such as blog with the growing disillusionment many journalists felt towards the mainstream news industry in India. The first post on *Desimediabitch*, titled "Mistakes Happen" was posted by Fadereu (the online pseudonym for Rohit Gupta) on October 29, 2004. It describes these tensions in the mainstream news media in India the following way:

As you can all undoubtedly feel, most of mainstream Indian media has sold out to advertising, promotions, and partisan politics. Highly circulated papers like Mid Day or the Times Of India have, of late, stopped carrying "corrections/errata".

We can draw two conclusions from this. Either they've stopped making mistakes, or they've finally convinced themselves that mistakes may happen, but they don't matter. This is tantamount to saying that the readers, you and I, are

62. The blog used the free *Blogger* publishing tool and the web address was *desimediabitch.blogspot.com*. The site was erased from existence in July 2005 when Rohit grew frustrated by its stagnancy and erased everything one drunken evening. As far as I know, I am the only one who still has an archive copy of the entire history of *Desimediabitch*.

complete freaking idiots. That readers are stark-raving eyeballs who will buy sand in the Sahara if it was advertised by a semi-nude slut and a suggestive slogan. This is how mass-media companies define mass-media.

Promotions, deals and sales gimmicks take over the primary objectives of newspapers – which is reporting. So we've undertaken the task of reporting on the excess indulgences of media in an unbiased and vengeful way.

We'll be your media bitches. Amen!

Desi Media Bitch

posted by Fadereu at 1:45 PM | 3 comments

As we can see from the above example, *Desimediabitch* was launched with the explicit aim of critically "reporting on the excess indulgences of media in an unbiased and vengeful way." The language used is illustrative of the irreverent tone than *Desimediabitch* was often known for during its time as a critical voice of mainstream news media and journalism in India. The changing Indian news environment is described here as a hyper-commercial industry where the average readers is seen by these news organisations as "stark-raving eyeballs who will buy sand in the Sahara if it was advertised by a semi-nude slut and a suggestive slogan."

Following its launch, *Desimediabitch* quickly gained popularity as a forum for journalists to discuss (or bitch) about the Indian mainstream news media as well as provide alternative media coverage. The criticism of the mainstream media is combined here with Internet-based alternatives such as blogging to older models of publishing. This double inspiration between criticism of the news media and new technologies of communication such as blogs came to characterise many of the activities *Desimediabitch* was engaged in during its short-lived time. After about a month of activity, a festival was announced on *Desimediabitch* titled "Desi Media Bitch Fest." Its aim was for the different contributors of the site to write commentaries about what

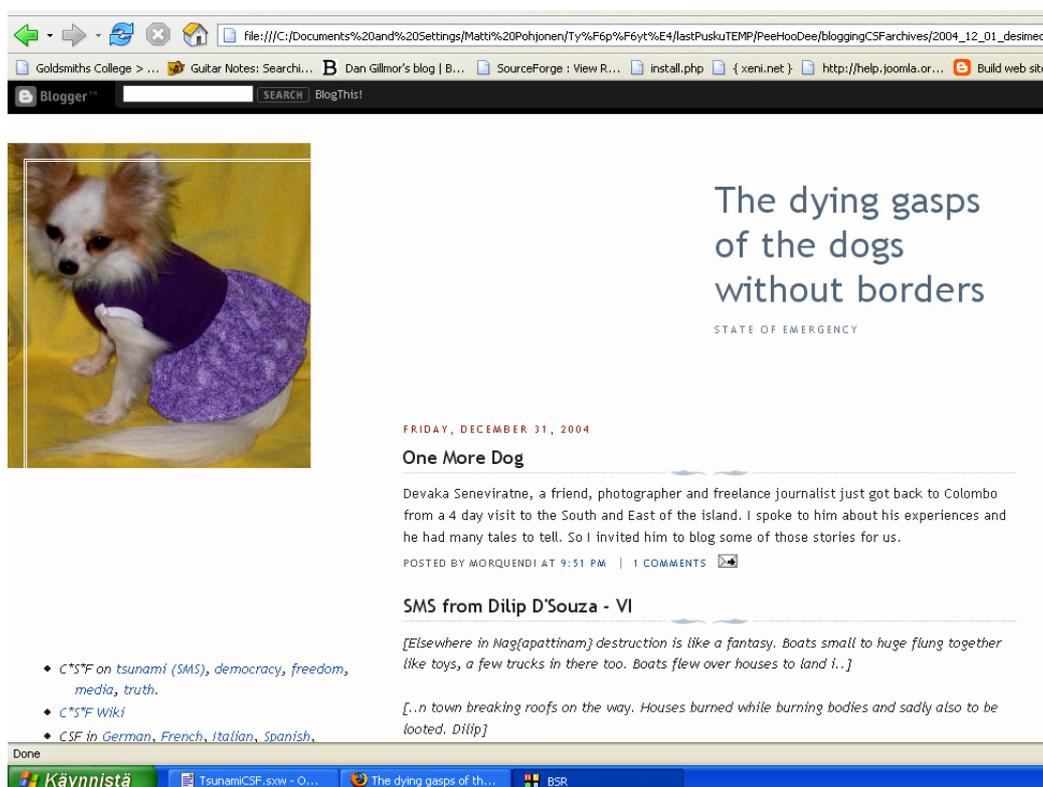
they saw as the most chronic problems with the Indian mainstream news media. The best "bitching" would win a prize selected by a group of the most active participants. On December 20, 2004, the direction of the blog was once again changed by the vote of its seven core people who had been most active posting since the beginning. The name was once again changed - now to *Dogz Without Borders* - and its participation extended to other journalists from the South Asian neighbouring countries. A part of its new direction was to begin a month-long dialogue between Indian and Pakistani bloggers on what the contributors on both sides considered the biggest problems that the two countries faced and the potential of the Internet-based publishing tools for promoting such cross-border dialogue. Soon after bloggers from Sri Lanka also joined.

After about two months of being online, it had more than 50 contributors from mostly from India but also from Pakistan and Sri Lanka including *Morquendi* who joined a few days before the Asian tsunami took place.⁶³ See below, the approximate layout of how *Desimediabitch* looked when the tsunami happened.⁶⁴

63. Morquendi joined Desimediabitch with his first posting on December 22, 2004. This was just 4 days before the Asian Tsunami happened

64. The layout of the page above is actually from June 2005 when I archived the pages. When researching blogs, it is actually quite complicated to provide the exact layout of the page as these tend to change over time. The same happened to Desimediabitch at least 5 times during the time I spent following and participating in their activities. As the template for the form and the content are different in the modular web structures of blogging, the content that has been published does not change (unless specifically changed) whereas the look of the blog can change radically. Thus, when I archived the entire blog as a back-up six months after the tsunami, *Desimediabitch* was undergoing radical re-structuring and experimentation with both format and content. Rohit Gupta, the founders of the site was disillusioned with the stagnancy it had been experiencing and was trying to decide whether it was worth continuing.

Picture 15: A screen shot of Desimedibitch just before it was cancelled



Following its unexpected popularity during the Asian tsunami, *Desimedibitch* went through different variations and experiments with alternative Internet based news forms. Some of these included starting the first video blogging from India (vlogs), a festival on psychogeography in Mumbai called *Algomantra*, and an activist campaign against a lawsuit of *Mediaah* blog by *Times of India*. Finally, on August 4, 2005, Rohit Gupta/Fadereu decided to pull the plug on *Desimedibitch* being disillusioned with the direction the site was going and lack of critical voices.

It was also within this socio-political context that I suggest such "virtual" or deterritorialised relationships became possible during the Asian tsunami in 2004. This had to do both with the new forms of alternative journalism such as blogs that young

journalists were experimenting with as well as the broader disillusionment many felt towards the state of the Indian news industry. A year later, many of the models that *Desimediabitch* was experimenting with had become commonplace in India and there was less room for experimentation to occur. What *Desimediabitch* had done in part during the Asian tsunami was replicated in the online coverage of the Mumbai floods, the London bombings in 2005 as well as during the Katrina tsunami. While in 2004 blogs were a novelty, after the Asian tsunami they quickly became a more mainstream activity both in India and internationally. The kinds of relationships/assemblages that I observed during the Asian tsunami had become integrated into reporting by the mainstream news media and became widely theorised in academic analysis. Following the Asian tsunami, Rohit Gupta eventually grew disillusioned about the direction blogging was going in India and went onwards to other experiments in writing, in coding technological devices for art, mobile-based performance projects, and finally to in-depth research into physics and mathematics. His new project home - the Zeta Trek - is an online collaborative effort by amateurs and outsiders to solve outstanding mathematical problems, such as the Riemann Hypothesis, where he uses the Internet to fundraise his intellectual work⁶⁵

(b) Organic intellectuals

In chapter 3 I argued that the theory of media-related practices was especially useful as it did not presuppose an epistemological hierarchy between the researchers'

65. <http://fadereu.posterous.com/pages/frequently-asked-questions> [as accessed on 27.7.2012]

theoretical frames of reference and of the participants themselves. Hobart writes that

understanding involves appreciating how people judge and comment on their own practices, while simultaneously analyzing the circumstances under which such practices occur, employing current academic criteria. This understanding is critical in the strong sense that is not only critical of the object of study, but of the practices and categories of the knowing subject, the analyst's own. It is in this encounter that the ethnographer is confronted by the Eurocentrism of her own thinking and presuppositions. It follows that, if research is not simply to reiterate hegemony, such cultural translation must be *dialogic*, again in the strong sense that academic presuppositions and practice themselves are continually called into question and interrogated through the dialogue (1996: 497; my emphasis).

I will conclude here by arguing that such a critical dialogue is also necessary to understand the relevance of changing technologies of communication to the international news environment. To do this I will compare my own theoretical understanding of the Asian tsunami with Rohit Gupta's accounts of the events and his theory about the relevance of new digital technologies of communication to international news environment at the time of the Asian tsunami.

Despite having numerous contacts across the world, Rohit Gupta has never left India. When he was interviewed about his activities recently, he described himself and his intellectual background the following way: "I'm actually saying that a completely new species of researcher and discoverer has been made possible by the Internet - the autonomous autodidact (Gupta 2012)."⁶⁶ Being a self-described autodidact, he has thus read extensively on a number of topics on the Internet including media and cultural studies theory. Treating him as an organic intellectual (Gramsci 1973) thus provides an useful way to understand how he has reflected on his

66. Full text can be accessed here <http://blog.zombal.com/post/a-quest-to-solve-one-of-maths-great-puzzles> [as accessed on July 30, 2012]

own practices and how these relate to the theories we use to analyse these media-related practices in turn. By interrogating Rohit Gupta as a theorist in his own right thus allows me to both interrogate some of his presuppositions (as a practitioner) as well as mine (as a researcher) and create a dialogue between them. I will thus conclude by looking critically at what was perhaps his most explicit theoretical writing on the Asian tsunami.

(c) The cultural translation of communication theory

In an unpublished essay titled "Veritas Lux Mea⁶⁷" (the truth enlightens me) Gupta articulated - perhaps most explicitly in any of his writings - what informed his practices during the time he was involved with *Desimediabitch*. The article begins by placing his ideas about the Internet and alternative forms of journalism within the context of the Asian Tsunami. He starts by writing that "on a collective weblog I write for - ChiensSansFrontiers, we were receiving and publishing SMSes from Sri Lanka and South India. One of them went thus: [Stay away from the Galle road. Continuous looting and violence reported in Moratuwa.] - Morquendi (Gupta 2005a)." What Gupta is interested in here theoretically is what, in fact, is the significance of such a short piece of information in this SMS message. He describes the problem the following way:

67. Full text can be seen in Appendix. As samples of his other published writings on journalism and technology, see for instance "The avatar versus the journalist: Making meaning, finding truth" Gupta 2005b published at *Online Journalism Review*. This can be accessed here: <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/050721gupta/> [as accessed on July 30, 2012]

This is a message that is less than 160 characters, but the meaning and urgency of this message cannot be ignored – it needs to spread and duplicate on the Internet, it needs to be plagiarised.

(Gupta 2005a)

What he sees as the purpose of this small piece of text, 160 characters, is that - because of its urgency - it needs to be spread and duplicated as widely as possible on the Internet. This is what he also defines as the primary function of news in the essay: news is something that needs to be re-used as much as possible when it has relevant information for the people who read it. Gupta then positions his own ideas of news within the broader context of new technologies such as blogging and citizen journalism. He attributes the popularity of these alternative forms of journalism to two flaws in the mass media (and in how news industries work). He writes that:

The rise of blogging, citizen journalism, and the sense of wonder it has inspired, is directly connected to some fundamentally flawed assumptions of mass media about itself. Let us take two of these and see where they lead us – 1) We influence a very large audience, and 2) We are objective in our reportage

(Gupta 2005a)

Yet these conventional understandings of mass media, according to Gupta, are flawed because (1) they can never reach a large enough audience; and (2) because there is no possibility for objectivity in mass media, despite claims to the contrary. He writes that when a "reporter goes around looking for stories, interviews a handful of people, and tries to form a hypothesis as to what happened in a particular area. The first draft is hacked, sorted, queued, and undergoes all sorts of editorial scrutiny before finally appearing in print as an objective article (Gupta 2005a)." The problem with such a notion of objectivity, however, is that it is only possible when everybody is represented

in the particular account of what happened. This is impossible unless everybody becomes a reporter. As a result, he explicates: "the audience of mass-media is not how many people you can sell a newspaper to - it is how many people are represented with their versions of a story in their newspaper or television channel (Gupta 2005a). The reason why blogging and SMS messages are thus better than traditional media, Gupta thus argues, is that they have the potential of becoming a true mass media: everybody can be potentially both the producers and the audience at the same time.

In my reading, what thus emerges out this media theory is a theoretical framework about the relationship between news and technology. News is something that needs to be re-used and copied as much as possible. And new digital news forms and technologies such as blogging allow this better than older forms of communication such as print and television news. Gupta elaborates that

physical duplication technologies such as printing, record pressing and film duplication allowed the duplication of books, newspapers and movies at low prices to huge audiences. Television and radio allowed the electronic duplication of content for the first time ... mass media is simply an amplifier for certain kinds of information, however, the originators of this information have always remained the same – human beings and other symptoms of life on the planet Earth. Mass media is a router of variously collected information, just like the Internet. Therefore, any media house that tries to control information through a moral or immoral construct is throttling its own popularity.

(Gupta 2005a)

What new digital technologies of communication (which blogs are an example of) therefore allow for is the easy duplication of different opinions and viewpoints, which - each in their own way - lead towards the final truth. With this theoretical definition in mind, he then places this idea of news within a broader Indian philosophical concept

of what this truth is. Gupta writes

Ajivikas, led by a scholar called Makkhali Gosala, had adopted a triadic logic about reality as it is perceived by a society. Reality is a sum = A + non-A+ both (A & non-A). What this means was explained by Gosala:

Truth is a continuum, with contrary properties being contained in greater or lesser degree in any depiction of reality.

This also means that any subject can be discussed and debated endlessly.

(Gupta 2005a)

What we can thus extrapolate from this account is the following theory about the relevance of new technologies of communication for international news: (1) Changing technologies of communication such as blogs and SMS text messages allow for new kinds relationships to be formed between producers and audiences; (2) This happens because they allow for more representation by bringing a broader participation in what is considered news (open discussion towards truth); (3) Mass media is not able do this because it tries to control the flow of information through developments like copyright and its need to make a profit.

In conclusion, then, when we look at Gupta's own "metaphysics of communication," we find many similar themes present that were common in the technological sub-cultures across the world during my fieldwork in 2004/2005. There are two sides to this. On the one hand, such ideas, in my reading, place him theoretically within the broader framework of what Himanen (2001) has called "hacker ethics" or Wark (2004) has called "hacker ideology." Here information is seen as having a transcendent quality of bringing about change: it is everywhere; it needs to be free; and technology should be used to help this free spread of information. Thus, when we look at the writings of Rohit Gupta, it is easy to place him within this

utopian tradition of technology that was popular in the online communities in 2004/2005 and still is especially among the technologically-driven advocates of digital media (see Gilmore 2006; Shirky 2009) Moreover, as Barbrook (1996) has argued such thinking emerged largely out of a particular socio-political experience primarily in the US and has been influenced by what has been called "Californian ideology" common especially among tech-driven online communities. Barbrook writes that this utopian notion of technology "promiscuously combines the free-wheeling spirit of the hippies and the entrepreneurial zeal of the yuppies. This amalgamation of opposites has been achieved through a profound faith in the emancipatory potential of the new information technologies (see also Ludlow 2001)."

Yet why this particular article is especially interesting is that it provides a kind of a situationist-style (Debord 1995) manifesto of the relevance of digital technologies for international news in India. But it also links Rohit Gupta's own understanding of technology to a more critical theoretical approach. Yet it is also fair to note here that, while he has read widely into situationist theory and other work from critical theory, this particular article has been influenced more by his understanding of open source and hacker cultures combined with his idiosyncratic reading of the Indian philosophical tradition rather than Continental intellectual movements. My experience with hacker communities in India has also shown me that such a critical tradition as exemplified by the Frankfurt school approaches discussed in chapter 3 is mostly lacking in their analysis or practice involving digital technologies such as blogging. The concerns are more pragmatic and less theoretical. What is, however, important about this article is that many of the themes present in Rohit Gupta's writings are framed through his experience of living in Mumbai and his background

in Indian philosophy. What he has done in this manifesto is culturally translate some of these ideas common in technological sub-cultures and hacker cultures across the world into his own philosophical framing and experience of somebody who has never left India. Moreover, his approach provides an interesting theoretical alternative to the representation-based approaches to communication and international news criticised in this thesis. In particular, his approach posits that meaning, in fact, is the sum of "A + non-A+ both (A & non-A)." This, in my reading, allows for a more dialogic and non-representational understanding of communication that includes differences as intrinsic to any claim to truth and not as something that needs to be explained away as is the case in classical Western metaphysical traditions (such as, for instance, the law of identity where A is A but never not A). Truth, in this reading, thus emerges out of the ongoing dialogue between the very theoretical tensions, contradictions and problems involved in different viewpoints without claiming to mediate them once and for all (see Singh 2010; Gupta 2011). In the language used in this thesis, when looking at the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India, such differences can thus never be resolved into some original identity through which its meaning is ultimately derived from. Difference is constitutive of truth itself, its driving force.

What I suggest, therefore, in conclusion, is the following: new developments such as citizen journalism during my fieldwork in 2004/2005 - despite their shared characteristics between different parts of the world - need to be always understood within the cultural context they are embedded in. I have proposed a working theory around the concept of virtual/deterritorialised relationships/assemblages as a possible way to address some of the examples looked at in this chapter. Yet how we

understand these virtual/deterritorialised relationships/assemblages and the media-related practices that have made these possible also need to be always culturally translated. Theoretical frames of reference - whether practitioner's or researcher's - always change as they travel between and across different parts of the world. This is the fundamental, if not irresolvable, tension behind the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India, developed in this thesis.

6. Conclusion

This chapter looked at the second point of entry into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India: examples of citizen journalism during the Asian tsunami. I argued that what the Asian tsunami showed us were some of the alternative relationships/assemblages that are now possible in the international news environment due to new digital technologies of communication. Yet in order to avoid over-interpreting the significance of these technologies, we need to place them within the culturally situated contexts in different parts of the world. The chapter, by examining the practices and writings of the key member of this *Desimediabitch*, Rohit Gupta, therefore proposed the theory of virtual/deterritorialised relationships/assemblages as a potential way to understand the relevance of these new technologies of communication in countries such as India. Such relationships consist of those kinds of potentials involved in international news that can never be known before they become actualised in practice in different parts of the world. These relationships - and the habitual practices around them - are always embedded into particular cultural-specific context and the broader discourse around them. In order to understand the relevance of new digital technologies of communication for the

international news environment, the chapter thus concluded by suggesting a "dialogic" method that would take into account the differences between academic and practitioners frames of reference towards an object of study without trying to resolve them once and for all.

7. RELATIONSHIP OF A RELATIONSHIP

If interpretation can never be brought to an end, it is simply because there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, because at bottom everything is already interpretation (Foucault 1981: 64).

Introduction | Framing the Problem | Politics of international news (part II) | the politics of difference | Hegemonic articulation
| Conclusion

1. Introduction

The two previous chapters looked at media-related practices behind the re-use of international news in Mumbai, India, and the different kinds of the relationships underlying it. This chapter, in turn, looks at the fourth and final point of entry into the problem of cultural translation: the changing media commentaries about the "politics" of international news in the English-language newspapers in India since economic liberalisation in 1991 (1990-2008). The chapter focuses, in particular, on two themes underlying the argument made. The first looks at how the "political significance" of the Western news coverage of major world events and themes has been commented on in English-language newspapers in India since 1991. The second theme looks at commentaries around allowing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the print

newspaper industry in India, and especially on how these debates refracted markers of difference drawn around what it means to be Indian (and what not) in the self-imagination of the newspapers industry in India.

The aim of the final chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it situates the examples looked at in the thesis within the contemporary political discourse in India, and especially around conflicting articulations of Indian economic growth following the liberalisation of India's economy in 1991. Secondly, it concludes the argument of the thesis by suggesting that the political question of international news should not be theoretically approached at the level of representation/interpretation but rather at the level of discourse. The thesis thus concludes with some theoretical implications of such a discourse-based approach to the politics of international news and to the broader problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

2. Framing the problem

Towards the end of my research period, on the 26th of November, 2008, a group of armed men sneaked silently on the cover of night by a boat to the Southern shore of Mumbai. After disembarking from the boat, the men run amok in the city for the next 60 hours, killing indiscriminately and taking people hostage. High-profile targets such as the Taj Hotel, Leopold's Cafe and the Mumbai Jewish Centre were attacked. The "Mumbai terror attacks" made headlines across the world. It seemed, once again, these attacks were designed to maximise international news visibility, yet another example of what some media scholars have called a "media spectacle" (see

Kellner 2003).⁶⁸ Yet as the carnage unfolded, another story was also making the news. As had happened four years earlier during the Asian tsunami, this other story was about the significance of changing technologies of communication for the international news environment. This time around, however, the spotlight was not on blogs or SMS text messages. This time it was *Twitter* that was commented on as an example of the changes that are taking place in the international news environment. An article published in the *Guardian*⁶⁹ on November 28, 2008, titled "Twitter comes of age with fast reports from the ground," commented on this the following way:

From the moment the first shots were fired, the internet provided a kaleidoscopic view of events in Mumbai. Using blogs and file-sharing sites, those caught up in the mayhem rapidly provided accounts from the ground as well as links to the best news reports appearing on the web ... One rich source of information was Twitter, which provides text-message-length updates. Its Mumbai thread provided a stream of snippets, not all accurate, from observers on the ground, with details of casualties, sieges, gunfights, and even the suspected names of terrorists

(Lewis 2008).

This relatively recent (in 2008) micro-blogging platform was again articulated as an example of the broader changes to the international news environment. Similar to the commentaries of the Asian tsunami looked at in Chapter 6, terms such as "coming of age" and "eyewitness accounts" were used to articulate its significance. For instance, Jeff Jarvis, a media commentator in *The Guardian*,⁷⁰ in an article titled "In Mumbai,

68. I refer to media spectacles here as those kinds of events, such as some of the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai, whose purpose has been to, at least partially, maximise its media coverage. The actions have been designed for media visibility (see Oh and Agrawal 2011).

69. This article appeared on p9 of the Main section of the Guardian on Friday 28 November 2008. It was published on guardian.co.uk at 00.01 GMT on Friday 28 November 2008. A version of it can be seen online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/28/mumbai-terror-attacks-india-internet-technology-twitter> [last accessed on 27.7.2012]

70. This article appeared on p8 of the MediaGuardian section of the Guardian on Monday 1

witnesses are writing the news" published on the 1st of December, 2008, articulated the challenge of *Twitter* the following way: "the witnesses are taking over the news. That will fundamentally change our experience of news, the role of witnesses and participants, the role of journalists and news organisations, and the impact reporting has on events (Jarvis 2008)."⁷¹

What was interesting about this story about a story was the controversy it stirred. During the Mumbai terror attacks mainstream international news outlets such as *BBC News* and *The Guardian* relied heavily on live updates from *Twitter* on its website. These examples of citizen journalism were promoted - perhaps for the first time to such an extent - alongside more conventional international news coverage. This caused a heated debate in the media in the UK about whether such "unverified" original news should be given visibility by "serious" news organisations. Another article published in *The Guardian*⁷² on the 5th of December, 2008, titled "BBC admits it made mistakes using Mumbai Twitter coverage," summarised the debates that ensued:

December 2008. It was published on guardian.co.uk at 00.01 GMT on Monday 1 December 2008. It can be accessed here <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/dec/01/mumbai-terror-digital-media> [last accessed on 27.7.2012]

71. Ibrahim, for instance, writes the following about the Mumbai terror attacks: "During the 60-hour siege of Mumbai, many of the eyewitness accounts emerged from social media including social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr. The explosion of reports in new media networks and the narration of terror as it emerged prompted many media critics to describe it as a "social experimentation" for new media and a coming of age for these new forms of media (Ibrahim 2009: 387)." What is interesting to note here is that the same language is used with Twitter, albeit in a modified form, as happened four years earlier during the Asian tsunami with blogs.

72. This article appeared in the PDA Digital Contents blog. A version of it can be seen at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2008/dec/05/bbc-twitter> [as accessed on 27.7.2012]

There has been a mixed reaction to the BBC's use of live reports from micro-blogging service Twitter in its coverage of the Mumbai terror attacks.

BBC News website editor Steve Herrmann has added his thoughts to the debate, including an admission that the corporation will need to take more care in how it uses lightning fast, unsubstantiated citizen posts from Twitter in the future.

... In the Indy Tom Sutcliffe argued that Twitterers shoot from the hip, whereas the hallmark of journalism is not to publish wildly because of the potential professional cost.

"A Twitterer owes no duty except to their own impressions and own state of mind, they'll pass on rumour as readily as fact," he says. "If the BBC doesn't want the cynicism to grow, it should be a bit more careful about blurring the boundary between twittering and serious reporting

(Sweeney 2008)

What was interesting about this debate, rather than rehashed arguments about journalistic objectivity, was how a set of contingent practices of using a new communication tool were given such retro-active significance by mainstream media commentators. Similar to my analysis in Chapter 6 on the Asian tsunami, the use of *Twitter* during the Mumbai terror attacks consisted, once again, of a diverse group of bloggers, journalists and other tech-savvy Mumbai residents using this emerging social media tool to produce short snippets of information during a chaotic unpredictable event. Following this we then find a complex sequence of practices through which the original news material on *Twitter* was first re-used and linked to by other media and then added on another layer of meta-commentary.

The core argument of the thesis is that international news should not be approached as a naturalised object of study or an abstraction but rather as the outcome of different practices of articulation, sometimes contradictory, through which the different practices and relationships behind it have been given temporary coherence and closure. What we see thus emerge from this examples of the meta-

commentary about Twitter during the Mumbai terror attacks are one of the most important mechanisms of such closure: what Hobart (2001) has called *intermedia commentary*. This consists of the different kind of practices whereby the news media comment on the significance of the prior practices of other news media, thus giving political significance to what often otherwise consists of a set of contingent practices reacting to a quickly-changing and chaotic situation especially in times of crisis such as the Asian tsunami and the Mumbai terror attacks. Two questions are thus raised that will be looked at in detail in this chapter: (1) how do we then best theorise these attempts at establishing closure in practices of self-commentary by the international news media itself; and (2) what could these articulations tell us more broadly about the "politics of international news" in India, and more broadly, in other parts of the world?

(a) Media commenting on media commenting on ...

Hobart (2001) has argued that media and cultural studies has historically faced a difficulty in pinning its object of study down. He notes that much has been written on the perspective of political economy or the sociology of media as well as the analysis of media content and texts and their interpretation by audiences. Yet each of these approaches presuppose that there is something substantial, something present, that is mediated: whether this is culture, meaning, reality, or something else that would pre-exist this mediation. The problem with these approaches, however, is that they require a degree of theoretical closure to work. That is, in order for us to understand what it is that is being mediated, we need to have "some idea of what the news, film or autobiography is about, in the sense of what it refers to, what the auteur

meant or how the author wished you to understand her life (2001: 5)." These attempts at closure have historically found three analytical forms in media and cultural studies. Hobart writes that "in the first the media reflect reality more or less accurately. In the second they express the inner meanings of the work. In the last, the media encourage or oblige viewers or readers to interpret the text in a certain way that requires great effort to resist (2001: 6)." Against such approaches, Hobart argues that it makes sense to consider media as *underdetermined*. By this he means that the myriad practices and differences that compose media today overflow its theoretical analysis: "what happens is far more complex, variable and underdetermined than can be encapsulated in any single account (2001: 8)." As a consequence of this, a significant part of what media does is composed of different kinds of practices whose purpose is to tell us what it is that we are, in fact, seeing, hearing or doing with the media. In other words, Hobart writes, we never "simply hear, read or watch ... there are innumerable media practices designed to convince us that what we see is real, what we hear is some revealed truth of which we have been ignorant that this is the obvious, or only, way to understand the matter at hand (2001: 6)."

According to Hobart, one important practice of closure is *commentary*. Here Hobart extends on the work of Foucault and his analysis of the different kinds of discursive mechanisms developed especially in his influential inaugural lecture "Order of Discourse" at the *Collège de France*. Foucault argued that what we commonly call knowledge (or discourse) is maintained and controlled through various mechanisms of closure, that is, through a "number of procedures, whose role is to ward off its power and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality (1981: 52)." These mechanisms of closure are both external as well as

internal to discourse. Such production of knowledge is controlled both by outside rules (such as forbidden speech, division into rationality and madness, the will to truth) but also by its internal mechanisms (such as the idea of the author and the academic discipline) as well as the imposition of roles on the speaking subject through institutions such as universities (1981: 52). One of the most important mechanism through which this this happens is what Foucault called commentary. Foucault wrote that

in what is broadly called commentary, the hierarchy between primary and secondary text plays two roles which are in solidarity with each other. On the one hand it allows the (endless) construction of new discourses: the dominance of the primary text, its permanence, its status as a discourse which can be always re-actualised, the multiple or hidden meaning with which it is credited, the essential reticence and richness which is attributed to it, all this is the basis of an open possibility of speaking. But on the other hand the commentary's only role, whatever the technique used, is to say at last what was silently articulated 'beyond', in the text. By a paradox which it always displaces but never escapes, the commentary must say for the first time what had, nonetheless, already been said, and must tirelessly repeat what had, however, never been said (1981: 57).

Such commentaries thus consist of different kinds of practices through which earlier texts or practices are given retroactive meaning. Yet the paradox of commentary is that, by commenting on what the meaning or significance of the earlier texts was, commentary opens up an endless cycle of new commentaries by repeating that which was not said in the first place. That is, commentary completes the meaning of the primary text by interpreting it *despite the impossibility of pinning down what its original meaning was*. This, Foucault argued, leads to an endless chain of commentary where previous texts are interpreted yet, in the absence of an original meaning, we are left only with more commentary. Behind this commentary and its interpretation, we can only thus find previous commentaries and interpretations. If such interpretation

cannot be brought to an end, it is because there is nothing to interpret in the first place, no essential truth that would anchor down this interpretation once and for all.

Everything is always-already interpretation. Foucault thus wrote that such an

infinite rippling of commentaries is worked from the inside by the dream of repetition in disguise at its horizon there perhaps is nothing what was at its point of departure - more recitation. Commentary exorcises the chance element of discourse by giving it its due: it allows us to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is this text itself which is said, and in a sense completed. The open multiplicity, the element of chance, are transferred, by the principle of commentary, from what might risk being said, on the number, the form, the mask, and the circumstance of the repetition. The new thing lies not in what is said but in the event of its return (1981: 58).

This problem of over-interpretation is central to the problem of cultural translation looked at in my thesis. I addressed this problem in length in my discussion of the concept the simulacra in Chapter 2. My argument was that approaches premised on representation/interpretation cannot account for the problem of difference because they claw back differences into some originals through which these differences are given their identity and meaning in the final instance. As a consequence, theoretical models premised on representation/interpretation run the risk of becoming more about prior representations/interpretations that they do about the complex and messy world of practices. We lose our object of study by turning them into simulacra: a copy of a copy without reference to an underlying reality behind it.

Hobart's analysis of the commentary is thus relevant as it provides a potential way to overcome this challenge for research posed by the concept of the simulacra. Hobart picks up on this theory of commentary and applies it to media practices and processes. In specific, he argues, that one of the key functions of media today is to be a site for commentaries whose purpose is to retro-actively determine the meaning of

prior media representations and/or practices *in the absence of these meanings in the first place*. This consists both of commentaries that are of more general in nature but also of the more specific kinds of commentaries where media comment on the prior practices and articulations by other media. Hobart writes that "among the many practices which make up the contemporary mass media, some are reflexive. That is, they are about practices themselves. Just as crucial, indeed, constitutive, set of media practices frame, represent, modify and articulate events, actions, text or what have you, these practices comment on and articulate these articulatory practices (2006: 10)." As a consequence, what Hobart calls *intermedia commentary* consists of those kinds of practices which are "meta practices, meaning not of some higher order, but simply those that that come after. I shall use 'commentary' here as a way of singling out those kinds of practices, the constitutive purpose of which is to comment of previous practices of articulation (2006: 10)."

The concept of intermedia commentary thus emerges as a relevant theoretical tool to address the problem of cultural translation. What we broadly call international news in this thesis always overflows attempts to establish closure around it. As a consequence, we need to shift our theoretical focus from looking at what international news is (as an ontological or hermeneutic category) to looking at the different ways the contingent practices and differential relationships underlying it have been given meaning through articulation and commentary (difference and repetition). Hobart asks that "if meaning is elusive - put another way, if 'the social always exceeds the limits of the attempts to constitute society' - how come it appears so substantial? I suggest it is because we engage in practices which make it so (2001: 7-8)." This is where intermedia commentaries come in. Such intermedia commentaries "frame

what is going on, give you context or tell you which bits of context are relevant to understanding the facts, tell you what sort of facts they are, what you should rely on and what distrust - in short how to appreciate and respond to what is going on (2001: 7-8)." Such commentaries in the English-language newspapers in India are of course just one among the many sites where such closures are produced but they are perhaps the most consolidated of such sites of research where such commentaries can be examined; and as such provide me with a tangible object of study for understanding the "politics" of international news in India.

(b) When is international news?

Yet if there is no grounding of meaning that ties down the rippling of commentaries, how is there any meaning at all? Is not some form of "closure" necessary? In the theory of articulation discussed earlier, I argued, following Laclau and Mouffe, that nothing pre-exists practices of articulation. Yet I also noted there must be some form of closure established for meaning to take hold in the first place. Laclau and Mouffe write "the limitation of the productivity of the signifying chain established positions that make predication possible – any discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic (1985: 122)." These moments of "partial fixation" take place by constructing temporary points of fixation called *nodal points* (point de capiton from Lacan). Laclau and Mouffe write

it is not the poverty of signifieds but, on the contrary, polysemy that disarticulates a discursive structure. That is what established the overdetermined symbolic dimension of every social identity. Society never manages to be identical to itself, as every nodal point is constituted within an intertextuality that overflows it. *The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, its turn of the constant overflowing of*

every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity (1985: 113; emphasis in the original).

In theories of articulation, such nodal points function as points of partial fixation around which closure is achieved, however temporarily. In their reading of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of articulation Jorgensen and Phillip, for instance, define nodal points as the "privileged sign around which other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point (2002: 26). They give as examples of such nodal points elements such as the "body" in medical discourse (through which other signs such as "symptoms" acquire their meaning); or "democracy" in political discourse (through which other elements such as "politics" or "masses" are given significance). One function of intermedia commentary, I thus suggest here, is the articulation of such nodal points around which contingent media-related practices and differential relationships underlying international news are given partial closure. These nodal points are historically and culturally specific and changing. They need to be empirically researched.

This understanding of international news as articulation and commentary changes how we understand the broader problem of cultural translation. Here international news is always-already the outcome of the different attempts to reify the differences that underlie it. It is always-already a simulacra without any original truth or meaning behind it that would anchor its meaning down once and for all. Research focus thus shifts away from what international news "really" is to the moments where such partial fixations and closures have been articulated. Laclau and Mouffe write that "the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a

discourse, we will call *moments* (1985: 105; emphasis mine)." The articulation of nodal points is of the most important moments where such mechanisms of closure can be critically looked at. With this in mind, a new set of questions is raised. In other words, following Goodman (1977), the question underlying our research needs to change: instead of asking *what is international news* perhaps we need to now ask *when is international news?*⁷³ That is, when is international news represented *as* something and for what purpose? And when and under what circumstances has it been commented on *as* something (political, corrupting, dangerous, insignificant) thus giving it political significance in public debates in India and elsewhere?

This chapter will thus provide the final entry point to the problem cultural translation by looking at two sets of intermedia commentaries in the English-language print news media in India where such partial fixations have been produced. It ties together the discussions from the previous chapters by focusing on the two narratives that have structured the thesis throughout: the articulation of international news through its political significance; and the construction of markers of difference around what is Indian and what is not underlying international news. In particular, the thesis will focus on two such sets of debates in the English-language print news media where refractions of these themes can be found:

1. When has international news coverage been commented on as political in the Indian English-language print news media, and especially during major

73. In her theory of art, Goodman (1977) argued that the question 'what is art?' was a wrong question to ask. This forces the inquirer into postulating some essential truth behind that is unchanging. Goodman argued that is better to ask instead, when is art? This allowed to explore certain characteristic of art that were related more to context and historical period than timeless essences. See also Kvak (2011: 96).

international news events such as the First Persian Gulf War, September 11 and the Attacks of Afghanistan, and the Second Persian Gulf and their news coverage in India?

2. When has international news been commented on as India (and when not), and especially in the debates around allowing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Indian newspapers, where the link between politics, national identity and newspapers was articulated and commented on in competing and often contradictory ways in the news media in India itself?

3. The politics of international news (part II)

In Chapter 3 we looked at the broader historical changes that have taken place to Indian news environment following the liberalisation of India's economy in 1991. It was argued that the dual forces of economic globalisation and technological change had opened up new kinds of relationships through which international news could be accessed in India. Following the end of government monopoly on international news sources, there was now - at least potentially - a proliferation of international news channels journalists and audiences could rely on to access original international news about major world events and themes. Given these articulations of change, the first set of intermedia commentaries will look at how the international news coverage of three major world news events - the First Persian Gulf War (1990-1991), September 11 and attacks on Afghanistan (2001-2002) and the Second Persian Gulf War or Iraq War

(2003-2008) - have been commented on by the English-language newspapers in India. In this section, I ask the following questions. When has this international news coverage been imagined as relevant for India's own news media and its international news coverage? Through what kind of nodal points has this politics of international news been articulated in these commentaries? And finally, what have been some of the changes and shifts in how the relationship between international news and Indian news media has been articulated since 1991 when India opened up its economy to global capitalism?

(a) CNN and the First Persian Gulf War

On the 2nd of August, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. As a consequence of this, an US-led coalition of forces quickly deployed forces to defend Kuwait. These forces attacked Iraq on the 17th of January, 1991, followed by a ground assault that led to the expulsion of Iraq out of Kuwait. The First Persian Gulf War was characterised from the beginning by its live news coverage and especially the visible role a new satellite news network, CNN, was given because of its live coverage of the war. For the first time, audiences across the world were able to watch the war "live" as embedded reporters provided news coverage alongside the US troops and live television feeds showed missiles hitting their targets. As a result, the news coverage of the First Persian Gulf War has been widely known for this "CNN Effect", a term indicating the changing role 24-hour live TV coverage has on government policy and sometimes on the events itself. Robinson (1999) describes the relevance of CNN for

international news coverage the following way:

during the 1980s the proliferation of new technologies transformed the potential of the news media to provide a constant flow of global real-time news. Tiananmen Square and the collapse of communism symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall became major media events communicated to Western audiences instantaneously via TV news media. By the end of the decade the question was being asked as to what extent this 'media pervasiveness' had impacted upon government, particularly the process of foreign policy making ... the phrase 'CNN effect' encapsulated the idea that real-time communications technology could provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to global events (1999: 301; See also Bahador 2007)

This international news coverage of the First Persian Gulf War also stirred abundant debate and commentary in the Indian English-language newspapers about the shifting political significance of the international news media for India's own international news reporting. Below are some of the many examples where this relationship has been commented on in Indian English-language newspapers:

On the 27th of November, 1990, an article in media section of *The Telegraph (Calcutta)* titled "The Bias in the Western Press" commented on the international news coverage of the First Persian Gulf War the following way:

How does the western Press report India and other developing countries? Gratuitously, incompletely and, sometimes, dishonestly.

The western media's reporting of Iraq and IOK (Iraq occupied Kuwait) has been particularly unfair, lurching clumsily between bias and untruth.

(Merchant 1990)

A few themes emerge from these intermedia commentaries. First of all, because of the dominant role the Western news media has in covering such major international crises, Indian news media has to rely on original news material always produced elsewhere for its own coverage. Secondly, this dependency has imagined political

consequence to how Indian newspapers themselves cover major world events such as the First Persian Gulf War for their own audiences. Another article in the *Telegraph (Calcutta)* similarly comments on the significance of this Western dominance:

Bias in the western press is all the more dangerous because it is backed by technology and professional expertise. Prejudiced, dishonest comment that comes dressed up in such impeccable clothes is often credible, which is why so many newspapers in India (and other developing countries) dutifully reproduce news and opinion from western media. It is a habit that will be difficult to break, but it is crucial that it is broken.

(Merchant 1990)

The articles I have cited here are only two among many similar examples. We can also find similar political articulations in the commentaries that have addressed directly the role *CNN* has had on the changing international news environment. An article published on January 5, 1992, in the Mumbai-based *Sunday Observer*, titled "CNN: Who's recording whose history?" commented on *CNN's* coverage of the war the following way:

Everybody who watched CNN's coverage of George Bush's prosecution of the Gulf War knows it. It was the first war in history of the human race in which millions of people became witnesses - and that too in the safety and comfort of their own homes. In the process of its operations as a unique, live news telecaster, CNN itself over night became a famous newsmaker. Much in the legendary tradition of *BBC*, in 1991 it became a byword for reliable, go-getter news peddler.

(Kulkarni 1992)

This popularity of CNN, however - the article is quick to claim - hides the fact that the Indian news media is dependent on a Western news channel that primarily reflects US geopolitical interests. Furthermore, while the relationships underlying international news are changing because of changes to technologies of communication

and developments such as *CNN*, these changes do not necessarily benefit the interest of India. The article continues by stating that

the imagery most evoked in the kudos showered on CNN is Marshall McLuhan's prophetic "Global Village". Who can deny that the world has been unstoppably shrinking because of the sovereignty-defying power of modern communications media. Today no nation can even think of jamming media products beamed from other lands and bounced off by satellites orbiting round the earth. But the question is: Who is making these media products? And who is transcending these boundaries?

The grim reality is that news still comes from the West - from networks like CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS, or BBC (in TV media) and from agencies like AP, Reuter, AFP, UPI, Kyodo (in print media). And the boundaries that are being transcended round-the-clock are India's, Venezuela's, Zimbabwe's and of all those countries in the former Third World which continue to be information have-nots

(Kulkarni 1992)

Echoing the earlier NWICO debates and theories of cultural/media imperialism, the arrival of CNN is thus articulated as metonymic of the broader changes taking place in the international news environment. The article says that the world "has been unstoppably shrinking," boundaries are broken but those who are "transcending these boundaries" are still the same Western dominant news organisations: "The grim reality is that news still comes from the West - from networks like CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS, or BBC (in TV media) and from agencies like AP, Reuter, AFP, UPI, Kyodo (in print media)."

While such commentaries on the international news coverage of the First Persian Gulf War were limited in the archival material, a few things can nonetheless be noted from them. First of all, these articles show a historical continuity with the debates popular during the Cold War in India and the NWICO debates about Western dominance of international news flows. Secondly, because of the biases in the

Western news coverage, Indian newspapers remain dependent on news material produced by these Western news organisations that is ultimately detrimental to Indian interests. And while some changes have happened to the international news environment due to the emergence of new satellite channels such as *CNN*, the international news environment still remains dominated by Western geopolitical interests. What can be thus extrapolated from these examples is that the commentaries still reflect the pre-economic liberalisation discourse where political value is imposed on Western global capitalism and the international news system that is a part of it. This discourse as we have seen in Chapter 3, was dominant in Indian public debates from the colonial times until at least economic liberalisation. In other words, the *nodal point* through which international news is articulated in these commentaries is one of "cultural imperialism" or that India has to suffer in an unequal system of international news production. The dominance of the Western media on the system of international news is articulated within the framework of geopolitical interests of the Cold War political climate.

(b) September 11 and Attacks of Afghanistan

This discourse of cultural imperialism, however, has started to change ten years ahead. The same dependency is still noted in the commentaries on September 11 and the attacks on Afghanistan but the attribution of political value has shifted. A significant amount of academic research has been written about the international news coverage of September 11 and the events that followed. Sreberny and Peterson write in their overview of international news research that "the significance and centrality of news media in bringing global events to our living room has never been

more evident. September 11, 2001, proved that as a global audience of millions watched in shock and impotent horror, sometimes from thousands of miles away ... [they] often knew better than the people trapped in each tower what was going on (Sreberny and Peterson 2004: 4)." This news coverage also stirred abundant commentary in the English-language newspapers in India. What, however, was different about these intermedia commentaries was that there had been a subtle shift in how the political significance of this international news coverage was articulated. In other words, similar dependency on Western news organisations was noted but the explanatory cause behind this dependency had changed. Systemic problems in international news coverage was now imagined less according to the earlier framework of cultural imperialism and more around themes of globalisation popular in public debates in India at the time. The globalisation of capitalism, it was argued, was also reflected in how this international news coverage affected India's own news coverage. Here are few examples of the commentaries that I found about September 11 and the following attacks on Afghanistan:

An article in *the Hindu (Mumbai edition)* titled "Mesmerised by the West" published on October 16, 2001, commented the following about these attacks:

FOR the Westside story of the ongoing Afghan conflict, just switch over to CNN. Those who do not understand Uncle Sam's language – and I know more than a handful – they can plug into one of the Indian language channels. The chances are, they would be parroting the same stuff, same clippings, same visuals. Only the language would be indigenous, rest, including the deliberate slants in audiovisual reporting will be just the same.

(Salam 2001)

As we can see, the same dependency is observed in this article. Even the vernacular newspapers in India have to rely on a framing of the events provided by the dominant

Western news providers. Despite the differences involved in translating international news to the Indian context, the news material re-used remains nonetheless virtually identical. The article notes that "the chances are, they would be parroting the same stuff, the same clippings, the same visuals ... including the deliberate slants in audiovisual reporting." What is different now, however, is how the political significance of this dependency is articulated. While the problem is the same as it was 10 years ago, now the blame is cast less on cultural imperialism but rather a kind of homogenisation of viewpoints brought about by the globalisation of capitalism. The article continues:

But it is the Indian viewer who has been short-changed in the coverage of international events, post September 11 - not that they were remarkably better off before the unfortunate blasts.

At such a delicate time when it is an absolute must to check and cross-check your facts before rushing in with your sound byte and visual clippings, almost all of the Indian channels have taken the word of foreign channels as the Gospel truth ... for instance, when almost all the India news channels rushed to provide "exhaustive coverage" of the New York twin tower mayhem, it was easy to accept what the CNN guys were waiting the world to know.

... This global catastrophe has proved once and for all, that whatever the pretensions, many Indian channels are nothing but dutiful messengers of the stuff relayed by foreign visual media. Much like those newspapers which have no foreign correspondent and rely exclusively on tie-up with American and British papers for giving their readers international news.

(Salam 2001)

The changes in these articles are only subtle in their emphasis. The Indian viewer (as a customer) is not getting what he/she deserves from this international news coverage and its re-use by the Indian news media. The same dependency is noted but the attribution is now less on US geopolitical interests or imperialistic agenda as it was 10 years ago and more the commercial dominance of the Euro-American news organisations. Take as an example another article published on the 21st of November

in the news section of *the Indian Express (Mumbai edition)*. The article titled "Their television, their coverage" says:

Today it is these two great networks that transmit images of events they think are interesting. Obviously, the agenda for what has to be covered is set in London and Atlanta (Georgia) where the CNN is headquartered.

... But don't Indian networks have foreign coverage? They do. But every clip – barring an occasional effort - is bought from foreign agencies. And these agencies will prioritise the coverage according to their interests. What happens in New York or London will obviously take precedence over what happens in Mumbai. Some people have been grumbling about the media lately. There will be a great deal to grumble when a major war gets underway in our backyard and we will not be in the frame.

(Naqvi 2001).

The political articulation of international news is obvious. If the war begins in Afghanistan (India's backyard), Indian audiences will again have to rely for their own international news on a news agenda set in either in Atlanta (CNN) or in London (BBC). Another example of this can be found in an article published in *the Indian Express (Mumbai Edition)* on the 15th of September titled "Your Master's Voice - It's My Enemy, It's Your War." This article articulates the historical continuity between earlier debates on cultural imperialism and the international news coverage of September 11, 2001, the following way:

In the new age of electronic communications, information, like popular culture, remains a one-way street - as imbalanced as the McBride Commission found it in 1980. Take the case of India. For all the 60-odd TV channels we receive, the four homegrown channels and approximately 400 newspapers, for all the unfettered freedom of the Internet, when Bush comes to shove, right here in our neighbourhood, what do we do? We turn to a few foreign (American) media organisations. Last Monday, during the second wave of air attacks, 10 channels (we receive) covered the White House briefings and strikes. Of them, seven relayed CNN's coverage (DD News, Zee News, NHK, TV5, DW, CNN and PTV) and two Fox/Sky News (Star News and Aaj Tak). BBC completed the numbers. There's a subcontinental joke here: PTV and DD depend on CNN for "identical" war coverage. And despite Pakistan's long-standing ties with the Taliban, it prefers CNN or AlJazeera to communicate with the world.

The print media is no different: see our headlines, read their stories. Count the

number of bylines/photos credits from AP, AFP, Reuters, New York Times, Los Angeles Times / Washington Post, Sunday Times, The Guardian. Often, our premier English language newspapers publish stories from identical American sources. At times, the media's vision was so narrow, it could have pierced the eye of the needle.

(Bajpai 2001)

This article notes that even if there have been changes to the international news environment, alternative viewpoints are still missing because of the dominance of the Euro-American news organisations in producing the original news material for the rest of the world to re-use. As a result, virtually identical text and pictures are re-used in India to such a degree that the article concludes by saying that "at times, the media's vision was so narrow, it could have pierced the eye of the needle."

While cautious in providing conclusive answers based on my reading of these media commentaries, what seems to happen in the period of ten years between the First Persian Gulf War and the events of September 11 and attacks of Afghanistan is a subtle discursive shift in how international news is imagined. While the dependency remains observed almost in identical ways, what the political relevance of this dependency is imagined to be has shifted subtly. In the earlier articles a more distinct narrative of US geopolitical interests and cultural imperialism was present. Here, instead of a discourse of cultural imperialism, a new nodal point of "globalisation" seems to emerge at least insofar as the causal agent for this dependency is not as clear-cut as in the earlier commentaries. This discursive shift is even more visible when we look at the commentaries of the Second Persian Gulf War some years later. Here the role of the Qatar-based Arab satellite news channel, *Al-Jazeera*, has emerged as an alternative to such Western dominance in the international news environment. In this shifting discourse of globalisation and capitalism, what is now argued is that India

needs to compete more effectively in the global environment to rectify some of the political inequalities in the system of international news.

(b) Al Jazeera and Second Persian Gulf War

In 2003, following years of controversy around Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq, the US and the UK, together with a loose coalition of countries, attacked and invaded Iraq. The US troops remained in Iraq, in one form or another, for another 9 years making this a highly controversial war internationally. The media coverage of what is called the Second Persian Gulf War also stirred up an abundance of international news commentaries and analysis. If the first Persian Gulf War was characterised by the *CNN Effect*, this time around it was the *Al Jazeera Effect*, which caused debate, both academic and public. Seib writes that

We are seeing a comprehensive reconnecting of the global village and reshaping how the world works ... Al Jazeera is a symbol for this new, media-centric world ... more than that, Al-Jazeera is a paradigm of new media's influence. Ten years ago, there was much talk about "the CNN effect," the theory that news coverage - especially gripping visual storytelling - was influencing foreign policy throughout the world. Today "the Al Jazeera effect" takes that one significant step further. Just as "the CNN effect" is not about CNN alone, so too is "the Al Jazeera about much more than the Qatar-based media company. The concept encompasses the use of new media as tools in every aspect of global affairs (2008: 1)."

Similarly, in the commentaries found in the Indian English-language newspapers, there are also a number of examples where the emerging political significance of *Al-Jazeera* is noted. Furthermore, a subtle discursive shift has again taken place in how the politics of international news is being articulated. Whereas during the First Persian Gulf War, the relationship between Indian news media and international news was articulated through a paradigm of cultural imperialism, and during September 11 and

attacks of Afghanistan more through a paradigm of globalisation, here the relationship is articulated to include the competitive challenge brought about by *Al-Jazeera*. This challenge is imagined in two ways. Firstly, what once was a dualistic relationship between the "West and the rest" in these commentaries, we now find an emergence of a more multi-polar world including a variety of players such as the Euro-American news media, *Al-Jazeera* and the Indian news media. This in turn reflects the changes brought about in the international news environment by global capitalism and changing technologies of communication. Secondly, when we look at these commentaries, a similar dependency on Western news media is still noted. However, unlike before, this dependency is now articulated more through a discourse of competition. *Al-Jazeera* now provides a positive alternative to western dominance, and this is an alternative that the Indian news media should emulate in order to be able to compete in the international news environments. Let us look at some examples where these kinds of political refractions of these intermedia commentaries can be found:

An article published in *The Telegraph (Calcutta)* on the 19th of April, 2003, titled "No News is Good News" commented on the Euro-American coverage of news events such as the Second Persian Gulf War the following way:

what is much more dangerous today is that news networks for the most part in the US, except for the BBC, span the whole planet, and everyone, literally everyone, hears of sees or reads news purveyed by these giant networks. Put it in other words, no one is free of the images of "reality" that are being poured into homes through television, radio and the press ... Because they are the ones who create reality today. The media networks working out of the West, which inevitably, and tragically, begin to influence the smaller and more fragile networks

(Bose 2003).

The same dependency is observed here as found in the earlier commentaries. These

dominant Euro-American organisations are in the position to create "reality" for news networks in other parts of the world that have to rely on this original news material for their own coverage of major world events and themes. However, there is an alternative now: *Al-Jazeera*. An article in *The Asian Age (Mumbai)*, published on the 22nd of July, 2004, titled "The Voice of the Other" comments on the significance of *Al-Jazeera* on the international news environment the following way:

If CNN heralded the era of 24-hours news television that defined the Gulf War (discounting the Iraq-Iran war) the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the more recent American invasion and occupation of Iraq were defined by *Al-Jazeera*. It provided an alternative voice for the Arab world hungry for a fresh new perspective and it beat CNN at its own game by persistently scooping stories of Osama among others. The voice on the other side was never louder (Singh 2004).

It is interesting to note here how the use of language has changed from a language of domination to a language of competition: audiences in the Arab world have been "hungry for a new perspective;" it "beat CNN at its own game;" and other similar phrases are used to explain the challenge posed by *Al-Jazeera*. Similar commentaries can be found in another article titled "Media Coup" published by *Times of India (Mumbai)* on the 15th of October, 2005. Here the rise of *Al Jazeera* is placed within a longer history of international news in India.

Back in 1991 CNN created a stir with its saturation coverage of Gulf War, when it seemed the round-the-clock coverage of international news has finally come or age. The excitement, however, soon faded when it became clear that, at least as far as the one-billion global audience for English-language programmes is concerned, Anglo-American news channels dominated; and those channels hewed very closely to the official views of their respective governments when it came to coverage of international affairs. This monopoly, however, is about to be broken ... Western domination of the information order had been questioned in the 1970s, but attempts within the UN to set up an alternative information order had faltered because it had been sponsored by authoritarian governments who wanted simply to propagate their own views. *Al Jazeera*, however, is different ... if it can successfully provide an alternative to

CNN and BBC, it may blaze a trail for Indian TV channels to follow one day
(Anonymous 2005)

This changing use of language in this article clearly reflects this shift towards a discourse of competition that we can see in these articles. What the example of *Al-Jazeera* shows for Indian news channels is that there can be now an alternative to the "monopoly" of the Euro-American news channels as the Euro-American news organisations do not serve the needs of "one billion global audience of English-language programmes." In other words, the dominance of the Western media on the international news environment can, and has been, beat at its own game in the competitive international news environment. What therefore is relevant about this commentary of *Al-Jazeera* is that, compared to before, there is now an alternative that India can follow when faced with this historical dominance that Euro-American news organisations have had on the international news environment. What Indian news channels thus need to do is change this dependency *not through political action* but, similar to *Al-Jazeera*, by *becoming more effective in the global marketplace*. An article titled "Through Their Eyes and Ears" published in *the Indian Express (Mumbai edition)* on the 23rd of July, 2004, comments on this the following way:

The need for a Multimedia Indian International news network is now more urgent than ever before. There was always considerable imbalance in the international information order. But the sources of news and information in the hands of western monopolies are becoming instruments of manipulations. Partisan agendas are transforming news into propaganda
(Naqwi 2004).

It is important to note the framing again here. Al-Jazeera is now given as an alternative of what can be potentially achieved by an Indian satellite channel ready to

compete with the Euro-American news channels. The article continues that

The arrival of Arab channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al Arabia has been of no use to us because they are in Arabic. There are reports that Al Jazeera is about to launch an English channel soon. It will, of course, be a pity that the world's largest democracy will supplement its diet of information from the Arab world through channels sponsored by sheikdoms known neither for democracy nor free press

(Naqvi 2004b).

Similarly, in another article titled "Embedded in a foreign frame" published on the 15th of October, 2004, in *the Indian Express (Mumbai edition)* the same framing is provided. Here the article enthuses that India's rise as a regional economic and political superpower needs to be mirrored by its news media. This article comments that

away from the upheaval, secure in the Indian land-mass, is the Indian journalist. He is covering a great story, of course, because I truly believe the 21st century will in large part be India's story. But the great Indian drama is taking place in a regional and a global context. The Indian story will not make sense unless it is seen as part of complex global linkages. If our journalism is focused exclusively on India, who will inform us about Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Israel. Since we're now engaging in the eastern flank, where are our networks in Yangon, Bangkok, Jakarta, even Dhaka.

The depth of our democracy, satisfactory economic growth, well equipped armed forces will have multipliers attached to them if we have a global TV-radio network to inform us about the rest of the world and inform the world about us

(Naqvi 2004b).

What is thus needed is an Indian international news channel that also serves its economic and geopolitical interests. The problem with the dependency on Euro-American news organisations, therefore, is not anymore the result of the aggressive promotion of a Western imperialistic agenda but rather the result of an absence of a successful and competitive Indian channel that would provide an Indian viewpoint to

international news. India is now experiencing a great story of economic growth and increased geopolitical importance, yet without an Indian news channel competing in the international market this story will not get adequate coverage. Even more so, the article finally notes, Indian journalists are in the position to better compete with the Western news media because India's proximity to countries such as Iraq. The nodal point underlying international news has shifted from "cultural imperialism" to that of "capitalistic competition" through which the political significance of international news in India has been articulated.

What we can thus infer from these intermedia commentaries found in the English-language newspapers in India between 1990-2007 is a discursive shift around how the politics of international news has been articulated. In my reading of these commentaries, the same dependency remains in place in the differential relationships that underlie international news environment, but the imposition of political value on these relationships has shifted: first from a discourse of "cultural imperialism" to a discourse of "globalisation" and, finally, to an emerging discourse that I have tentatively called here "global capitalist competition."

4. The politics of difference

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 I argued that we can trace a post-colonial ambiguity around what is considered Indian and what is not in our understanding of international news in India. As a result of this, I argued, that we should not approach these categories (Indian/not-Indian) as naturalised categories. Rather, the constitutive differences underlying them are also the outcome of practices of

articulation, sometimes contested and contradictory, through which markers of difference have been constructed. Because of this we need to shift our analytical focus from what these differences are to where and when they have been articulated and for what purpose? With this in mind, the second question that I was interested in when looking at these intermedia commentaries in the Indian English-language newspapers was when were, in fact, such markers of difference drawn between Indian news media and international news? And what could such shifting articulation of difference tell us more broadly about how Indian English-language news media positions itself *vis à vis* the international news media? In the archival material, I found a set of commentaries where these questions of difference were refracted in complicated ways showing us some of the shifting contours of how Indian news media imagines its changing role in the liberalisation of India's economy and its relationship to global capitalism. These commentaries revolved around a set of debates that took place in 2002 about allowing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Indian print news industry. Sonwalkar (2001b) has argued that in these heated debates many of the key antagonisms of India's contemporary society could be analysed. He writes that

few words have aroused passions across India as the word 'foreign' has; or rather, its Hindi equivalent, 'videshi'. The distrust of the 'foreign' would appear to be deeply embedded in the political and social life of the country in the context of invasions and conquests in its 5000-year history. The distrust of the 'videshi' was further fuelled when Gandhi used the concept of 'swadeshi' as one of the foremost devices of protest. Verily, the protests were not too different in their intensity from the bonfires of the pre-independence era, except that they were evident more in the columns of the press than in public places. The target of attack was the Narasimha Rao government and the foreign press (mainly western); and among the protesting newspapers were those launched by the British in the nineteenth century (2001b: 744-745)."

These debates raised fundamental questions about what it meant to be Indian (*swadeshi*) and what it meant to be Western/foreign/international (*videshi*) in the self-

definition of the Indian news industry itself. More importantly, these debates were largely carried out in the news commentaries - editorials, columns, and op-eds - in the Indian English-language newspapers. These commentaries thus provided a concrete object of study where the shifting markers of difference between what is considered Indian and what is considered not in the very definition of international news in India itself. During the first round of these debates in 1991-1995, Indian government had decided not to allow Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Indian newspapers because of widespread and opposition towards them. These debates, however, re-surfaced in 2002, when *Mid-Day* and other newspapers proposed to attract foreign investment to finance their expanding business operations. This was at the time illegal under a law in India that had been in place since 1955. A debate once again ensued whether limits on FDI for Indian newspapers should be changed to adapt to a more liberalised economic environment India. Finally, on the 25th of June, 2002, the government in India decided to allow foreign investors - including foreign media groups - to buy up to 26 per cent of Indian news publications and up to 74 per cent in non-news publications.⁷⁴ This decision was preceded and followed by a widespread debate about what the political significance of this decision would be for the Indian newspapers and, more broadly, to the Indian society as a whole. In these debates battle lines were drawn around what it means to be Indian and what it means to be foreign in the self-definition of the news industry in India itself.

74. This law, however, came with rather heavy stipulations, once again, showing how news media was articulated as politically significant in India. For instance, the majority of the shareholders accepting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have to be resident Indians; Three quarters of the board of members accepting FDI must be resident Indians; the Managing Director must be a resident Indian; key post on editorial boards must be with resident Indians etc.

(a) When is swadeshi?

In the commentaries that opposed FDI, the arguments made reflected the historical debates we have already looked at in Chapter 3. These commentaries also articulated a strong historical significance newspapers have had in the Indian society and politics more broadly. The common argument was that, if the newspaper was owned by foreigners, it could not provide an Indian viewpoint to the Indian political debates. This was argued to have detrimental consequences to India's political system as a whole. Here are a few examples where the markers of difference between *swadeshi* and *videshi* have been reified through this historical articulation of news as one of central pillars of important political activity in India. In an article in *The Hindu (Mumbai)* titled “Protect the Press” published on the 23rd of October, 2000, Katya comments on why FDI should not be allowed in the Indian newspapers the following way:

Pathetic indeed is the mindset of those who put newspapers on par with consumer items and plead for exposure of the print media to the winds of change now blowing in various sectors. Newspapers are different from soaps, textiles, electronic gadgets, cars and the growing list of fancy items catering for the material needs of people. The present media is the vehicle of information, of interpretation and analysis helping people help themselves to understand issues, political and social, national, regional and international – and to play their role as citizens. .. *Newspapers are a part of the political and democratic system and, as such, are not to be treated like its other segments. Would the advocates of the media opening-up favour foreigners playing a role in the political system (2000; my emphasis)?*

As we can see here, newspapers in India are strongly differentiated from more material forms of activity such as manufacturing. News deals with political ideas and, as a consequence, is closely linked to the democratic process in India. The differences underlying this division between *swadheshi/videshi* are thus articulated through its

imagined political significance: foreigners can only represent foreign interests thus corrupting political system with their ownership. We can also see similar articulations of difference in other articles opposing FDI at the time. In an article also published in *the Hindu (Mumbai)* on the 31st of October, 2002, titled "Perils of Opening Print Media" the author positions India's newspapers within the long history of the political press. This article argues that

the press is one of the pillars on which the democratic polity stands. Imagine the pillar, partly Indian, partly foreign. The nation, buffeted by divisive and disruptive forces, cannot take a chance of opening the print media to those who are fanning separation or those who are wanting to impose their way of thinking. In our country, the printed word is sacred. There is a blind faith in whatever appear in the press

(Nayar 2002).

Echoing the post-colonial debates looked at in Chapter 3, here the "inner core" of ideas behind the Indian post-colonial identity (Chatterjee 1993; Hansen 2001) is differentiated from the outer core of "material values" that is excluded from this self-definition. In other words, in these commentaries opposing FDI, the press is fundamentally considered inside - a central part of Indian democracy and the definition of what it means to be Indian - and thus it cannot be allowed to be corrupted by foreign or outside interests. Material goods such as technology can come from the outside as this will not affect fundamentally what is "inside" India but the purity of the press needs to be kept intact as ideas are different from material goods, more sacred and more important. The article comments on why foreigners should never be allowed inside this political self-imagination of what is Indian and what is not in the Indian print news industry the following way:

Those not attuned to our ways, traditions and multicultures can misuse this trust and cause great harm. Foreign companies are already a force in the country. The print media may give them political clout which they can use to push their economic agenda or even the nefarious political one. It is true that a few Indian press barons have spoilt the profession and equates it with the industry. For them, a bar of soap is no different from a daily. They have converted their newspapers in to a dustbin for dumping drivel, film gossip and other trivia. This does not mean that foreign newspapers should be allowed to "improve" them or compete with them. It is our battle and we shall fight it our own way ... I am at loss to comprehend what foreigners entry will do. In terms of machinery, even the medium press in India possesses the latest. The technology we have is a modern as anywhere in the world. Journalists are inferior to none. All that foreign companies may impart is a bit of Westernism, consumerism and a bit of tabloid syndrome

(Nayar 2002).

The same binaries between material goods and non-material "spiritual" goods found in the earlier post-colonial debates are refracted here once again. The negative changes that have come to the Indian news industry thus always comes from the outside and from not the inside: from what this author calls "Westernism, consumerism and a bit of tabloid syndrome." In an another article again published in *The Hindu*, titled the "Sweep of Globalisation" published on the 1st of July, 2002, this close relationship between Indian newspapers and politics is also commented on. The article writes that

and yet, the entry of foreign capital into this sector causes disquiet. For, as everybody knows by now, news reports do not only chronicle events that have taken place in the country and outside the country objectively, they inevitably prioritise these happenings. They report some occurrences, exclude many, highlight some and downplay others. In the process, the way an event is represented, interpreted and evaluated becomes more important than the event itself. At times, representations lose connection with what is being represented. They acquire an autonomous existence.

(Chandhoke 2002)

Here news is articulated as a selective practice of representing reality. What the news media does is produce a selective interpretation of reality for the audiences who consume these news. It is interesting to note here that what the foreign investment

into this fragile business of representing reality risks doing is turning news in India into a *simulacrum*. The author writes that "at times representations lose connections with what is being represented (Chandhoke 2002)." The same theoretical criticisms, and occasional nostalgia, about the corrupting influence of news that has been popular in theoretical debates in Western academia now finds its own version in the Indian news media commentaries. A newspaper, the article argues, sets "the term for politics, for culture, for society, for the economy as well as words set the terms for politics, for culture, for society, for the economy as well as set the terms for our responses to these events and happenings (Chandhoke 2002)." With such enormous imagined political power, it is thus important to not let foreigners corrupt this power or lose the intimate connection the Indian journalists have to the underlying reality, or the Indian truth, that news claims to be able to accurately represent. The article finally asks that "should be let non-Indians who are not of our world, who do not share our pains and our sorrows and who more importantly have agendas of their own, influence the business of making and disseminating news? Should we allow others to represent us as a people even when they have no stakes in the system, except the stake of profit? The questions are truly troublesome (Chandhoke 2002)."

Indeed, as Sonwalkar argues, when we look at the first round of debates on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in 1991-1995, the differences between who supported FDI and who opposed it could be quite clearly drawn within the different sections of Indian society. In the first round of these debates, those in favour of FDI saw no major difference between newspapers and other industry or a threat to the Indian political system emerging from such investment. Those in opposition to it, on the contrary, argued that allowing foreign investment would "amount to legitimizing

cultural imperialism which, in course of time, might assume political dimensions and pose a threat to national sovereignty (2001b: 746)." The opinion was also divided between newspapers such as *The Hindu* (cited here in three examples) who had a more critical editorial policy towards FDI and business-oriented papers that tended to support FDI more vocally.

(b) When is *videshi*?

In the first round of debates, the debates against FDI won and the government backed down from its plan to open up newspapers to foreign investment. As Sonwalkar summarises the debates (quoting from the Washington Post) "no proposal has prompted such a visceral anti-foreign reaction as the one to open India's print media to international investors (Sonwalkar 2001b: 746)." In the second round of debates in 2002, however, the contrary was the case: FDI was now allowed in Indian newspapers, albeit with stipulations and limitations. When we look at these commentaries about supporting the proposal for FDI, we can see a panoply of different opinions emerge in support of foreign investment. Here the argument is two-fold: on the one hand, ownership, while important, is not intrinsic to how Indian newspapers operate and this will not have significant political consequences. Rather investment will be good for the industry as it will make it more competitive. On the other hand, foreign media has always-already been a part of the Indian newspapers so this proposal brings nothing new to the situation. Drawing such strong markers of difference around what is Indian and what is not is thus neither factually correct nor

politically expedient. I will provide below some examples where such supporting opinions were voiced and how these commentaries articulated the boundaries of difference about what it means to be Indian and not in Indian. An article in the *Business Standard* titled "Who's Afraid of FDI in print?" published on the 17th of July, 2002, said the following:

The fact is that foreign media entered the gates long back without too many people sounding any alarm or being the worse for it. The breaching of borders by radio in ancient history. The satellite television "invasion" is more than a decade old. The earlier beachheads established are being enlarged. Foreign newspapers, journals, books and cinematic films are freely available in the country and foreign wire services feed the Indian media, albeit through the filter of a domestic agency. Nothing has been subverted.

(Verghese 2002)

Here the strict division between what is Indian as argued by the opponents of FDI is seen as historically circumspect. The boundaries of difference, which these arguments rely on, do not apply anymore (nor have they never really) as there has always been foreign influence in the news media in India. This foreign influence - foreign newspapers, journals, books and cinematic films - have thus always-already been a part of the news industry in India and, as a result, more FDI will not change much. On the contrary, it will make the industry more competitive and India a better place (as compared to shutting out all that is foreign). An another article in the *Business Standard* titled "What are they afraid of?" published on the 6th of April, 2002, similarly commented on FDI the following way:

Actually, foreign investment in the print media is about the best thing that has happened, and it was inevitable ... so much of the content and style of foreign TV (news, reporting, soaps, music) has been appropriated as indisputably Indian, the reverse is also true - the opening up of Indian TV has played a key role in the current craze for Bollywood in the entertainment and fashion industries of the West. Far from corrupting Indian culture, foreign channels

have helped exporting it in unexpected ways
(Sethi 2002).

According to this commentary, India has already had access to the benefits of globalisation. This has allowed not only foreign influence to come in but also for all other kinds of "contra-flows (Thussu 2007)" to take place from India to the rest of the world. Global competition in other media forms has only led to positive outcomes in exporting Indian culture to the rest of the world. There is no reason, it is argued in these commentaries, why the same could not happen in the newspaper industry. Another other article, titled "The Pros and Cons" published in the *Deccan Herald (New Delhi)* on the 30th of June, 2002, argues similarly, placing the debates in a longer historical context in India. It comments that

the 1955 resolution needs to be looked at afresh in the context of present socio-political reality and communication revolution.

The masses are guided more by the electronic media. The notion that newspapers mould public opinion is fallacious, now it is the TV that does it.

Foreign capital is necessary for the Indian press, particularly small and medium newspapers, to compete with big newspapers that enjoy a monopoly position. Smaller publications suffer in the circulation war. Government has permitted foreign equity in electronic media, so its denial to print is discriminatory.

The ownership issue is divorced from management control because investors are looking for financial rewards and not management control. The print media is already dependent on foreign news agencies

(Anon 2002).

What emerges from this commentary is that, on the one hand, India's news media is already dependent on foreign news agencies so FDI will not change much; and, on the other hand, print news media does not hold such a sacrosanct position in Indian society anymore. On the contrary, since the initial decision to block foreign news organisations in India in 1955, the media environment has changed significantly with

the advent of the new communication technologies and allowing foreign investment now will only help make the news environment better and more competitive.

(c) The politics of international news in India

Other readings of these debates are of course possible. What is suggested here, however, are that these two sets of debates reflect the broader discourse that has taken place in India since it liberalised its economy in 1991. While such an interpretive discourse analysis is always limited, my reading of these commentaries nonetheless shows some of the parameters of how the politics of international news and the politics of difference have been articulated in the public discourse in India itself. A few ideas to conclude with:

1. In these commentaries, we can find a continuing dependency on Euro-American news organisations in India. What has changed, however, is how the relationships underlying this dependency have been articulated and what nodal points have been used to do this. In particular, reflecting broader changes in Indian society, there seems to have been a gradual shift from a discourse of cultural imperialism to a discourse of global capitalist competition: from a nodal point of "cultural imperialism" first to a nodal point of "globalisation" and finally to "competition." In other words, the political significance of international news remains in tact but its particular characteristics have shifted from a Cold War criticism of cultural imperialism and US geopolitical dominance to a new assertion of the growing role India has in the global economy;

2. In these commentaries, markers of difference are also still drawn around what is considered Indian and what is not in the self-definition of the news industry in India. But these too are shifting. Whereas in the earlier debates on FDI, the opposing side was able to win the argument by equating ownership with foreign domination, in 2002 these lines were becoming more complicated. The side opposing FDI articulated a more strict division based on the historical role the print news industry has had in the political process and in India's democratic system since the colonial times. The side supporting FDI, on the contrary, articulated a more hybrid picture where strong markers of difference had always been mixed and that the "foreign" had always-already been a part of the self-definition of the Indian news industry. Foreign investment was thus not dangerous, and it could make India's news industry only stronger. Foreign capitalism was no longer considered a threat that had to be contained outside the self-definition of what the Indian news industry is, or perhaps, the very identity of what it means to be Indian. We have seen similar refractions of these shifting markers of difference in our analysis of international news in Chapter 5.

Finally, in these commentaries international news is political *because it has been articulated as political in different ways in the public debates in India*. This political imaginary of international news, however, shifts as the relationships and practices behind international news become articulated in new ways reflecting broader discursive shifts in Indian society. A few preliminary observations to thus conclude my analysis of these intermedia commentaries. Firstly, these commentaries clearly show a discursive shift that has taken place in India from the earlier discourse of Nehruvian socialism to a new discourse of global neoliberal capitalism. And secondly, if the problems found

in the system of international news (as claimed in these commentaries) can now be solved through capitalistic competition rather than political action, does this not also imply that the underlying hegemonic articulation here has become that of neoliberal global capitalism that India and its news industry now more or less subscribe to?

5. Hegemonic articulation

I will thus conclude this chapter by arguing that the political question of international news cannot be found on the level of representation/interpretation. Rather, it can be found on the level of discourse instead. With this in mind, in order to re-imagine the political question of international news in new ways, we need to look closely at the media commentaries and public debates where international news has been articulated *as political* for some purpose and what the political refractions underlying these articulations are. I will conclude by arguing, first, that in India the different instances of international news that I have looked at in this thesis - historical analysis, newsroom practices, technologies of communication and discursive mediation - each differently reflect the hegemonic articulation of economic liberalisation in India and its discontents. And secondly, I will conclude by arguing that behind these articulations we can again find the broader problem of cultural translation: that is, behind the discourse of international news there are always a series of irresolvable *antagonisms* that such hegemonic articulations try to suture over.

(a) Hegemonic articulation

In their theory of articulation, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argued that what we call discourse is, in fact, an empty field of signification onto which different groups project their interests in an effort to achieve closure around why a given state of affairs should be accepted the "way things are." What we can call a "hegemonic articulation" is thus a situation where one set of articulations becomes accepted as naturalised during any given historical period. These hegemonic articulations, however, are never homogeneous or consistent. Rather, they are the outcome of many conflicting attempts to construct a centre, to achieve closure around the polysemy and differences that surround these articulations. Laclau and Mouffe write that "once we reject the ontological plane, which would inscribe hegemony as centre of the social and hence as its essence, it is evidently not possible to maintain the idea of a singleness of the nodal hegemonic point (1985: 139)." As a consequence, "hegemony is, quite simply, a political type of relation, a form, if one so wishes, of politics (1985: 139). Laclau and Mouffe continue that

the general field of the 'emergence of hegemony is that of articulatory practices, that is, a field where the 'elements' have not crystallized into 'moments'. In a closed system of relational identities, in which the meaning of each moment is absolutely fixed, there is no place whatsoever for a hegemonic practice. A fully successful system of differences, which excluded any floating signifier, would not make possible any articulation; the principle of repetition would dominate every practice within this system and there would be nothing to hegemonize. It is because hegemony supposed the incomplete and open character of the social, that it can take place only in a field dominated by articulatory practices (1985: 134).

I have argued similarly in this thesis that we should not approach international news as an abstraction. It too is the outcome of complicated practices of articulation, often contradictory and contested, through which the contingent media-related practices

and differential relationship underlying international news have been given closure both in academic theorising and public debates. What is relevant about these commentaries about the politics of international news and politics of difference in the English-language newspapers in India is that they show how international news (in the broadest sense possible) is always-already embedded into the broader discourse that surrounds it. As I have shown in this thesis, in India this discourse - or, more accurately, the sometimes contradictory debates around it, public and academic, through which such hegemonic articulations are produced - has been closely linked to both its postcolonial history as well as the range of debates that have emerged since 1991 when India began the process of opening up its economy and, in one way or another, initiated the many changes that are still going on.

Indeed, during my fieldwork in 2004/2005 in India, a similar discursive shift was taking place that I also found in the intermedia commentaries analysed in this chapter. Among some of the books that were popular during this time discussing this discursive shift were Nandy et al (1998), Varma (1998), Rajgopal (2001), Hansen (1999, 2001) and Mazzarella (2003). In all of these books, the year 1991 was mentioned as the dividing line between the old Nehruvian developmental discourse and the new emerging India, with its slogans of "India Shining" and rapid economic development. This date, of course, refers to when India - following IMF-imposed structural reforms - began the process of liberalisation of its markets to the outside world and embracing neoliberal capitalism. There were two variations to these debates. The opening up of its economy to foreign competition and consumer products, it was argued, resulted, on the one hand, to an influx of western lifestyles, consumer patterns and a consequent new public discourse in which "idealized images

of urban middle class consumption in print media and televisual advertisements and corresponding public discourse (Fernandes 2000: 88).” But, on the other hand, in these articulations another India was also envisaged: a country not in the throngs of a happy consumer revolution but in the process of redefining itself internally - sometimes violently - through constructing markers of difference around what it means to be Indian within these changes that were taking place. This process was exemplified during my fieldwork by the rise of *Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)* as the most powerful player in Indian domestic politics, a process closely linked to popularization of the idea of *Hindutva*: the attempt to redefine the essence of what it means to be Indian based on an idea of a Hindu civilisation that excludes the Other (the Muslim Minority/ the West) from its self-definition (see Chakravarty and Gooptu 2000).

(b) Cultural translation as antagonism

It is within these broader discursive changes in India that the different points of entry to the problem of cultural translation looked at in this thesis have to be understood. What I have thus attempted to do in this thesis is to address some of the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems underlying existing accounts of international news in India through two different theoretical moves made. The first has been a move away from representation-based approaches to international news (focusing on the communication of political meanings internationally) towards a closer appreciation of the discourse of international news in India (through theories of practice, articulation and commentary). The second theoretical move has been to develop a doubly critical or bi-focal methodology that would allow us to remain critical both of the theories through which we understand international news in India

as well as the discourse of international news itself. The different concepts and methods developed in the thesis have each attempted to provide an alternative way to imagine my object of study.

What I will finally suggest in conclusion is that one possible future task for critical research in media and cultural studies and international news research is to critically and explicitly address the different closures that have been constructed around media practices and processes in countries such as India, or more specifically, the different *antagonisms* that these closures try to suture over. In their theory of discourse, Laclau and Mouffe argue that one of the key ways discourse functions is by different mechanisms it tries to suture what they call antagonisms that underpin any claim to structure or system. What Laclau and Mouffe call antagonisms are the kinds of constitutive outsides or contradictions that threaten to break apart any attempt at a final explanation or claim to knowledge. They write that

antagonism, far from being an objective relation, is a relation wherein the limits of every objectivity are *shown* - in the sense in which Wittgenstein used to say that what cannot be *said* can be *shown*. But if, as we have demonstrated, the social only exists as a partial effort for constructing society - that is, an objective and closed system of differences - antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of a final suture, is the 'experience' of the limit of the social. Strictly speaking, antagonisms are not *internal* but *external* to society; or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter's impossibility of fully constituting itself (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 125-126; italics in original).

Antagonisms are thus the kinds of differences that overflow any system, or any representation of this system, preventing it from achieving final closure. With this in mind, what I finally suggest in this thesis is that what the problem of cultural translation as a research framework ideally aims to achieve is to address some of the

antagonisms that underpin my object of study. As a result, it can never be a purely theoretical or empirical argument: it is rather an exploration of how we understand the impossibility of final authoritative claims to closure or knowledge. Ultimately, then, the problem of cultural translation becomes as much about acknowledging and exploring the theoretical contradictions, tensions and problems - the antagonisms - that exist between the theory and practice of research when we look at international news practices and processes in countries such as India. I have chosen to look at two such articulations around the politics of international news and the politics of difference as they, in my experience, most closely reflected some of the antagonisms I experienced during my fieldwork period in Mumbai, India.

6. Conclusion

The final entry point into the problem of cultural translation looked at intermedia commentaries of how the politics of international news have been commented on in the public debates and media commentaries in the Indian English-language newspapers. The aim of this chapter was to situate the examples looked at in the thesis within the broader political discourse in India, and especially around the conflicting articulations of Indian economic growth following the liberalisation of India's economy in 1991. In order to address these political refractions underlying international news in India, the last chapter looked at concepts of hegemonic

articulation and antagonism as potential ways research can examine the contradictory ways the politics of international news has been imagined, both in academic accounts and in public debates. The chapter suggested that one task of critical research is to examine the different kinds of closures made by such hegemonic articulations and the antagonisms they have attempted to suture over. Yet as such antagonisms can never be objects of representations but rather are the limits of any attempt to final closure, theoretical or otherwise, this remains the fundamental and irresolvable tension I have called the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India.

8. CONCLUSION

Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25).

Introduction | The problem of cultural translation | In medias res: concluding in the middle.

1. Introduction

This thesis has been an investigation into the problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India. Underpinning it has been the assumption that what we call international news is, in fact, composed of a limited amount of news material - text and pictures - in circulation on any given day. What we call international news therefore largely consists of different kinds of practices through which such "virtually identical pictures and words (Sreberny and Paterson 2004: 7)" are re-used for different purposes in other parts of the world. By looking theoretically and empirically at different kinds of "media-related practices" (Hobart 2011) behind the re-use of such *similar* news material but for *different* purposes in the English-language online and print news media in India, the thesis explored some of the theoretical problems, tensions and contradictions underlying international news and

global media and cultural studies more broadly. The final chapter of the thesis, the conclusion, will now close the discussions in the thesis by drawing together the arguments made throughout the chapters and providing preliminary suggestions for future research.

2. The problem of cultural translation

The thesis provided a critical analysis of some of the moments of closure through which international news has been imagined as an object of study in academic research and in debates in India. The key argument developed in the thesis was that international news should not be seen as a naturalised object of study or an abstraction. Rather, it itself is the outcome of congruent practices of articulation, sometimes antagonistic and contradictory, through which contingent practices and relationships underlying (what we loosely call) international news have been given closure. These moments of closure need to be opened up for critical analysis. In particular, the thesis argued that especially theoretical approaches premised on representation/interpretation (the communication of political meanings) is inadequate when we research news practices and processes in countries with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. Such approaches risk over-interpreting my object of study by bearing more resemblance to the theories we use rather than the multiplicity of different media-related practices found across the world. In order to pry open some of the closures around my object of study, the thesis therefore argued that we need to adopt a doubly critical or bifocal research approach: a method that is both critical of the object of study (international news in India) as well

as the theories commonly used to understand this object of study (international news theory). I have called this dialogue between the theory and practice of research developed in the thesis the *problem of cultural translation of international news in Mumbai, India*.

This argument and method has been developed in the thesis through the following sequences of chapters combining theoretical self-reflection and empirical analysis focusing on the English-language online and print news media in India:

In the literature review, I argued that international news has been historically imagined as that part of global media production where its political stakes are most manifest. As a result, research approaches to international news have largely focused on understanding the communication of political meanings in international news thus foregrounding research approaches that have been premised on theories of representation/interpretation: that is, how major world events are represented in international news content and how news producers and audiences across the world interpret these news representations. By interrogating the different ways international news has been conventionally understood - through approaches in political economy, domestication and sociology of news production - the chapter thus provided a critical reading of such approaches to international news. In particular, drawing on the work of post-structuralist thinkers such as Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Derrida, I argued that such representations-based approaches to my object of study are problematic insofar as they cannot adequately account for the problem of difference. Moreover, by clawing back such differences into some originals through which they are given their meaning in the final instance, these approaches risk turning my object of study into a

simulacrum: something that bears more resemblance to the theories used to understand it rather than the multiplicity of practices and empirical variations found across the world. In other words, the chapter asked, if the theories we use to understand international news are largely based on examples from Euro-American media practices and processes (and the philosophical traditions informing these), what kinds of cultural translation do our theories themselves need to undergo when researching other parts of the world with different cultural, social and political histories and media environments? And what kind of methods would be best suited for this kind of cultural translation needed when we research countries such as India?

The methodology chapter picked up from this discussion and explored what such a critical methodology would entail for my research. In particular, through a reading of approaches from Critical Theory, media and cultural studies and post-Marxism, the chapter suggested that we need to adopt a doubly critical research methodology towards this problem of cultural translation: a method that is able to both critically address our object of study as well as the theories we use to understand our empirical examples. Furthermore, this kind of doubly critical or bifocal method needs to critically take into account the social conditions of knowledge surrounding research as well as the situated practices of the participants themselves in other parts of the world such as India. I argued that Critical Theory approaches are thus useful for my research insofar as they allow me to better understand the socio-political conditions that surround any practice of research or claim to truth; and, as importantly, media and cultural studies approaches are useful for my research insofar as they allow me to better understand the culturally-situated practices of the participants involved in mass media practices and processes. Finally, through a post-

Marxist reading of ideology, I argued that such a method requires us to shift our analytical focus away from understanding what international news is (as an ontological category) towards looking at the different moments of closure where it has been articulated as something and thus given meaning, political and otherwise. The chapter concluded by outlining three conceptual tools that are useful for this purpose in the thesis: namely, theories of media-related practices, theories of articulation and theories of assemblages.

In the fourth chapter I stepped back from the theoretical debates and provided a historical perspective to international news in India. I argued that from a reading of the history of international news in India, we can extrapolate two moments of closure that need to be critically addressed in the thesis: the assumption that international news in India should be approached through its political significance; and the assumption that underlying international news are naturalised markers of difference about what it means to be Indian (*swadeshi*) and what it means to be something else (*videshi*). By looking at an "ontology of the present (Foucault 1984b)," I argued that a historical reading gives a starting point to address some of the closures around my object of research in order to better understand the diversity of media-related practices through which international news is actually produced in newsrooms in Mumbai, India.

The fifth chapter picked up from this historical analysis and looked in detail at some of the media-related practices at *Mid-Day*, a Mumbai-based tabloid, and specifically some of its newsroom practices through which international news is sourced and re-used. I argued in the chapter that based on my participant-

observation at the newsroom at *Mid-Day*, we can identify three theoretical detours from earlier representation/interpretation-based approaches to international news. The first of these looked at intralinguistic and intersemiotic translations and their relevance to questions of design. I argued that the re-use of international news at *Mid-Day* is informed as much, if not more, by requirements of design (the relationship between text and images) as it is by the content of the international news. Secondly, following Terranova's re-reading of communication theory, I then looked at the different practices through which the text and images behind international news stories at *Mid-Day* were sourced. I argued that when we look at the actual media-related practices at the newsroom level, one of the most important ways such news is accessed in through the use of the *Google* search engine. I called these kinds of practices of sourcing international news probable relationships or territorialised assemblages. And thirdly, by investigating examples of Western popular culture news at *Mid-Day*, I argued that the markers of difference between what is Western and what is Indian at *Mid-Day* still reflect old postcolonial ambiguities around the construction of the Indian identity. In other words, certain things can be openly discussed when they are articulated as Western but not when they are articulated as Indian. Yet the shifting boundaries of difference between what is considered Indian and what is not are always changing, reflecting broader discursive shifts taking place in India. Following Foucault (1984b) I concluded that Western popular culture / international news at *Mid-Day* serves a kind of a heterotopic function in international news production India.

In the sixth chapter, I looked at the significance of changing technologies of communication to the international news environment, and in particular examples of

citizen journalism and blogging in India. Moreover, by examining closely a celebrated example of citizen journalism that took place during the Asian tsunami in 2004, the chapter looked at different ways we can understand alternative journalistic practices or contra-flows through which news flows from the rest to the West. To do this, I looked in detail at the media-related practices of a Mumbai-based group blog, *Desimediabitch*, that gained global visibility when it published SMS text messages and eyewitness accounts from the crisis-struck areas in Sri Lanka. These examples were subsequently commented on in mainstream news media in the West as examples of new kinds of relationships that are possible in the international news environment due to new digital technologies of communication. Drawing on alternative readings around this "question of technology," I argued that what this example from the Asian tsunami shows us are potentially disruptive possibilities provided by new digital technologies. In particular, I developed the theory of "virtual relationships" or "deterritorialised assemblages" as alternative conceptual tools that might help explain these changes to the international news system. Finally I concluded that such disruptive practices cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they take place. These practices are also always also culturally translated in different parts of the world.

Finally, in the seventh chapter I looked at how the key themes underlying the thesis were given political significance in the media commentaries in the Indian news media itself. In order to do this, I drew on Hobart's (2001) theory of "intermedia commentary" and Laclau and Mouffe's theory of "nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe 1985)" to understand how international news has been given meaning in the public debates in India itself. Based on an archival reading of the English-language

newspapers in India since 1991 when India liberalised its economy, I looked at two key themes that have structured my thesis. The first looked at intermedia commentaries of the major international news events and the imagined political significance of their news coverage internationally: the First Persian Gulf War, September 11 and the Attacks of Afghanistan, and the Second Persian Gulf War. In these commentaries, I argued that we can see a gradual discursive shift that has taken place from the earlier debates from cultural imperialism to contemporary debates on the changing role India now has in the competitive global capitalist economy. The second strand of analysis looked at the debates around allowing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the newspaper industry in India and the different arguments - pro and con - around what is the imagined political significance of "foreign" influence in the Indian news industry's self-definition itself. I finally concluded that, in order to understand the political significance of international news, we need to move away from theories of representation/interpretation to theories of discourse. I concluded that in these intermedia commentaries we can find refracted some of the hegemonic articulations in contemporary India around global capitalism and the antagonisms these articulations try to suture over. One possible task of critical research on international news, and on global media more broadly, therefore, becomes to open up such closures in order to see what antagonisms and questions are dis-articulated by them.

3. In media res: concluding in the middle

While wishing to restrain from any easy answers, I will suggest in conclusion that cultural translation - that is, as developed as a research framework in the thesis -

potentially provides a working method for researching news practices and processes in countries such as India with different cultural, political and social histories and media environments. Behind this thesis has been a theoretical move away from simple overarching explanations towards foregrounding the contingent practices and differential relationships behind what we call international news. In order to do this, I have developed the doubly critical or bifocal method as a methodological tool that hopefully helps open up new questions and perspectives to my object of study. Based on the experiences during fieldwork, and drawing on the theoretical resources used, cultural translation as a method thus allows us to foreground the theoretical contradictions, problems and tensions that emerge when we research any media activity that takes place *across* or *between* different cultural contexts. And while the thesis has focused on international news, the discussions developed can be also applied to other media-related activities that routinely cross cultural boundaries.

This strength, however, is also a limitation of the research. By remaining a critical meta-theory, the findings of the research cannot be easily exported to other fields of research. Rather, what the problem of cultural translation developed in the thesis hopefully provides is a working practice that researchers can adopt when looking at their respective fields of study and the theoretical closures that inform them. Such work needs to be always done through meticulous case-by-case empirical research and cannot be the outcome of an *a priori* theory. This is the irresolvable tension behind the problem of cultural translation: it can never be resolved or brought to a conclusion. Rather, it must always begin in the middle and end at the middle.

Finally, if good research is not be about simple answers but only raising more

questions that are only formulated better, here are a few questions to conclude with for future research:

1. *Theories of international news.* As the research has hopefully shown, the approaches to international news that have focused primarily on the communication of political meanings have disarticulated a diverse world of media-related practices in countries such as India. New empirical research can hopefully benefit from such doubly critical or bifocal methodology to, firstly, open up some of these theoretical closures and, secondly, to provide new ways to re-imagine the significance of international news in different parts of the world. My research has looked at a few such theoretical detours that have helped me begin this task. More future research, however, is needed to continue where each of the detours left off: such as questions around the politics of design; research into the use of search engines and other software; and research into the imagined spaces and heterotopias that the West represents in Indian public imaginary just to name a few themes picked up in the thesis. All this work remains to be done.
2. *Theories of representation and difference.* As the research has also hopefully shown, work remains to be done on theoretical questions of representation and difference started in this thesis. A sustained critical dialogue is indeed needed between international news research and approaches from post-structuralist theory. The discussions in the thesis were aimed at applying some of this difficult philosophical material to the specific practical and empirical problems raised by the research questions and - due to limitations of space - such discussion have been unfortunately preliminary and linked only to the argument developed. A full

exposition of the difficult work of thinkers such as Derrida, Baudrillard, Foucault and Deleuze, and their applicability to international news research, would warrant at least another thesis if not more. As a result, each of these lines of flight opened up in the thesis - ontology of the present, media-related practices, technology and technics, commentary and discourse - all need more systematic development in future research. And most importantly, the problem of difference raised in the thesis still continues to haunt research on non-Western media. How can we prevent our objects of research from turning into a *simulacrum* that tells more about the preoccupations of the Western researchers rather than the multiplicity practices and empirical variations found in different parts of the world? How do we account for the unequal hierarchy of knowledges that Asad (1986) has warned us about? While not claiming to provide conclusive answers to these difficult questions posed in the thesis, my solution to this problem of difference has been to start co-working with the people I research. In other words, whenever I now write about issues dealing with digital technology in India (or elsewhere), I co-write these articles with the people I work with, thus continuing to develop a dialogic research approach that combines theory and practice as a method for research (Paul and Pohjonen 2011). This is just one possible way forward I have found useful in my work.

3. Finally, like any other research, this research has also serious limitations. If one could only start from where one concluded, the research would always look entirely different. In my research trajectory, there are two major limitations that I cannot unfortunately address in the pages of the thesis. The first is the long duration of the research that is reflected in the delayed completion of the thesis.

Some the examples looked at are almost 10 years old and the debates have changed in India significantly since the time of my fieldwork. What was contemporary research has become historical research. More contemporary fieldwork is thus be needed to better understand where the discussions in India have moved on since my fieldwork. The second limitation has to do with the contingencies of fieldwork. While the transition from research that began first as an ethnography of production at *Mid-Day* and then moved towards a theoretical reflection using multiple empirical case studies helped me better address the core questions my research set out to explore in the first place, the transition has not always been smooth. As a result, many questions still remain unanswered that would require further research to give a more comprehensive picture of the online print and news media in India. However, these are the limitations of all research that one must always live with. The overall argument around the problem of cultural translation, I believe, still holds despite these limitations.

To conclude with, then, the problem of cultural translation has acted in this thesis as a kind of magnifying lens, a conceptual tool through which I have tried to negotiate some of these theoretical difficulties and antagonisms *in medias res*: starting from the middle, without providing premature closure to how we understand them, and the differences implied by them. In their discussion of antagonisms, Laclau and Mouffe write that

we must consider this 'experience' of the limit of the social from two different points of view. On the one hand, as an experience of failure. If the subject is constructed through language, as a partial and metaphorical incorporation into a symbolic order, any putting into question of that order must necessarily constitute an identity crisis. But, on the other hand, this experience of failure is not an access to a diverse ontological order, to a something beyond differences, simply because ... there is no beyond. The limit of the social cannot be traced

as a frontier separating two territories - for the perception of a frontier supposes the perception of something beyond it that would have to be objective and positive - that is, a new difference. The limit of the social must be given within the social itself as something subverting it, destroying its ambition to constitute a full presence. Society never manages fully to be society, because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevent it from constituting itself as an objective reality (1985: 126-127).

Similarly, the concept of cultural translation developed in this thesis cannot be seen purely as an empirical or theoretical exercise but it must also include the *experience* of the limits imposed by our research frameworks and the contingencies of research itself. The thesis has thus hopefully helped me achieve at least a small part of this aim. I end with the hope that the lessons learned will indeed carry into my future research.

9. APPENDIX

Veritas Lux Mea

During the days that followed the Sea Eat tsunami, on a collective weblog I write for – ChiensSansFrontiers, we were receiving and publishing SMSes from Sri Lanka and South India. One of them went thus:

[Stay away from the Galle road. Continuous looting and violence reported in Moratuwa.] - Morquendi

This is a message that is less than 160 characters, but the meaning and urgency of this message cannot be ignored – it needs to spread and duplicate on the Internet, it needs to be plagiarised. Such a short text is not protected by any existing copyright law. To understand this, I had to read up some history and these are my subsequent thoughts.

The rise of blogging, citizen journalism, and the sense of wonder it has inspired, is directly connected to some fundamentally flawed assumptions of mass media about itself. Let us take two of these and see where they lead us – 1) We influence a very large audience, and 2) We are objective in our reportage.

Mass media is a communication method that began with the Gutenberg printing press in the 16th century, but only started gaining importance in the 20th century when electronic duplication kicked in. I quote the Wikipedia:

Physical duplication technologies such as printing, record pressing and film duplication allowed the duplication of books, newspapers and movies at low prices to huge audiences. Television and radio allowed the electronic duplication of content for the first time.

Mass media is simply an amplifier for certain kinds of information, however, the originators of this information have always remained the same – human beings and other symptoms of life on the planet Earth. Mass media is a router of variously collected information, just like the Internet. Therefore, any media house that tries to control information through a moral or immoral construct is throttling its own popularity.

It may happen over a long period of time, depending on the flux of information within a community or society, but it happens nonetheless, that decay is inevitable. The Kena Upanishad, an ancient Indian scripture, says that:

No light can be hidden in a basket underneath a hill. Nothing can be hidden, neither bad nor good. Of course, the unveiling of character may require a full generation of time.

How does traditional mass-media gather information? A reporter goes around looking for stories, interviews a handful of people, and tries to form a hypothesis as to what happened in a particular area. The first draft is hacked, sorted, queued, and undergoes all sorts of editorial scrutiny before finally appearing in print as an objective article.

Is it really objective or is that word a euphemism for “dispassionate”? These are two separate things. Dispassionate means devoid of feeling and emotion, whereas objectivity is a manifestation of neutral point of view, and there is no such thing as a neutral point of view. What “neutral point of view” really means is that all possible points of view must be fairly represented. Mass media has never been able to achieve that because they have never been able to reach a wide enough audience.

The audience of mass-media is not how many people you can sell a newspaper to – it is how many people are represented with their versions of a story in their newspaper or television channel.

This is why blogging is the new mass media, but certainly not the final form mass media will take. There is a life beyond blogging, I’m certain. If concision and brevity are desirable qualities, then SMS or short text-messaging service is the ultimate journalistic device invented, so far.

I’ve been reading this book by Robert T. Oliver, called *Communication and Culture in Ancient India & China*, and it contains some good insights on word-of-mouth in societies:

Ancient Indians had a far deeper confidence in living speech than in the moral, impersonal and derivative written communication. When words issued from the mouth of a sayer, they carried a personal endorsement.

Ajivikas, led by a scholar called Makkhali Gosala, had adopted a triadic logic about reality as it is perceived by a society. Reality is a sum = A + non-A+ both (A & non-A). What this means was explained by Gosala:

Truth is a continuum, with contrary properties being contained in greater or lesser degree in any depiction of reality.

This also means that any subject can be discussed and debated endlessly. For instance, mass media is fiercely protective of their intellectual property by a strange device they refer to as Copyright. It is not an accident that copyright was invented soon after the movable type printing press, and the Wikipedia has a fair knowledge of this:

It appears publishers, rather than authors, were the first to seek restrictions on copying printed works. Given that publishers now obtain the copyright from the authors as a

condition of mass reproduction of a work, one of the criticisms of the current system is that it benefits publishers more than it does authors.

To improve upon this system, many people are moving towards Lawrence Lessig's Creative Commons, which is a natural extension of the Internet as it exists today. However, the Internet as it exists today is seriously flawed. Have you noticed that hyperlinks are a one-way traffic mechanism? When you click on a hyperlink it takes you to a page and leaves you there. It is not necessary that an identical link on that page will take you back. You have to wait for the next bus to come around.

You can always hit Back Space, but that is really like reversing a car all the way back to town. It's ridiculous.

This is the reason why a lot more people ought to be listening to Ted Nelson, the man who coined the word hypertext. His Xanadu model is a simple two-way linking mechanism, unlike the Internet. Some persistent fools call it the longest running vaporware in the history of the Internet, but I call it the simplest and most widely misunderstood (or not understood) idea of the last half century. So much so that even the Wikipedia, which claims to have a rapidly developing neutral point of view, has no listing of Nelson's "transcopyright" model on the copyright page.

Robert T. Oliver writes in his book about copyright and the ancient Indian scriptures:

Neither is it accidental that the Upanishads contain no internal evidence as to when, where or by whom they were composed. Their very thesis is that we dwell in the midst of a timeless eternity. With everything so indissolubly united that particular areas or places are of no concern. Who might be the author of an idea or a way of communicating it must be of no importance whatsoever, since truth is truth.

This makes sense to me at least. I don't know about you.

Copyright establishes territorial right on a semantic created by the author of a text, and a way of saying that – "these thoughts are mine alone." If these thoughts are the author's alone, why is he publishing the work so that others can experience his thoughts? The very act of making your writing public so everyone can read it, is relinquishing your territorial rights to the semantic created by you.

The better your writing, the more the number of people who experience the thrill of your words, the thrill of your thoughts. Those thoughts that escaped from your mind have now entered an arena from which words can never be taken back. If you can't take back what is yours, it is not yours anymore.

There is no way to actually exercise copyright or any kind of right on intellectual property except keeping it secret and private. Furthermore, what copyright laws assume, and plagiarism laws also specify is a finite amount of intellectual property that can be copied without permission, however, the quantity itself is absolutely arbitrary.

Imagine if there was only one man who lived on the planet. Would he inflict such a

thing as copyright onto himself? Will he not leave his notes lying around carelessly for the future to find?

Would he not say this - how can you prevent me from knowing the truth, if I am the source of the truth? Veritas Lux Mea – the truth enlightens me, the truth is my light.

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