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Development Remix: Representing Poverty, Culture, and Agency in the Developing World[1]

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The development remix, a project initiated at Georgetown University, is a six- to eight-minute-long digital narrative that mixes or edits existing literary or audiovisual representations. The remix project enables development students, scholars, and practitioners to prepare their own narratives about the developing world, through experiencing existing narratives closely, and makes them empathic and critical while humanizing the cultural conditions of poverty in the developing world. The digital remix also actively engages scholars and practitioners with audiovisual representations, rather than as silent observers or readers of fictional texts and visual dramas. After a brief conceptualization on circulation of narratives about the developing world, the article presents the remix technique for the development scholar. The remix is, in effect, a translation with several strengths: it foregrounds the remixer's reflexivity, humanizes the conditions in the developing world, locates voice and agency in development narratives, and presents all narratives as culturally hybrid. These issues have been the subject of not just development research but also social sciences in general, especially on the use of films and fiction in pedagogic practices. Therefore, the usefulness of preparing remixed narratives extends beyond international development studies.

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How is the developing world represented and what are the consequences of this representation? How do we experience these representations and construct a sense of developing world cultures and its everyday life? From study abroad and field research to reading novels and watching films, as scholars and practitioners, we struggle with closing the distance between our representations and the ways that people for whom we speak might represent themselves. This article presents the experience of a decade-long project—cultural identity narratives (CINs) or, as my students liked to call them, "Development Remix"—undertaken by students in my graduate seminar on Technology, Culture, and Development at Georgetown University from 2004 to 2012.[2]

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[2]I have now left Georgetown University for George Mason University, and therefore, I use the past tense in this essay when referring specifically to students at Georgetown.

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The development remix is a six- to eight-minute-long digital narrative or edited audiovisual representation prepared by aspiring development scholars and practitioners (hereafter students). Development students prepare their own digital narratives or stories about the developing world through remixing existing audiovisual and literary representations.[3] I will argue that novels, films, songs, poems, and photographs are powerful narratives unto themselves.[4] However, the digital remix further actively engages scholars and practitioners differently with audiovisual representations through remixing them to tell their story about them, than they would as silent or distanced readers of fictional texts and visual dramas.

In short, the idea of the remix allows one to experience various forms of representation from the ground-up or inside out by making the student quite conscious of the montage used to present the narrative. The best way of experiencing a remix is to watch one, and a few links are provided in the footnote below.[5] In general, the remix technique makes students aware that all representations rest on further representations. Cultural representations are about a set of people and their ways of life; the remixers are always aware that their digital narratives are their own representations of other representations.

The remix is not only a way of understanding knowledge but also that of creating knowledge in a digital format. After presenting a brief conceptualization on the reinterpretations of existing representations, and the circulation of their meanings, this article presents the development remix as an act of translation with unique strengths. Overall, the remix allows the student to understand how hard it is to represent people's lives and the complex circumstances in which they are embedded. At a micro level, it foregrounds the remixer's *reflexivity*, *humanizes* the conditions in the developing world, locates *voice and agency* in development narratives, and presents all narratives as *culturally hybrid* (emphases for the five issues covered later). These issues have been the subject of not just development research but also social sciences, in general, especially on the use of films and fiction in pedagogic practices. Therefore, the usefulness of preparing remixed narratives might extend beyond international development studies.

The Idea

The problem of development narratives or policies is that of representation. How is development imagined in the minds of its most ardent practitioners and how do we act upon these imaginings? The way the developing world is imagined and conceptualized shapes the resulting characterizations and interventions ranging from multilateral development projects to calls for transnational solidarity and empathy expressed in civil society accounts. The distance between the reality of the image (much like an ethnographic field site) and the location of the interpreter (student scholar) is, therefore, important.[6]

[3]The term representation as used here means that some sense of reality is being re-presented in another format as opposed to representation as persuasion. Unless otherwise stated, the term "representation" is deployed throughout the essay in the sense of re-presentation. See Spivak (1988) for the distinction between representation as persuasion versus re-presentation as building upon existing presentation forms. Author C of this forum discusses these issues within the context of CINs.

[4]The use of audiovisual narratives, especially films, for pedagogy is an established practice in the international relations classroom. See, for example, Gregg (1998), Weber (2001), and Ruane and James (2008).

[5]A few CINs from the students have been placed on vimeo: Kelsey Burns: Reading Lolita in Tehran, 2005; Hilla Meller: Father of Daughters, 2011. At: http://vimeo.com/user11028897 Patrick Scullin: Brasil Final Cut, 2012. At: http://vimeo.com/38174563.

[6]In this sense, the digital remix is an auto-ethnography, making the development scholars aware of their relationship to existing representations about the developing world. Thanks to Roger Lancaster for making this point to me.

Consider a few films, which although avant-garde or experimental in many ways, are not in the remix mode. Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* and Walter Salles' *Central Station* (Centro do Brasil) are filmic narrations from the filmmakers' perspective of young boys, Krishna and Josué, orphaned in the big metropolises of Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro. In presenting the social milieus of their lives, both directors show train stations: Central Station in Rio and various stations in Mumbai beginning with the Victoria Terminus (renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in 1996).[7] A series of montages, with a number of close camera shots, in both films introduce us to momentous crowds and the hustle and bustle of these train stations: the noise and the barely comprehensible public announcements; the grimness, the grittiness of people's faces and sometimes, especially in *Salaam Bombay*, an occasional smile; the glamour of big cities portrayed on billboards and TV screens sitting above the lack of suitable clothing on many people who pass under them; the quick paces with which people walk past and, sometimes, into each other; the various types of economic activity and enterprise taking place in and around the train stations' platforms; and so much more. The directors portray what at first glance seem to be spaces of chaos or anarchy, but what begin to emerge as platforms for presenting patterns of cultural activity and political economy. There is almost an inside-out element to these stories.

Contrast this with Claire Denis' film *Chocolat*. The film portrays a young woman named France who spent her childhood in colonial French Cameroon. The film's opening scenes portray long shots of the Cameroonian countryside. As the grown-up France returns to postcolonial Cameroon, she gazes at this countryside from a distance, in silence, recalling her childhood. Claire Denis employs the mise-en-scène of these long shots to foreshadow the administrative, racial, and sexual boundaries of colonial life to which the film attends. Claire Denis problematizes or represents the Orientalism of French colonialism, which affixed boundaries between the two sets of peoples assigning administration and rank to one and an inferior status to the "other." As one of the protagonists tells France at the end, almost recalling the way the film begins, there is a horizon or a line that cannot be crossed between the French and the local inhabitants. The film is an outside-in account of French presence in Cameroon.

Often times, the development scholar is blamed for presenting long shots from a distance, however empathic these representations and conceptualizations might be. Underlying these representations are the worlds of Krishna and Josué, presented as inside-out close-shots, and the world of France presented through outside-in long-distance shots. Anthropologists in particular have been at the forefront of pointing out the cultural distance (and the power) of our representations. James Ferguson (1994) argues that development interventions seek to integrate Lesotho into global markets, while ignoring the fact that Lesotho has been part of the global political economy, in exploitative ways, in his account, for two centuries. Jane Guyer (2004) shows how various forms of market and exchange have existed in Equatorial Africa for centuries and that Africans are not as "bewildered" by market interventions as, perhaps, the scholars themselves who come to study Africa. Arturo Escobar (1995) calls into question the entire development discourse that sets in place relations among the subparts. "In sum, the system of relations establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise. It sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory, or object to emerge and be named, analyzed, and eventually transformed into a policy or plan" (p. 41). In Paulo Freire's (2000/1970)

[7]The train station has been featured in a number of films, including *Slumdog Millionaire*. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Most of *Salaam Bombay*'s plot, though, takes Krishna to, in, and around Grant Road Railway Station, in Mumbai's red-light district.

eloquent terms, the ability to name one's own worlds is the ultimate pedagogy for liberation. In this sense, even an empathic film director is naming the world for someone, somewhere, from a camera lens that sits at a distance.

For pedagogic purposes, the idea of digital remix actively engages us with audiovisual representations, rather than as silent observers or readers of fictional texts or visual dramas. Two strengths of the development remix are that (i) it allows students to question their reflexivity and assumptions and (ii) in engaging reason it allows the student not to be emotionally manipulated through fictional and powerful visual narratives. These weaknesses have been the subject of international relations research in general on presenting films in the classroom.[8] Therefore, the usefulness of preparing remixed narratives, hopefully, extends beyond international development studies. After presenting the technical dimensions of the remix, this article examines a few conceptual issues underlying the two themes above regarding reflexivity, empathy, and reason-based engagement.

The Remix Technique

The remix technique allows agency to the creator/remixer to unhinge narratives from their original meanings and reveals the rationale of interpretation and translation in presenting new meanings. It presents the development narrative as a meaning in circulation and not as some essential or true depiction of reality.[9]

In trying to capture the difficulty of outlining in broad strokes the differentiated artistic practices of a continent, Simon Njami, curator of *Africa Remix*, one of the biggest exhibitions of contemporary African art launched in Europe in 2004, notes the following:

> If you had to find something all African artists have in common, you would probably notice that they all draw from the materials they grew up with, each in their own way. Our five senses are the gateways to the soul. Art—in Africa as elsewhere—can only be its most sensitive, human and imperfectly completed translation. (Njami 2005:19)

An interview with Tunisian writer Abdelwaheb Meddeb, in the *Africa Remix* catalogue, builds on Njami's contingencies, though his reflections reflect as much a longing for the aesthetics of circulation than merely its description:

> We need to create a space for things to circulate, in which all who have the desire and capacity to tell their story are welcome. This is the modern nomadism, dissemination and displacement, and the end of one-dimensional, self-referential world….Aesthetics is created by what I call the aesthetics of passing through and betweenness. (Meddeb 2005:46)

A museum of contemporary art just about anywhere these days emphasizes circulation of meanings and contingencies of translation, but their self-references in subaltern settings are particularly remarkable. Istanbul Modern speaks to the ways in which Turkish painting developed as a homage to French schools in the nineteenth century, to finding a modern "linear" voice under Kemal Ataturk, to the diversity of voices and forms now. Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro and several others in Latin America almost invariably speak to the hybrid and

[8]For a discussion of these issues in international relations, see Swimelar (2009) who writes: "While emotion and personal drama can galvanize interest, there is also the potential for films with human rights content to be shallow, exploitative, and visually gratuitous in an attempt to use emotion manipulatively, thus we must be selective."

[9]It is, therefore, a technique similar to the one laid out in Indian classical text *Natya Shastra* that asks the reader/viewer/audience to always be aware and conscious, lest they get emotionally manipulated. The Brechtian technique calling attention to the theatricality and artifice of representations is similar.

syncretic practices that gave rise to representational forms. They present nomadic meanings in circulation.

It is important to be conscious of the reader's or the viewer's interpretative agency in experiencing representations. In a powerful essay from three sociologists, Lewis, Rodgers, and Woolcock (2008) note that literary or fictional representations can serve as sources of authoritative knowledge about development. The authors, nevertheless, commit the readers to the same folly that created the authoritative knowledge they seek to question: they treat reading as an act of receiving authoritative knowledge. The authors (Lewis et al. 2008:11) note that it is "necessary for us to develop forms of writing that can engage with the economic and political realities and human struggles and challenges of development that go beyond the conventional academic and policy forms of development writing, and much may be learnt in this regard from fictional forms of representation." It is hard to disagree that there is much to be learnt from fiction, but the authors do not tell us how this engagement "that go beyond the conventional academic and policy forms of writing" is to take place beyond the mere act of spectatorship or reading that is inherent to the humanization in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, works listed in the authors "Recommended List of Literary Fiction on Development" (pp. 12–13). In fact, this listing is similar to my own and other social science courses on international development syllabi or various syllabi on postcolonial fiction. However, there are also differences. The "List of Literary Works" in my development syllabus is merely the first step in experiencing "creative cultural expressions from the developing world." The next step is the cultural identity narrative that students prepare, a non-conventional form of writing and reinterpretation in a digital format.

It seems fairly reactionary then to expect our students to reimagine the top-down ways in which the developing world was imagined in the past by using the same tools that we used to imagine it in the first place: as silent or passive listeners to voices of authority. This is not to say that passive listening is unimportant. Immersions in voices of representation from inside out is a crucial first step in our reimaginings: a Pablo Neruda or a Rabindranath Tagore can tell us something about the voice of hope and dignity that the Orientalism of Samuel Coleridge's Kubla Khan cannot. However, here the reader's translation and engagement is somewhat passive. The readers may walk away, in fact, without engaging at all or relying on another voice of authority to translate for them; story-telling, after all, can be quite manipulative. We need a technique that questions the completeness of translations from above or below, while simultaneously engaging the readers in questioning their own assumptions. If the Foucauldian gaze arresting the Orient, in particular power relations, is to be undone, we cannot do so by merely reversing the gaze through obedient readings of bottom-up narratives, especially if these narratives themselves are meanings in circulation.[10]

The remix project analyzed in this essay seeks to engage readers in active forms of translation. They experience the *various forms of narratives* ("the aesthetics of passing through and betweenness" referenced above), but then by using editing techniques, they create their own narratives from the narrative they have read, seen, heard—or passed through. The remix technique is similar to the impressions created from a silent but reflective and critical walk through a contemporary art museum: our gaze allows us to form an understanding of our own interpretation through the editing techniques in our head without ever

[10]At times, the bottom-up narratives themselves force the reader to be more attentive in calling attention to their own artifice: Joaquim Maria Machado De Assis' 1881 postmodern novel *The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas* is an early example.

verbalizing anything. The remix preserves the movement, circulation, and contingency in all forms of representation.

A common problem encountered in discussing the developing world is that of dealing with stereotypes and understandings in our minds about the developing world. In replicating stereotypes, for example, we are often editing and repeating a narrative or discourse that we heard, read, or watched elsewhere. The Development Remix or the Cultural Identity Narratives (CINs) project was designed to make students more reflexive about the narratives they choose for depicting the developing world.

The small "t" or the toolbox of techniques of the remix is important. For the project executed in my development class at Georgetown, students read, watched, and listened to creative cultural expressions *from* the developing worlds—fiction, films, music, art, and photographs—and then presented their own digital narratives by remixing them. They could only edit the representations as they found them and could not use their own words. This exercise exposed them to the difficulties of constructing a narrative about another culture and relating to that experience and the way we "edit" other cultures in our minds and imaginaries. The remix, nevertheless, is a more proactive project for introducing digital media to the classroom than passively engaging students in watching films or reading fictional narratives.

Cultural narratives were prepared in my Georgetown classes for eight years (2004–2012) to present various aspects of the developing world in a digital format to examine everyday cultures, or production and circulation of meanings, in developing societies. Students started by first reading a fictional narrative or watching a film from the developing world to select an identity theme. After selecting the theme, students found other representations from the developing world (the entire narrative presented some sense of a chosen geographic space, broadly defined) that deepened and explored the identity theme.

The preparation of the narratives does require a few resources. The library should have access to literary, film, photographical, and musical materials. Development remix is also a way of familiarizing ourselves with cultural heritage and diversity: students find art, photography, and music from the geographic spaces they represent.[11] Georgetown library has a large multimedia library, and one of the librarians generally provided an introduction on how to search for specific themes and materials within these collections. However, students in the past also received films from Netflix or other providers, found clips of films online through YouTube or other engines such as Hulu or vimeo, and during Spring 2012, one of the students even requested from the Chilean Embassy a film she saw at a festival, Matías Bize's 2010 film *The Life of the Fish* (*La Vida de los Peces*); they obtained a copy for her. Second, dedicated staff at the library or a multimedia laboratory is required to impart or give advice on technical aspects.[12] Generally, the students received training on how to use iMovie, and we also conducted workshops on how to construct a digital storyboard, which helped them specify a narrative arc for their digital presentations. While the students used a variety of media platforms—including HTML and ColdFusion—to piece together their narratives or remixes, iMovie emerged as the platform of choice over the years.

Most importantly, the development remix project seeks to contribute to the scholarship and narratives from the developing world in the social sciences or literary readings of postcolonial fiction and media. In the first half of the

[11]Every now and then, I receive a postcard or a message from alumni noting that they are now physically traveling in the areas they represented or that the remix was their point of entry into a particular art from that area, which they continue to explore.

[12]I also worked with staff at Georgetown's Center for New Design in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), which also awarded me a small grant in 2004 to develop this project.

seminar (generally first two months of the semester) while the students prepared their narratives, I spent some time in my classes each week discussing various sets of readings and reflections on fictional narratives from the developing world, including the Lewis et al.'s (2008) and the *Africa Remix* essays referenced above. It was also helpful to direct students to a plethora of resources on digital humanities in general and the various forms of digital storytelling, especially in archival and historical practices. These readings made the students aware of the debates regarding these narratives and provided them additional perspectives for their own reflexive position. Taken together, the discussions on these readings and the preparation of the narratives were not just meanings in circulation but a contribution to translating these meanings through a digital practice.

Translation

The act of translation is an active one and crosses semantic boundaries. To translate is to present a meaning or a condition. We translate all the time: we translate, with our interpretation, when we come back from a souk in Morocco and report that people like to haggle there while we call it bargaining when we do it in the United States; an academic translates a cultural condition in noting that women in Nepal need microfinance; and multilateral institutions translate socioeconomic conditions when they represent them through equations or ethnographies.

Therefore, the question is not whether or not we should translate into different languages and syntactical structures: the activity is ubiquitous and cannot be wished away. The relevant question is: How should we translate? Certain types of translations often present themselves as authoritative and closed, even though translation is about context and dialogue. The Development Remix projects suggest five issues, analyzed below, that might help alleviate the tensions of power in translation: *reflexivity, humanization, voice, agency,* and *cultural agency*—in sum, a condition of awareness in the act of translation.

I imposed some fairly conventional conditions of translation upon the students. They could not use the personal pronoun or their own words or voice in the narratives. Naoki Sakai (2006:74) notes that "the translator is responsible for the translation but they cannot be held responsible for the pledges expressed in it, because….the translator is someone who cannot say 'I'." This condition of responsibility needs to be revisited as we broaden the meaning of translation and acknowledge that the luxury of representation carries the privilege of power. In fact, Sakai in connecting the issue of translation with modernity, nation-state, and colonialism, also notes: "Historically, how we represent translation does not only prescribe how we collectively imagine national communities and ethnic identities but also how we relate individually to national sovereignty. It is also complicit with the discourse of the West and the Rest through which the colonial power relationship is continually fantasized and reproduced" (p. 78).

Any act of translation is laden with power and draws from context. Language itself carries connotations of power. The following passage comes from R.K. Narayan's short passage, "English in India," when the author as a boy and his friend are introduced to the English language alphabet in colonial India. R.K. Narayan, perhaps the first well-known Indian writer to give the English language an Indian flavor and syntax, writes the following with some irony, I think:

> The first lesson in the glossy Primer began 'A was an Apple Pie' (or was it just Apple, I don't remember); and went on to explain, 'B bit it' and 'C cut it'. The activities of B and C were understandable, but the opening line was mystifying. What was an Apple Pie? From B's and C's zestful application, we could guess that it had to do with some ordinary business of mankind, such as eating. But what

> was it that was being eaten? Among fruits we were familiar with the mango, banana, guava, pomegranate and grape, but not the apple (in our part of the country) much less an Apple Pie. To our eager questioning, the omniscient one, our English teacher, would just state, 'It must be some stuff similar to our *idli*, but prepared with apple.' (Narayan 1995:20)

Reflexivity

The translator or the remixer becomes aware of her reflexive position as a representer (in the advocacy sense) of narratives. Immanuel Kant's perspective that reflection on one's own privileged position in knowledge production applies to, as Nick Couldry describes, doing homework rather than proceeding to do fieldwork in some far-off place (Couldry 2000:124). In development remix practice, it means being aware of the reasons why "postcolonial" representations have been silent from our canonical texts on development and the cultural assumptions about the status of these representations in our minds even before we engage with them. The student generally comes from a position of power prior to the interaction, the sediment of three centuries of discursive formation. Unless the student has experience with alternative discourses, and I must admit that in the diversity of our classrooms, many of them do inhabit this position, s/he is likely to have been exposed to the kinds of images that Edward Said (1978:286–287) characterizes as Orientalizing: "In the films and television the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty….Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all these images is the menace of the *jihad*. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world."

One way to introduce reflexivity is through narratives that have orientalized and alternative images, especially from the developing world, that question this power. The "homework" for the *remixers* included an explicit discussion on discourse formation. Sometimes these engagements are subtle: in her remix Sofia Sunaga, an ex-student, also a staff member at the Inter-American Development Bank, chose passages that spoke to spirituality in shamanic practices through her engagement with Malidoma Patrice Some's *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman*. In particular, her CIN presented Some's interpretation of the color black in African shamanic practices as one that provides the requisite darkness for inner reflection and spirituality. Similarly, engagements on color, and questioning of power, is present in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* where a character questions why the colonists have scalded their faces with hot water to get white skins. Introducing and discussing narratives such as these can, therefore, expose us to the assumptions we might have made about the purity of white or the simplicity of pastels. The digital CINs presented by the students are full of color!

Humanization

Storytelling, poetry, and film images can stir a soul and trouble a conscience—narratives so powerful that they can unmoor our private assumptions about people's lives. They present human beings in all their complexity, as full-fledged human beings, walking past us with their life and its struggles. They speak to the human condition and evoke empathy and caring that scholars such as Martha Nussbaum (2001) and Thomas Pogge (2007) take to be essential preconditions for development praxis.

Paulo Freire is best known in development practice for his emphasis on dialogic communication. Participatory action research, which he inspired, and that

inspires the Development Remix project, gains from the Freirian perspective on love (here understood in the agape or Christian sense of communion) as preconditions for understanding.[13] In dialogic communication, writes Freire, love and humility, rather than sadism, inform the interlocutors:

> Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism is the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And, this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. (Freire 2000/1970:89)

With respect to emotions, love, and caring, there is a second issue that the development remixer must address. While civic passions, as Sharon Krause (2008) calls them, may be necessary to evoke empathy and moral sentiments, they are not sufficient to ensure that the development remixer is not manipulated emotionally or seeks to manipulate.[14] After all, emotional manipulation has been a concern from Platonic thought (in his calls for banning poetry) to our contemporary concerns about broadcast images (Postman 1985). The development remix project wards against emotional manipulation in two ways. The student is not a passive recipient of images, texts, and sounds. The task of remixing these images to construct another narrative entails both passions and reasoned judgments. Second, the student is aware of the manipulations inherent in various audiovisual and literary forms though deliberation and readings that precede the preparation of the narrative. In Plato's Parable of the Cave (*The Republic*, Book VII), a philosophical mind would allow the cavemen to see that the shadows they see in front of them, because they are bound, are only shadows and not the original source. Plato is also asking us to be critical of various forms and the way they arise.

Voice

From the outset, the remix provides representation to voices that are marginalized in dominant discourses, especially in the global North. The primary voice, of course, is that of the remixer but with a sense of caring toward the original narratives from which s/he draws her inspiration. I found that the student remixers avoided grand pronouncements on how their remix now represents a people or that the original representation authenticated the experience of a people. Gao Xingjian's caution at his lecture while receiving the Nobel Prize for literature speaks to this issue: "A writer does not speak as the spokesperson of the people or as the embodiment of righteousness. His voice is inevitably weak, but it is this weak voice that is the most authentic" (Xingjian 2007:32). In fact, the complexity of the narratives on human conditions presented in the remix invariably made the students careful about grand pronouncements about a set of people of the "I was in country or place X and they all do A, B, C there." In a

[13]For my reflection on Paulo Friere's life and the continued relevance of his work, especially outside a radical framework, please see Singh (2008).

[14]In a broader philosophical context, Sharon Krause has argued that David Hume's concept of moral sentiments, evoked through public engagement, is important for understanding civic citizenship (Krause 2008).

sophisticated remix, one encounters a plurality of actors doing or thinking a number of different things.

Several issues are important for understanding voice. First, the remixer realizes that the voice of a film director or a novelist from the developing world is likely to be an elite voice. In introducing postcolonial studies, Neil Lazarus (2004:8) notes the dilemma facing the "progressive intellectual" who purports to speak for "the people": "the subalternizing and silencing propensities of the colonialist representation are often—and symptomatically—evident, too, in elite representation issue from within the colonized."[15] Therefore, Ngugi wa Thiongo's writing about scalded skins or Sembene Ousmane's comments (Perry et al. 1973:37) about the patronizing attitudes toward African cinema must be understood in the context of an elite response to the North and might even be a form of self-exoticization in response to the Orientalizing gaze. Even the entire Negritude movement, including Nobel Laureate Leopold Senghor's poetry, has been critiqued for speaking more to the boudoirs of Paris than the outskirts of Dakar (Soyinka 1990). Second, the remixer, despite the difficulty, often conjures enough empathy and courage to move us toward the authenticity of the weak voice. I often shared with my students the cultural theorist Richard Hoggart's comment about Pablo Neruda at UNESCO where Hoggart served as Assistant Director General (1971–1975). Hoggart's witty but caustic account is full of the power plays, inefficiencies, corruption, and internecine warfare at UNESCO, which nevertheless seeks to provide moral guidance to the world, beginning with its preamble exhorting that the defenses of peace must be constructed in the minds of human beings. Hoggart notes:

> In spite of all such disappointments, there are occasionally moments which remind one dramatically what UNESCO is about. I remember Pablo Neruda, in poor health and only a few months from death, standing before the Plenary Meeting of the General Conference and reminding the delegates about UNESCO's fundamental commitment to the poor and deprived of the world, to them as whole human beings not simply as units who have to be made literate and given more money. It was as if the poor of his native Chile, of all Latin America, of the whole world, walked sadly and in silent reproof through that elegant hall, evoked by Neruda's passion and poetry. (Hoggart 1978:102)

Agency

The development remixer, in representing a cultural condition, speaks to groupness. Cultural conditions are about patterns, rules, beliefs, and norms and the power structures that sustain them. The remixer, therefore, must attend to either the agency or the lack of agency among groups. Hilla Meller's and Kelsey Burns' cultural identity narratives (see Footnote 3) both speak to the lack of choices women face, but both ascribe agency to women: Burns' narrative finds agency in the power to imagine and the dreams among Iranian women, and Meller's agency lies in the violence unleashed from the Tunisian/Moroccan women she represents.

[15]Similarly, it is rather elitist of progressive literary theorists to lump all postcolonial writing as nothing but national desire as Frederic Jameson does (1986). Aijaz Ahmad (1987), otherwise an admirer of Jameson, sees nothing but a desire to create the Orientalizing other in Jameson's writing. Jameson notes that the Western novel expressed in the nineteenth century the kinds of longings for national modernities that postcolonial writers do. He misses, I think, the gritty schizophrenia of postmagical realism writings (Jorge Franco or Laura Restrepo), the questioning of all kinds of authority among female writes such as Mariama Ba and Tsitsi Dungarembga, the playful caricatures of society in Jorge Amado, the postmodernism of early nineteenth-century writer Joaquim Maria Machado De Assis, to name a few themes.

Another agency is that of the remixer. Most of them speak explicitly to the choices they must make in piecing together their narrative: the edited "reality" that the remixer presents gathers snippets of prior representations. The remixer decides what kind of intertextuality of meaning s/he desires. Intertextual practices are conscious of the referential and layered representations that are linked with each other and, therefore, call attention to the contingency of successive meanings. One student, Gabriel Dillon, ran four mini-screens while presenting a narrative on violence in Medellin, Colombia. Another narrative from David Betancur, also on drug-wars in Colombia, presented two narratives, one from the perspective of the perpetrators and the second from that of the victims. Here the remixers chose to present multiple points of view: the source materials that they were employing did not contain these points of view. In general, the remixers also noted that their agency came from the particular media that are at the forefront in their narratives. In Kelsey Burns' narrative, *Reading Lolita in Teheran*, the novel and photographic images from Iranian feminists are at the forefront. In Patrick Scullin's narrative, the intertextuality of the three films he employs comes through first.

Hybridity

The remix is a hybrid form, but it borrows from multiple hybridities. First and foremost is the hybridity of the cultural conditions that the remixer experiences in the source materials. Jorge Amado's playful forays into Bahian miscegenation and syncretic practices such as condomblé come to mind. Jorge Amado is prescient in pointing out, not so subtly, the racism, class-based exploitation, religious oppression, and the patriarchal conditions that lurk underneath the mixing and matching of peoples, religions, and their ideas that are so often subjects for celebrating cultural diversity in Brazil. In *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, Dona Rozilda contemplates her daughter's choice for a suitor:

> He was not, she repeated, the son-in-law she had dreamed of, the prince of noble blood and coffers of gold. The only noble blood Morais could claim was that of remote forebear, Obitiko, the prince of an African tribe who had been brought to Bahia as a slave, mingling his blue blood with the plebeian strains of Portuguese peasants and Dutch mercenaries. Out of the mixture had come a light mulatto, with a quick smile, an agreeable dark person. (Amado 1969:75)[16]

The second point on hybridity is in the media of presentation among the source materials and the representer's remix. All forms that remixers engage—films, poetry, fiction, photography, art, or music—are hybrid forms. R.K. Narayan was introducing in English the form of a novel, which Hindi and Urdu writers had already introduced in their borrowings from the European novel. The flows go in several directions. Musical and dance forms everywhere reveal layers and layers of hybridity. Without sub-Saharan Africa, we would have no samba, tango, hip-hop, or rap. Bahman Gohbadi presents the Iranian hip-hop group Hickhas' "Ekhletaf" in his film *No One Knows About Persian Cats*; it is the Persian sound of hip-hop.

The case of hybridity must be pushed further though—in *the idea* of the remix. Cultural Identity Narratives are making contributions to understanding the developing world from new vantage points, furthering a new pedagogic practice, and adding to digital forms of scholarship. Similarly, the Wikipedia entry on the remix cites the ethnomusicologist John Von Seggern who notes that the remix

[16]Although Jorge Amado since the 1950s and the Tropicalismo movement since the 1960s questioned race relations, the dialogue on the underlying racial hierarchies and tensions is only now beginning in Brazil, decades after a celebration of racial hybridity among the Brazilian elite (see Winant 2001; *The Economist* January 28, 2012).

"is a major conceptual leap: making music on a meta-structural level, drawing together and making sense of a much larger body of information by threading a continuous narrative through it…. pulling together the efforts of others into a multilayered multireferential whole which is much more than the sum of its parts."[17]

Conclusion

There are limitations to the remixed narratives or stories that are presented: they are often not linear and sometimes defy any kind of understanding without knowledge of the source materials; they are time-consuming and technical, even though students found making them to be thoroughly rewarding;[18] they may or may not make the remixers question deeply held assumptions and, even when they do, students note after graduating that they find themselves in development agencies such as Chemonics, USAID, or the World Bank where there may be little sensitivity toward humanizing the lives of those impacted by development interventions. Their frustration is disheartening.

Nevertheless, the development remix project will continue.[19] Its ultimate challenge to development practice is to be careful in its representations through equations, qualitative analyses, or policy proposals. The five issues with translation provide the development practitioner with a guide: (i) homework with remix would produce empathy before a development intervention, just as well-kept ethnographic field notes document various perspectives before the ethnography is written; (ii) empathy and caring are not the same as emotional involvement in which the passion for development disguises reason; (iii) neither the voice of the development practitioner nor that of other narratives is "authentic" but it can reveal, with caring, cultural conditions; (iv) the development practitioner makes considerable choices in locating agency in the narratives; (v) the development practitioners add another hybrid layer to those underneath it—they are not bringing markets, modernity, or democracy to bear upon some essential tradition: they are translating and transplanting their development imaginaries upon a set of people who may or may not accept them.

On the vimeo site, where the 2012 student Patrick Scullin placed his Cultural Identity Narrative, he writes:

> I tried to convey that there is beauty, dancing, love making, sensuality, despair, hope, and yes, violence in the experience I had with the directors and authors I read. It is not intended to be an all encompassing judgment or expression of Brasil. It is what I felt was necessary to communicate, not because all of the things are nice to reflect on, but because that was my experience of their experience. Life is a grand opera. It is not intended to accurately reflect Brasil, it was a reflection of my experience with the art that was created there.

Patrick Scullin was responding to the critique from a few people that he was valorizing poverty and violence in Brazil. His response was to take ownership of his representation as a reflection on the many arts that he had experienced. In the words of Laura Roselle, one of my colleagues who read this article, "it is important to remember that there is no original CIN but many original CINs."

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[17]Quoted in Remix, Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remix (Accessed March 28, 2012).

[18]Not a single student raised any kind of concern about the time it took to make a cultural identity narrative, although it takes upwards of 20 hours after they have read the novel and watched the films. The narratives only comprised 25 percent of the total grade for the class. However, it set the tone for thinking about cultural conditions in the developing world. The final project in the class was a reformulation of already implemented development projects/interventions, albeit with cultural sensitivity. This project comprised 40 percent of the grade.

[19]I hope to engage masters and doctoral students in a similar undertaking in the future at George Mason University. I have explored broad issues of creativity, representations, and cultural identity in Singh (2011).

In a world of development practice, the introduction of a multiplicity of meanings and translations would in the long run, I believe, seek to humble the scholar and the practitioner.

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