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From *The Matrix* to Campanella: cultural hybrids and globalization*

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Starting from an analysis of the recent film *The Matrix*, and emphasizing its millenarian and messianic components, the article goes on to consider the importance of millenarian and messianic movements in the Old World (especially Spain and Portugal) and the New world (especially Mexico, Peru and Brazil) in the 16th century, noting Tommaso Campanella's expectation of an imminent world monarchy. The conclusion is that these movements offered a privileged space for different religions to interact and to mix.

The most spectacular, omnipresent and visible hybrids unfold on the countless screens that fill our lives today, whether in the cinema, on television or on the computer. Does the term 'cultural hybrids' adequately describe them? These two simplistic terms – 'hybrid' and 'culture' – rarely question the manner in which these productions are mounted, the meaning they can have and the impact we should attribute to them.

The Matrix: a mixed bag and a hybrid trilogy

It is not possible to imagine a more astounding melting pot than the collection of images, ideas and beliefs that inspired the Wachowski brothers to write and film *The Matrix Trilogy*. It is packed with cinematic and literary references. The shadows of Bruce Lee and *kung-fu* films, *Superman 2*, *Akira*, *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoven) are mixed with allusions to science-fiction and references to such classics as *Alice in Wonderland* (to which Neo, the hero played by Keanu Reeves, is compared).[1]

But the Trilogy is equally saturated with borrowings from several religious and philosophical trends. In *The Matrix*, Judaism, Christian gnosticism, Calvinist

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predestination, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Islam flirt with snatches of Platonism and Postmodernist thought (Baudrillard). You may scoff. I prefer to see it as the emergence of a global culture equally evident in what has become the international bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown.[2]

Should we deal with the issue by talking about religious syncretisms or should we admit that we are faced with a montage all the more complex for partly eluding its creators, one that is never perceptible or even conceivable in its entirety? The complexity of texture, the diversity of possible references demand multiple exegeses, which critical thought in the US and elsewhere has not failed to provide. Furthermore, it would be wrong to reduce *The Matrix* to a treatise on the history of religions, the pages of which have been jumbled. What is important is not the kinds of knowledge that the Trilogy deploys or gives the appearance of bringing together, but the use of multiple references, none of which fully coincides with a defined tradition or a fixed creed.

Are we talking about quotations, influences, mixtures? *The Matrix* typifies the hybrids of the end of the 20th century. The incessant blend of images and ideas – this cacophony so puzzling for our knowledge and academic tools – clearly underscores the fact that the Trilogy is invented from start to finish. We constantly think we recognize familiar elements, but no single episode could be said to constitute a mere pastiche. A sort of cannibalism – similar to that discussed by the Brazilian modernists[3] – transforms every borrowing by incorporating it in groupings that are variable but always discrete. That is why every identifiable element appears in the residual form of left-over beliefs, fragments of myths, films or literary works, never taken up again in their original form. Neo is close to the figure of Christ, without ever merging with him. He can only be Christ 'in inverted commas'. The Trilogy is packed with constantly modified echoes, resonances that are only approximate and always unsynchronized. It plays on reflections from broken or partially clouded mirrors.

This mythical residue refers to the manifestations under which religions and 'religious cultures' often survive today in Western Europe and in the US. But it equally corresponds to the figures, ideas, expectations and dreads that traverse and give expression to the imagination of the Western world, in the broadest sense of the term. Such remnants – icons, visions, scenarios, symbols, visual codes – are still significant enough to be reworked by the spectator and to reopen the debates generated by the original mythologies, the literary works of past centuries or the great filmic tradition. These substitutes are rechargeable, in other words they may be 'reloaded',[4] as though they were still able to impact on the imagination. At the same time they are sufficiently broken down to lend themselves to multiple interpretations and to become registered in the imagination of the spectators and what for them is now 'global culture'.[5]

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What, then, provides the wherewithal to compose a mixed and eclectic collection, pleasing to the specialist, but, at the same time malleable and plastic, apposite in a period when ideas are unravelling, diversifying and being reconfigured and, in consequence, highly prone to attract the most diverse imaginations? Let us not forget that *The Matrix* was shown all over the world and that the Trilogy received an impressive welcome everywhere. The Tokyo crowds waited for the premiere of *The Matrix Reloaded* in the presence of the stars of the Trilogy, while in Moscow, gathered in front of the Pushkin cinema where the film was being shown, the followers of the old Communist party chanted slogans proclaiming their Neo-Communism – the hero of *The Matrix* is called Neo! – and their wish to see no more of *The Matrix*. The spin-off products that accompanied the global showing of the Trilogy further accentuated its impact on the minds of spectators and consumers.

Forms of Messianism and Millenarianism

Heterogeneous, fragmentary, diversified, but never arbitrary or accidental, the borrowings from which *The Matrix* is woven are made up of many elements without which its narrative and cinematic alchemy could not work. One of them raises the question of reality and its representation: the protagonists live immersed in a virtual reality from which some try to escape by using shortcomings in the computer system or flaws in its programming. This dimension has been the subject of quite a few more or less pertinent commentaries. Upsetting the established boundaries between illusion and truth, immanence and transcendence, by virtue of being a filmic spectacular, *The Matrix* could be thought of as pure simulation. Furthermore, because the second instalment proclaims that everything is mere simulation, *The Matrix Reloaded* could be thought of as having a radically Post-modern filiation.

But *The Matrix* is also a composition with religious resonance. The way, for example, in which Christianity is 'reloaded', the subscription to a Christic and heroic tradition peculiar to the US and the variations on these models highlighted by *The Matrix*, all reflect the fate of religious thought in Western society at the beginning of the 21st century. How can we not be struck by the adaptation of Messianic and Millenarian elements, which infuse the three instalments, even though the critics hardly gave these most singular aspects the attention they deserve? Not only do these elements lend rhythm to the progression of the three films by maintaining the narrative thread, but they are for the most part at the root of the emotive reactions that the film arouses in the spectator. They appear inseparable from the extreme violence that runs through each chapter of the Trilogy and which is even more manifest in the video game *Enter*. 'This violent translation of world religious traditions within *The Matrix* has serious implications

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for our own violent culture with which it resonates'.[6] The appropriation of different religious traditions occurs while all vaguely peaceful or pacifist desires are set aside. All quests for harmony are banished, whether of Christian, Hindu or Buddhist inspiration. On the contrary, the *Trilogy* exploits the measure of aggression that these religions have also always promoted or legitimized.

Neo, the hero of *The Matrix*, has to defend what is left of a people entrenched in the underground city of Zion, about which the prophet Obadiah wrote: 'But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance'.[7] Neo fights an incarnation of Evil, Agent Smith. He dies and comes back to life, bearing the revelation that the daily universe is nothing but an illusion engendered by an artificial intelligence, which recycles human energy in the most literal and brutal sense of the term. Christ and the Messiah, the Providential Saviour of an enslaved humanity, Superman traversing the skies, Neo is all this at once. Names, such as Seraph, Zion, Trinity, Nebuchadnezzar, games of predestination and prophecy, proof of belief,[8] a few resurrections, even the death of Neo marked by the words 'It is done', spoken by the *deus ex machina* (*The Matrix Revolutions*),[9] all these constitute a range of elements that constantly indicate a Judaeo-Christian filiation without its ever being proclaimed in so many words.[10]

What does *The Matrix* reveal to us, under the guise of a religious and hybrid Trilogy? The Messianic and apocalyptic themes, supposed to unveil the secret of the world, coupled with the hybrids characteristic of the Trilogy and the global reception of the Hollywood product, are these a manifestation of the globalization of the imagination? Or is all of this merely a jumble of fantasy coming from the minds of the mercenary creators of the Trilogy?[11]

Mirrors of Iberian globalization

If film critics showed little interest in the Millenarian and Messianic elements of *The Matrix*, it is because they would have had to go back in time, far from the places and periods frequented by modern societies. This sort of archaeology would be of little interest if it were limited to establishing the genealogy of beliefs that carry Hollywood productions along. The stocklist is certainly not useless, but in itself it hardly helps to explain the inherent motivation and range of the phenomenon. This is not the case, however, if we examine the nexus made up of different periods of the past of *mestisaje*, Messianism and globalization. It is not so much a case of unearthing antecedents of the Wachowski brothers' productions as exploring the fundamental framework of Hollywood imagery.

This going back in time brings us to the middle of the European Renaissance, to the period of Iberian globalization, when apocalyptic visions of history and of

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the world were being renewed and spread between the continents.[12] Whereas the Treaty of Tordesillas (1493) had split the world between Portugal and Castile, less than a century later, in 1580, the Iberian union of the two kingdoms of the Peninsula brought European, American, African and Asian possessions together under the same sceptre, that of Phillip II. Evolving step by step throughout the 16th century, this globalization was the fruit of both a political and dynastic venture. It had religious, ideological, economic, intellectual and artistic dimensions, which I have explored elsewhere. Mixed race societies appeared in Africa, Asia and America, making *mestisaje*, in all its forms, one of the central themes of Iberian globalization. Explosions of Messianism and Millenarianism came with the expansion of Iberian domination, inside as well as outside Christendom. Votive fires were lit up in Europe and America, while Islamic Asia did not remain untouched by these forces.

Let us try to clarify the link that developed between Messianism and Iberian globalization. From the second half of the 15th century onwards, Christian Europe endured upheavals and shocks that weakened both its foundations and its convictions. The Lutheran schism shattered the religious unity of Western Europe. The East established itself in an alarming manner, as the Ottoman Empire grew in power, constantly threatening the coasts of the Christian Mediterranean and the very heart of Europe. The emergence of Vasco de Gama in India introduced the Far East to the European spectrum, while in the West, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Castilian discoveries pushed back the horizons of the world known to the Europeans. For the Spanish historian and humanist López de Gómara, the discovery of the New World represented the most important event since the birth of Christ. The Iberian expansion towards both the East and America, the tension and agitation caused by Christendom's confrontation with Islam, the weakening and internal confusion provoked by the Reformation, all combined to put into question Latin Christendom both inside and outside its borders. It is clear that Europeans perceived the 16th century as an unbearable period, involving an unprecedented change of scale, and that some even sought refuge in the hope of the imminent Second Coming of Christ.[13] Seeking revenge for the losses endured in confronting Islam and Luther, Rome and the Catholic Church interpreted the ultimate expansion of the world as an open door to the conversion of all peoples, *plenitudo gentium.* This conversion, deemed to be a sign of the proximity of the end of time, was supposed to precede the advent of the Antichrist, of which Luther and the Turks already provided a terrible foretaste. Interpretations of the Old and New Testaments link the end of time and the 'globalization' of Christianity. The Latin formula, *plenitudo gentium/plenitudo temporum*, encapsulates this assurance and the hopes of a century which, for many, was an apocalyptic one, to use the German historian W. E. Peuckert's expression.[14]

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Forms of Messianism in Europe

If it has proved legitimate to refer to a 'Millenarian situation on a Euro-Asiatic scale',[15] the connection between European expansion, the 'clash of civilisations' and Messianic and apocalyptic interpretations made itself felt most obviously in the Iberian world. The diffusion of Messianic ideas was all the more widespread because of the exceptional nature of the people and contexts involved. The fall of Granada in 1492, the end of the *Reconquista* and the expulsion of the Jews paved the way for a chain of events leading to the Second Coming: the reconquest of Jerusalem, the conversion of Muslims, Jews and pagans, the gathering once again of mankind in one single flock under the same shepherd.[16] Prophecies full of Joachimism and pseudo-Joachimism, fuelled by visionary Franciscans – Arnaud de Villeneuve and Francesc Eiximenis – reinforced by astrological predictions of Celtic or Muslim origin, not forgetting the dream of the restoration of Christian Spain, inspired by the writings of Isidore of Seville, all of this was more than enough to revitalize imaginations only too prone to eschatological frenzy.

Exceptional times give rise to exceptional people. Trained in Portugal, at a time when the urge for expansion was coupled with a business sense and Messianism, Christopher Columbus took great care to give his voyages a metaphysical dimension, drawing on passages from the Holy Scriptures, which linked his enterprises with global Christianization. He was convinced that the discovery was forecast in the sacred texts: the Gospel would soon be preached all over the world, while he and the Catholic Kings already saw themselves as the instruments of God. 'Jerusalem and Mount Zion have to be rebuilt by Christian hands'.[17] The power of gold fascinated Columbus. The Temple of Zion would be built with gold from the Indies. The Messianism of Columbus merged with a dynastic Messianism, which made Ferdinand of Aragon and his successors the 'last Emperors' or 'hidden kings'.[18] The Spanish monarch would conquer the Holy Lands before embarking on the conversion of all the peoples of the earth. Did Columbus see himself as the Joachimite Messiah, destined to be the leader of the third era, the era of the Holy Spirit? Did he really believe that he was going to discover earthly paradise on the new continent? He had nonetheless set up the geographical and metaphysical shift, which would put America in the place of Jerusalem, making it a new Promised Land.

It is no coincidence that, during the same period, Portugal and the court of Lisbon also resounded with Messianic words.[19] The famous lines by Camoens:

> The waves were sweeping in from the East
> With all of Heaven determined to make Lisbon a New Rome[20]

refer to a deeply rooted tradition going back to the 15th century. They echo a royal Messianism developed in the court of Lisbon to reflect the global ambitions of

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King Manuel (1495–1521). Educated by the Franciscans, subscribing to the ideas of Joachim of Fiore and his disciples, inspired by prophecies such as those of the Franciscan Jean de Roquetaillade from the Auvergne, the Portuguese sovereign also dreamed of conquering Jerusalem by taking the Indian Ocean route and becoming Emperor of the East. He imagined himself arriving in the Holy Land and receiving communion, beside his father-in-law Ferdinand the Catholic, from the hands of Cardinal Cisneros.

While Iberian Messianism was literally drugged by the maritime expansionary policy of Castile and Portugal, the successor of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic, Emperor Charles V, expressed in his person the hopes kindled by his grandparents. His accession to the imperial title gave rise to a political discourse exalting his universal mission. In 1517, the Emperor's advisor, Mercurio Gattinara, drew up a *Somnium de futura orbis monarchia*; he urged Charles V to act as the leader of the world, in order to ensure the triumph of Christianity. Alonso de Valdés ended his narrative of the victory of Pavia with the watchword of Christian Messianism: 'Fiet unum ovile et unus pastor'. The return of the Empire of Constantinople and Jerusalem appeared to be at hand. The whole world could then receive the Christian faith.[21] After the victory of Mühlberg, Hernando de Acuña announced the coming of the Golden Age, 'one flock and one shepherd', adding pointedly: 'a monarch, an Empire and a sword'.[22]

If Charles V and his successors were careful not to openly make use of Messianic and Millenarian ideas, they nevertheless knew how to cultivate the image of the Good Shepherd, whose responsibility it was to round up the faithful of the entire world:

> The new generation is going to come from high Heaven.
> Arms will be put down and golden ages arrive.
> The prophecies of the wise will now be fulfilled,
> That you will be one King and one shepherd on earth.[23]

But the expectations surrounding the Castilian sovereign were far from being as powerful as the beliefs that spread to Portugal in the last third of the 16th century. The Messianism associated with the dynasty drew remarkable strength from a military disaster. The mysterious death of King Sebastian in the Battle of Kasr al-Kebîr in 1578 quickly fuelled the passionate hopes that formed Sebastianism. The return of the lost king was not in doubt: Sebastian would save Portugal from Castilian domination[24] and would found the Fifth Empire of the world.

Sebastianism crystallizes popular beliefs stirred up again in Portugal and on the Iberian Peninsula in the 16th century by a series of prophecies in verse, the *trovas* of Bandarra. Born around 1500, Gonçalo Andres Bandarra, a cobbler from

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Trancoso, had announced the arrival of the *Encoberto*, 'King of the travels of the Sea and all its wealth', proclaiming that 'All will believe the only Saviour has already come'. Bandarra was condemned in Lisbon in 1541. But his ideas took root among the Portuguese people and even further afield. The Sebastianism of the end of the 16th century, with its blatantly subversive dimensions, inspired the anti-Castilian political propaganda campaign led by João de Castro, the grandson of the Viceroy of India, who created a veritable myth identifying King Sebastian as the *Encoberto*. Did João de Castro not declare, in his *Discurso da vida do sempre bem vindo e apparecido Don Sebastaio*, published in Paris in 1602, that the King of Portugal was alive, roaming around the world fighting the Turks, before returning to his kingdom?[25]

Faced with the virulence of Portuguese thinking at this time, a royal Messianism, seemingly loyal to the Spanish crown, found an inspired spokesman on Italian soil. At the very end of the 16th century, the Hispanic claim to universal domination was at the heart of the reflections of a Calabrian monk. In a work dedicated to the glory of Spain, the *Monarchia di Spagna*, Tommaso Campanella defined the place of the Catholic King in the 'Catholic' and therefore universal world: 'It goes around from Spain to Brazil, through the Straits of Magellan, by the Pacific Sea and the Philippines, by Japan and China, by the Archipelago of San Lázaro, the Strait of Malacca, [the Bay of] Bengal, Narsinghgarh, Calcutta and Goa, by the Indus and the Strait of Hormuz, the Cape of Guardafui [Raas Caseyr], the Island of Saint Lawrence [Madagascar], the Eastern coast of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, the coast of West Africa, Guinea, Cape Verde and the Fortunate Islands [Canaries] of Spain itself, thereby encircling the world with its sun'.[26] For Campanella, this universal domination manifests itself through the celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass at any time of day, 'a marvellous event and sign of a great Empire', a sacrifice acting powerfully on the hearts of his subjects.

This global extension coincided with the approach of the end of time: 'Monarchies have come to an end […] we are now at a time when everything must be brought together in the Empire of the Saints and in the Church, […] that will take place at the end of the four monarchies and after the death of the Antichrist'. The King of Spain had, thus, a Messianic role. He would become the new Cyrus, the mediator of God in controlling the whole world, in restoring Jerusalem in its delivery from captivity and in the building of the Temple for the Heavenly Divine. Having liberated the Church from its evils, he would easily regain the dominion of the world and reassemble the flock, 'facendo unum ovile et unus pastor'. 'The end of the world is nigh, there will be only one flock, *unum ovile*, […] all nations and kingdoms which do not show their allegiance will perish'.[27] Once again, the worldwide extension of Iberian domination and the blend of peoples gave rise to apocalyptic and Messianic visions.

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Forms of Messianism in America and elsewhere

These Iberian and Mediterranean expressions are contemporary with ever more frequent American manifestations of the same phenomenon throughout the 16th century. Some stem from implants from the Old World, while others express indigenous reactions to Iberian colonization. The Franciscans in Mexico formed the first phalanx of evangelists who landed in Central America. Faced with a mass of Indians to convert, encouraged by the success of having baptized them in their tens of thousands, these Franciscans draw on Joachimite writings for the ideas and vitality that gave meaning to their unprecedented venture. The discovery of the New World and the conversion of the Indians marked, in their eyes, an element of fulfilment in the history of the Church and the world. Furthermore, they intended to recreate a primitive Christianity, even a latter-day Christianity, in short, a new and renewed world, within which Cortés would become a new Moses and Charles V the Emperor of a new age. The Franciscan hopes fitted in with the royal and imperial Messianism of a Catholic and universal monarchy, which was also a 'monarchy of the Indies'.

In Peru, a region long ravaged by the *Conquista* and civil wars, minds had been stirred up by the revolt of Hernández Girón (1553–1554), with its vague hints of Messianism and Millenarianism. The casualties of the *Conquista* were ready to follow a defender of the poor, to whom Saint Francis had appeared in person, encouraging him in his mission. Some 20 years later, overtly expressed Messianic and Millenarian aspirations triggered an unprecedented event, causing the monk, Francisco de la Cruz (1529–1576), one of the most prominent figures of the Dominican order in that part of the world, to be sent to the stake. Francisco de la Cruz, a theologian, a preacher and twice appointed Rector of Lima University, outstripped the apocalyptic temerity of Bartolome de Las Casas, who threatened Spain with fresh 'destruction' in atonement for the injustices done in the New World and even suggested the possibility of the relocation of the Church to America.[28] Did Francisco de la Cruz not proclaim that he was going to become the Head of the Church, that Rome and Spain would be destroyed? He would become King of Peru and Pope of the Catholic Church.[29] As a new David, a new Christ[30] – two epithets clearly inspired by the Joachimite tradition – heir to the Kings of Spain and Israel,[31] he would reign over Israel,[32] an Israel of the Indies populated by the Indians whom he saw as descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. If the prophecies of Francisco de la Cruz tried to answer the questions posed by the Christianisation of the Indians and the emergence of this new humanity, they also radically questioned the colonization of America. Doomed Catholic Europe, unworthy of its Saviour, was left to destruction at the hands of the Turks.

Explosions of Messianiam and Millenarianism also shook native Americans, from Mexico to Brazil and the Andes, in response to the sudden appearance of

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the Europeans in their ancestral world. Many of these native Americans expressed Amerindian traditions and European beliefs. In Mexico, men proclaiming themselves to be Gods travelled throughout the *Altiplano*, inciting revolt against the Spanish. These Indians proclaimed they were Gods and announced the end of the world.[33] In Peru, in the second half of the 16th century, one particular native movement was prominent;[34] the Taki Onqoy, in the 1560s, flourished in the Cuzco and Huamanga (Ayacucho) region, and later in a vast area stretching from Lima to La Paz. Some witnesses reported that the Indians danced in preparation for war against the Spanish God and to announce the return of *huacas*, their ancient deities. Some followers went so far as to take the name of Mary and Mary Magdalen.[35] A *pachacuti*, or overthrow of the world, would soon lead to the extermination of the invaders. It appears, however, that these Indians were far from rejecting all the Christian practices. Some of the dances and rites were integrated into the Christian liturgy. This reveals a syncretist element in the movement that the Church eradicators are said to have been at pains to hide, the better to show its subversive nature.[36]

In Portuguese Brazil, the *santidades* brought together groups and beliefs of diverse origin. In August 1591, at Salvador de Bahia, an old Portuguese Christian from the Algarve, who owned a *fazenda* in Jaguaripe, reported a matter to the Inquisition that had occurred six years previously on his property.[37] A new *seita* ('sect') was said to have appeared among the Indians (*gentio*) of the Sertão and was called a *santidade*. Made up of pagan and Christian Indians, free or enslaved, the *santidade* had at its head a Christianised native who called himself 'Pope'. He was accompanied by an Indian woman, called 'mother of God' or 'mother of all the world'.[38] Their God would deliver them from the 'captivity in which they found themselves', he would make them 'lords of the white people, and the whites would remain their captives'. 'A new fire would be born among them (= the Christians)',[39] while the non-believers would metamorphose 'into a bird and into the animals of the forest'.

Conceiving the world and changing it

It is also important to look at the forms of Messianism and Millenarianism that appeared in the same century in Muslim and Asian societies. To do so gives a better cognizance of the global language in which these hopes were uttered, in extremely diverse contexts. But what are we to make of this Messianic planet? In the 16th century, many instances of Messianism and Millenarianism were more than a collective frenzy or confused beliefs, appealing to societies and individuals who felt that they had embarked on a global mission. Messianism and Millenarianism gave meaning to unprecedented connections, which continued to increase between the continents. For the first time, Amerindians, Africans and

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Asians came into contact with Europeans. These links took shape against a background of expansion, in terms of religion, commerce and the sea: conquest, confrontation and destruction; evangelization and colonization; the slave trade; the spreading of germs in America; the global struggle against Islam – or against Christianity. All these were to be landmarks in the opening up of the world. Iberian globalization and the reactions it provoked increased the shock waves, which disorientated the collective imagination. In Mexico, Lima, Goa, Nagasaki, Luanda or Macao, in the depths of the Andes as in the flat plains of Manila, the global, personified by the Iberians, encompassed the local. Indigenous traditions, habits and beliefs were put in question. Repeated destruction and aggression could no longer be explained by calling upon the stock of ancestral interpretations. This expanding world necessitated the adoption and/or adaptation of explanations on a universal scale – Messianism and Millenarianism.

These movements use simple models, always based on binary and Manichean oppositions: the struggle of Good against Evil, of the Saviour against the Antichrist. Ubiquitous violence, when it does not involve extermination, pure and simple, sends the enemy back to the hated ranks of the Devil, the destruction of the Christians by the Turks, the annihilation of the Turks by the Crusaders, the extermination of the Whites by the Indians. It involved not just conceiving the world, but changing it. The present and the future are not merely announced, their progress must be accelerated. Does the *plenitudo gentium*, promised by the evangelization of the world not lead to the *plenitudo temporum*? It follows that action inspired by prophecies, which must urgently be brought to fulfilment, will have to bring a cataclysmic victory, full of ruins and spectacular metamorphoses, such as the destruction of Rome or Constantinople, and the appearance of the New Zion.

Many await the arrival of an all-powerful hero, capable of restoring order in the world. Tommaso Campanella, who made the King of Spain the great unifier of the Universal Monarchy, wrote, at the very beginning of the 17th century: 'It is clear that the man who destroys the Turkish Empire will rule the world.' For the Portuguese supporters of the vanished king, this providential hero would be Sebastian, for the visionaries of Lima, he would be Francisco de la Cruz. In other words, a strong link always unites power and Messianism. In the 16th century, these beliefs served to legitimize all sorts of universal ambitions: those of the Great Mogul, the Grand Turk or the Catholic Monarch. All these crowned heads exploited Messianic beliefs, justifying their claims to power at one period or another. Finally, these trends afforded a privileged space for the blend of beliefs and religions, mixing orthodox expectations and heterodox derivatives, bringing together mythologies hitherto separated by oceans.

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Return to *The Matrix*

What does our knowledge of the 16th century imply? It is obviously not a question of comparing manifestations pertaining to the religious domain with modern productions belonging to the world of spectacle and entertainment. On the one hand, we have the enactment of age-old traditions in treatises, beliefs, rituals and, less frequently, social movements. On the other hand, we have images and narratives, which furtively make their way on to the cinema screen and to the multiple spin-offs known as the 'franchise'.[40] If we can draw together the Iberian past and the Hollywood present, it is because we discover in each of them the way in which the imagination has become globalized, in order to meet the challenge of a planet opening up. *The Matrix* offers an interpretation of the world. The Trilogy likewise shows how to act on the development of time and history. The hero of *The Matrix* attacks a computer brain that rules the world. He confronts the God – the Architect – who sets the trap in which humanity is caught. He is 'The One', the Chosen One, an exceptional being whose mysterious identity can be located in a cluster of enigmatic signs. He is the hidden hero. We cannot help but think that bin Laden is today as much present, yet persistently untraceable, as King Sebastian of Portugal in his time. The Chosen One, hidden, yet endowed with limitless powers, is destined to become the master of the world and ineluctably accomplishes the global mission that is his lot.

The perspective of hindsight shows parallels that seem even more evocative. In the past, as in the present, Messianism and Millenarianism have worked as powerful agents of globalization. They attach local memories to a global narrative, where everyone thinks they find a little of themselves. They articulate a common language. Their success in this is due to their strong appeal to people's imagination. They polarize fears, they catalyse hopes in a global circulation of emotions and beliefs. They attract all sorts of traditions, independently of their respective sources. In playing on a sort of fascination of the absolute, Messianism and Millenarianism create shared imaginations that rely as much on emotional shock and being bombarded by images as on intellectual demonstration. Add to this force of attraction a power of connection. These beliefs link traditions, time-scales and past periods, while bringing about global inter-penetration.

Politics and forms of Messianism

Globalization is not only an economic or cultural metamorphosis. In the 16th century, forms of Messianism and Millenarianism appear above all as political tools, capable of being exploited in many different and even downright conflicting directions. They serve to support an established power by foretelling its global success or by mounting a frontal attack on a domination perceived as intolerable.

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Messianism serves a royal or imperial power by being the driving force of universal ambition and the instrument of legitimization. King Manuel of Portugal, Charles V, Suleiman, Akbar, the Portuguese claimants, all these benefited from this global perspective, in as much as they were its target. In opposition to the established powers, other popular, indigenous and mestizo forms of Messianism emerged,[41] attractive by virtue of their subversive strength, violent terrorism and radical fundamentalism.

In this way, the forms of Messianism in the 16th century highlight a formidable ambivalence, evident in the Wachowski brothers' Trilogy. Neo and his sidekicks get drawn into the toils of the subversive Millenarians, determined to overthrow a dictatorship. Neo is, in his own way, a 'self-proclaimed God' or a Francisco de la Cruz who has begun to act. Here subversion rhymes with terrorism. The heroes of *The Matrix* behave like 'gnostic fundamentalists', using all forms of violence to destroy our world. Their capacity to demolish skyscrapers is an irresistible reminder of the September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers.

But the Messianism of *The Matrix* is as much a product of Hollywood as it is virtual reality. It uses film to illustrate the claims to universal domination of a white American form of Messianism in the service of the planet and mankind. Neo and his friends also very classically establish themselves as the liberators of a humanity, reduced to slavery by computer programmes, the Post-modern version of the devil or the Antichrist. Once again, the salvation of the world depends on providential Messiahs chosen by Hollywood. *The Terminator* provides another remarkable example of this.

The contrast between the subversion of the established order and the reminder of imperial values gets blurred if we take into account the revelations of the second instalment of the Trilogy, *The Matrix Reloaded*. Seen in this light, rebellion programmed by *The Matrix* is a deliberate flaw, a key to the long-term viability of the system. 'No salvation outside *The Matrix*.' From this point of view, every hope of liberation is only an illusion, mere simulation. In which case, Messianism, subversion and terrorism may be seen to be generated by a system in the interests of its own self-perpetuation. Neo is unwittingly used by the architect, the *deus ex machina*, to accomplish the programme of which he himself is the bearer. In the same way, many examples of Messianism in the 16th and 17th centuries show the way subversive and official Messianism feed off themselves. Trends and ideas in Portugal, Mexico, Peru and Italy often turned out to be strangely transparent. This fundamental ambiguity, these shifts from established order to subversion, added to syncretic montages, explain the multiple and contradictory exegeses engendered by *The Matrix Trilogy*,[42] all of which gives food for thought on the connections between Millenarian terrorism and the global powers trying to suppress it.

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If our Cartesian common sense seems to be shocked by the heterogeneous montage of which *The Matrix* is the filmed illustration, there is more to it than the filmic packaging of a video game. The hybrids of which it is the product are indissociable from the mechanisms of globalization. They are only cultural in name. It is through these hybrids and their derivatives that the product succeeds in captivating audiences throughout the world. Messianic and Millenarian patterns format a hybrid concept of power with enough ambivalence to trap people as different and distant as video game fans or the old-style Communists of Putin's Russia. To each and every one, they offer, in their new technological guise, the illusion of rebellion and redemption, the fantasy of going into action, while guaranteeing a safe return to the studios of the Empire.

Notes and References

1. Note the vast literature sparked off by the Trilogy: M. Kapell and W. G. Doty (eds) (2004) *Jacking in to the Matrix Franchise. Cultural Reception and Interpretation* (New York: Continuum); K. Haber (ed.) (2003) *Exploring the Matrix. Visions of the Cyber Present* (New York: A Byron Press Book).
2. Brown, D. (2004) *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Corgi Books).
3. These discussions were in the context of the acculturations and assimilations making up the history of Brazil. But the cannibalism evident in *The Matrix* is no longer a prelude to modernism.
4. M. Kapell and W. G. Doty (eds) (2004) *Jacking in to the Matrix Franchise. Cultural Reception and Interpretation* (New York: Continuum), p. 65.
5. The success of *The Da Vinci Code* is attributable to hybrids, both mixed and fragmentary: the recourse to the apocryphal Gospel is illustrative of this re-evaluation of the fragment. This amalgam of borrowings nevertheless constitutes a sufficiently coherent totality to captivate hundreds of thousands of readers.
6. M. Kapell and W. G. Doty (eds) (2004) *Jacking in to the Matrix Franchise. Cultural Reception and Interpretation* (New York: Continuum), p. 106.
7. Obadiah 17 (in *The New International Version of the Bible*). See also Joel 3:5 and 4:17.
8. Cf. 'Now do you believe', the remark made by Morpheus, after Neo saved Trinity from a falling helicopter (quoted in M. Kapell and W. G. Doty (eds) (2004) *Jacking in to the Matrix Franchise. Cultural Reception and Interpretation* (New York: Continuum), p. 67).
9. John 19:30.
10. Nothing here is in fact strictly Christian, even if the Trinitarian reference offers an easily recognisable *leitmotiv* with Morpheus, as the substitute for the Father, Neo, the Son doomed to sacrifice, and Trinity, a female Holy Spirit. This reconstitutes the Catholic Trinity by shifting it in time, modifying or even correcting it: Morpheus is an African-American,

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Trinity is a woman, in conformity with political correctness and gender (M. Kapell and W. G. Doty (eds) (2004) *Jacking in to the Matrix Franchise. Cultural Reception and Interpretation* (New York: Continuum), p. 67).

11. *The Matrix* is, however, not the only Hollywood production to spread patterns where the dynamic springs of the action are mixed with expectations and interpretations of a world easily universalized. *Star Wars*, *Dune*, and *E.T.* offer further examples of this, not to mention another trilogy just as famous, *The Terminator.*
12. S. Gruzinski (2004) *Les quatre parties du monde. Histoire d'une mondialisation* (Paris: La Martinière); A. Prosperi (1999) *America e Apocalisse ed altri saggi* (Pisa, Rome: Istituti Editoriali Poligrafici Internazionali), pp. 15–63 (first edition in *Crítica storica*, XIII, 1976, pp. 1–67).
13. A. Prosperi (1999) *America e Apocalisse ed altri saggi* (Pisa, Rome: Istituti Editoriali Poligrafici Internazionali), p. 49.
14. *Die grosse Wende. Das apokaliptische Saeculum und Luther* (Darmstadt, 1966), quoted in A. Prosperi (1999) *America e Apocalisse ed altri saggi* (Pisa, Rome: Istituti Editoriali Poligrafici Internazionali), p. 42, n. 101.
15. 'conjoncture millénariste à l'échelle eurasiatique' (S. Subrahmanyam (2001) 'Du Tage au Gange au XVIe siècle: une conjoncture millénariste à l'échelle eurasiatique', *Annales. Histoire. Sciences Sociales*, **56**(1), pp. 51–84).
16. John 20–16.
17. 'Hierusalen y el monte Sion han de ser reedificado por mano de christianos' (J. Phelan (1972) *El reino milenario de los Franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo* (Mexico, UNAM), p. 37); see also A. Milhou (1998) 'Apocalypticism in Central and South American Colonialism', in S. J. Stein (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (New York: The Continuum), 111, pp. 3–35.
18. *Encubert* in Catalan, *encubierto* in Castilian.
19. S. Subrahmanyam (2001) 'Du Tage au Gange au XVIe siècle: une conjoncture millénariste à l'échelle eurasiatique', *Annales. Histoire. Sciences Sociales*, **56**(1); J. Jermann (1998) *No reino do desejado. A construção do sebastianismo em Portugal. Séculos XVI y XVIi* (San Paulo: Companhia das Letras).
20. 'As ondas navegavam do oriente [com] /Todo o Céu determinado de fazer de Lisboa Nova Roma' (L. de Camoens (1996) *Les Lusiades. Os Lusíadas* (Paris: Robert Laffont), p. 237).
21. D. Bigalli (2000) *Millenarismo e America. Nascita del Nuovo Mundo o fine dell'Antico?* (Milan: Libreria Cortina), p. 124.
22. 'una grey y un pastor solo' (D. Bigalli (2000) *Millenarismo e America. Nascita del Nuovo Mundo o fine dell'Antico?* (Milan: Libreria Cortina), p. 76).
23. 'Ia nova geraçam vem do alto ceo /e deixadas as armas correrão mundos dourados/Agora se compriram as profecias dos prudentes/que vos sereys hum Rey e hum pastor na terra' (F. Bouza Alvarez (2000)

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Portugal no tempo dos Felipes. Política, cultura, representacoes (1580–1668) (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos), p. 90).

24. Since Sebastian had no heir, Phillip II succeeded to the Portuguese Crown and united the two Empires.
25. 'rei das passagens do Mar e sua riqueza'; 'todos crerão que já veio o Ungido Salvador' (João de Castro). João de Castro also wrote *Da quinta e última monarquia futura con muitas outras coisas admiravéis dos nossos tempos* (Paris, 1597).
26. 'gira da Spagna per il Brasil per lo stretta di Magaglianes, per il mar Pacifico e per le Filipine, per il Giappone, per la China, per l'arcipelago di San Lazaro, per Malaca, per Bengala, per Narsinga, per Calicut, per Goa, per l'Indo, per Ormus, per il Capo delle Guarde (Gardafui), per l'isola di San Lorenzo, per la costa orientale d'Africa, per il capo di Buona Speranza, per la costa d'Africa occidentale, per la Ghinea, per Capo Verde, per l'isole Fortunate di Spagna medesima, attorniando il mondo col Sole'; 'stupenda cosa e segno di grand'imperio' (T. Campanella (1997) *Monarchie d'Espagne et monarchie de France*, ed. Germana Ernst (Paris: PUF), pp. 32–34).
27. Cf. T. Campanella (1997) *Monarchie d'Espagne et monarchie de France*, ed. Germana Ernst (Paris: PUF), pp. 5, 25, 33, 53.
28. Las Casas likened the troops of the *conquistadores* to Muslims, determined to destroy the Indies in the same way as the Turks had vanquished the Christians.
29. V. A. Castelló and M. J. A. Stoffels (1992) *Francisco de al Cruz. Inquisición, Actas* I (Madrid: C.S.I.C.), p. 1055.
30. V. A. Castelló and M. J. A. Stoffels (1992) *Francisco de al Cruz. Inquisición* (Madrid: C.S.I.C.), II, 2, p. 1197.
31. V. A. Castelló and M. J. A. Stoffels (1992) *Francisco de al Cruz. Inquisición* (Madrid: C.S.I.C.), II, 2, p. 1198.
32. V. A. Castelló and M. J. A. Stoffels (1992) *Francisco de al Cruz. Inquisición,* (Madrid: C.S.I.C.), I, p. 1032.
33. S. Gruzinski (1985) *Les Hommes-dieux du Mexique, Pouvoir indien et société coloniale, XVe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Editions des Archives Contemporaines).
34. On the Taqui Onqoy, see S. MacCormack (1991) *Religion in the Andes. Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
35. T. A. Abercrombie (2002) 'La perpetuidad traducida: del "debate" al Taki Onqoy y una rebelión comunera peruana', in J. Decoster (ed.) *Incas e indios cristianos* (Cuzco/Lima: CBC, IFEA), p. 88.
36. For a critical bibliography, see T. A. Abercrombie (2002) 'La perpetuidad traducida: del "debate" al Taki Onqoy y una rebelión comunera peruana', in J. Decoster (ed.) *Incas e indios cristianos* (Cuzco/Lima: CBC, IFEA). The perpetuity of the *encomienda* unquestionably stirred up hostility against the Spanish, so deeply did it threaten to constrain Indians of all classes in a society completely dominated by the new overlords (T. A. Abercrombie (2002) 'La perpetuidad traducida: del "debate" al Taki Onqoy y una rebelión

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comunera peruana', in J. Decoster (ed.) *Incas e indios cristianos* (Cuzco/Lima: CBC, IFEA), pp. 79–120).

37. R. Vainfas (ed.) (1997) *Confissões da Bahia* (San Paulo: Companhia das Letras), p. 63.
38. 'mãe de todo o mundo', R. Vainfas (ed.) (1997) *Confissões da Bahia* (San Paulo: Companhia das Letras), pp. 182, 352, 357.
39. 'cativeiro em que estavam'; 'senhores da gente branca, e […] os brancos haviam de ficar seus cativos'; 'Havia de nascer um fogo novo entre eles (= cristãos)'; 'em pássaro e em bichos do mato', R. Vainfas (ed.) (1997) *Confissões da Bahia* (San Paulo: Companhia das Letras), pp. 220, 182–83, 219.
40. As, for example, *Animatrix*, a cartoon made up of animated drawings of Japanese inspiration, the computer game *Enter* and all the merchandise offered for sale.
41. M. Adas (1979) *Prophets of Rebellion. Millenarian Protest against the European Colonial Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).
42. See numerous Internet sites.

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