

Wally: I grew up in Alexandra Township, a township just outside of Johannesburg, and I recall that we had a cinema there, to which we went almost every weekend, and most of the films that we saw were American movies, cowboy and Indian-type movies.

I grew up in Alexandra, and in Alexandra we had a cinema, which we went to almost every weekend. Most of the movies which they showed there were Cowboy ~~and Indian~~, Indians and Cowboys, now and ~~again~~ <sup>then occasionally</sup> there would be, you know, religious movies, and things like that. I think that those movies in the first instance portrayed to us what the West is. We saw what America is or what western civilisation is, ~~these~~ movies. But also because western civilisation was something which one had to aspire towards. So it is according to that we tried to become westernized, if you want to say that. And the result I think is that precisely because it was what I call Bang-bang type movies, they served to fuel a lot of gangsterism amongst our ~~W~~ always aspired to be the ~~in~~ in those films, I remember people like Gene Autry, John Wayne, Tarzan, etc. ~~This is very~~ This is very curious in the sense that once I left Alexandra and went to the US, it became very difficult for me to distinguish between real American life and the movies. First of all one saw what one heard, American twang, very familiar, but one had only seen it and witnessed it through the screen. And of course being in NY, one looked at the police, and one couldn't differentiate between them and the cowboys. And many other things which one can talk about, especially if one arrives in the US very conscious of a racism coming from an apartheid country, it's very easy that you feel that you are once more reliving, you know Cowboy-Indian feelings, but, you know, instead of horses and cows you are using cars and there are traffic lights. But you feel threatened in the same way that I would think Indians were threatened. So to a certain extent, this is the image that one would have of the West, besides the glitter which other films showed, besides the dream, you know, that it is possible to be, to acquire a fortune, it is possible to become famous, it is possible to live in a world that is extremely wealthy, there was that part too. But I'm saying all this to say that I think that the fact that movies which were exported to South Africa, to Africa to the Third World, I would suspect, they did -

(Telephone breaks in)

Q. Did you come expecting racism in US?

Wally: Well, you know, the important thing is that, what I was trying to say is that Cowboy-Indian movies I think made a very important metaphor for how one looks at America. You looked at America in terms of the hunters and hunted, and you knew that both ways were human beings, which metaphor fitted very well with our lives, because that's how one grows up, feeling hunted. But also, there is an additional thing, you see, on the one side you see white people hunting, on the other you see people who are not white being hunted, and again it fits in well with how you understand the world to be operated. The other thing is that you begin to understand that whatever else is shown as being wealthy belongs to white people, which means it reinforces, you know, racism, and reinforces oppression, reinforces exploitation of peoples. But you see it's important to know that as a black person you know the side that you are on. And I can't actually recall the actual films, but I know that whenever I saw black Americans acting in films, they actually reinforced the position that I knew belonged to black people. So what I'm going to say is that ~~one~~ then comes to understand how Western civilisation is structured. It is structured on the one level in terms of the hunters and hunted, it is structured in terms of power, meaning power belongs to white people, and the powerless being those who are not white. It reinforces positions of poverty for those who are not white, it reinforces, you know, the question of the side that has to continuously serve, and the side that has to continuously be served. Masters and servants, masters and slaves. By the time I went to the US, I had read many books, especially by Afro-Americans, and I had come to understand I think very well the question of racism,

and Afro-Americans articulated this very well. Writers like Baldwin, Imirá Baraka, John and others, Tony Morrison, many writers one had read by that time, so I - what was lacking from my side was the actual experience, mentally, psychologically, I knew exactly. So even when I actually arrived in NY, NY was not strange to me, I understood perfectly well how it functioned. So on the one hand, the mistrust, suspicion that I had about America I would say was introduced to me by movies, precisely because I knew that there was no way I could be white, and as a result there was no way that I could become a hunter, of human beings. But also, through literature, which then articulated the position of the hunted, in one of the world powers of the world, I was also prepared to understand and defend myself and be able to move in those streets. But the most important thing about what I've said so far is, growing up in Alexandra, having experienced film as I said I have, having been armed by Afro-American literature and South African literature, African literature, to know there is no reason why I am the hunted, then continuously you wanted to take a position among those who are hunted, which means, whatever skill you are going to learn, you wanted to learn it on behalf of those who are hunted. [This is why for me I have never understood, nor have ever believed that there is anything like impartiality when it comes to film. I believe very strongly that film is informed by how we are socialised, by the education that we got, the civilisation that we come from, according to that we make a decision as to where we point the lens.] So when I arrived in the US, initially I was going to study writing but I discovered that there was no way I could learn writing, I'd done whatever I can

to continue to be a writer, and I realized, being in the US, the powerful medium that is film. It's very powerful - but also I was attracted to it by the fact that it seemed an art-form that can break all kinds of barriers. If it is shown, it brings literature, theatre, it brings almost everything one time into a place. And according to how one wants to use it, you can educate through it, or you can reinforce prejudices whatever, but I recognized that it was a very powerful media, and being a creative person myself, I was extremely attracted to it, hence my studying it. But even as I entered it, I want to repeat that I entered it strictly as knowing that whatever I learned, I must eventually learn how to pitch it among the hunted, so that the world can look at the hunted as they see themselves, and that the hunted can look at the world as they understood it, and see it as it is. And both I believe believed then were entering a completely new arena, if one succeeded in learning the crafts, the crafts of the art form. One would almost have to relearn, you know, how to use their experience, the oppressed, and how to use their experience, their knowledge, to point the lens.

Q: What were you able to do with your studies at Columbia?

Wally: Unfortunately, when I was there, which I think I did it for two years, because the first year I was in writing and then I switched on to filming, in the two years that I was there I made a film, and even then as I started doing this, it was almost rebelling from how I was being taught how to make films. I had participated in many other films which were being made, and one can break these into several categories, into on the one hand explorative of sex, on the other, modernisation of Cowboy and Indians, on the other, exploration of, reinforcement of what America is. That's one set of things. The other was that I had to continuously tell myself that if I were going to continue to make films among the hunted, I would not have access, first of all to the funds that people had when they were making the films. Certainly I had to continuously tell myself that I would be working among people who up until then would have seen film-making as something that comes from outside. I would have to relearn that people see themselves as part of a film-making process. So when I was making whether one would have the equipment, whether one would have the money, one would have the resources among the people, and also one very important thing, which one also realized was, how in the film is made, is one going to make the breakthrough so that it becomes not a film coming from the Third World, but a film contributing to civilisation. So as one was learning this, one was also becoming very conscious of how film-making is in fact a very exclusive art, you know, is very exclusive, prohibitive of most. / And at that

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point I made a decision that, how to make films, how to make low-budget films, how to almost continuously try to oppose what Hollywood says films are, you know, the glamour, the expenses, etc. So I did a film about one person, and said to myself, This person being in NY, everybody else in NY will become the actor, whether they like it or not. They act either to reinforce this person's story, or to negate it, whichever way. And the story line was somebody who has left SA intending to learn and to go back to fight. And realising that this were not possible. And trying to define alternatives to that. I finished the movie, it was about, what, two hour thing. Unfortunately, I looked at it then when I was in NY, I've never looked at it again. Then I had to leave NY in '77, when I really felt that - I'd been there for three years then - I felt that if I was going to become a film-maker, I had to begin to be, you know, in the location where I wanted to make films then how to do that. I arrived - I could not go back to SA, so I landed in Botswana, and I discussed with people in the movement about this. And as I said, painfully and unfortunately I discovered film is very exclusive, you could not give it priority. So instead of making films I then worked generally within, among cultural workers. We founded that an organization called Mir Adensango, which in my view was very important, I think if one had limited oneself to dealing with film, one wouldn't have gained the knowledge that I think I gained, through looking at culture first in the broadest terms, and secondly looking at it as to how that broad definition of culture is expressed through the different art-forms. Because we created structures which were going to use all the art-forms, film, theatre, writing, painting wanted to know. First to learn the craft of it, the aesthetics of all the art-forms, and try to articulate political aspirations through this cultural expression. So one began to have a very broad point of view, in terms of how one approaches any art form from that group. When we tried to make a film using Super-8 - I was directing this thing - about a freedom fighter who survived the massacre in Maseru and gets to Botswana, the exercise for me was very important, because continuously, as I was saying earlier on, first of all we had to say to ourselves, you know, we must never under any circumstances use Hollywood as a point of reference. So we had to use our - define our reference point. And our reference point was that at all times, whatever any frame says, it must be able to articulate the newness of a freedom fighter among an oppressed people. What is this? At the same time, challenge the concept of hunters and hunted, at the same time try to define what is it that differentiates between a freedom fighter and a terrorist, which means what is it just that one can fight for. And the other thing is that we were using people who had no training as actors, who believed that somehow they can become actors, but their point of reference of course was still Hollywood, so we had to battle through that. I remember that at every point when we were preparing for a shoot, we had to discuss very extensively each character, and try to ask ourselves, you know, put what I may call a conscience around us, for instance, ask ourselves, if an old woman who has never been to the movies sees this image, what would they want to see? If a youngster who has seen many American movies comes to see this and we want to change that, what should we do to change it? So for every shoot we organized what I may call a "conscience workshop", to try to create a conscience for ourselves, which would guide how we do this. We finished shooting it, but unfortunately we ran out of funds, so even now that Super 8 thing is still in cans. I think that those were the two moments when I tried to put the skill that I'd learnt in Columbia, you know, into practice. Otherwise I have continuously maintained a great interest in film-making. Presently, especially now being here in London, living here in London, I'm quite exposed to films, the TV, etc, etc. And of course I continuously ask more or less the same questions that I was asking. First of all, you know, I've heard a lot about objectivity, I've heard a lot about impartiality, that's one set of position or principal that one wants to discuss. I think at the present moment it would be correct to say that generally speaking, historically the world has had to put high on its agenda the question of democracy; and then the third point would define

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would be about where I come from. There is a slogan that has emerged in SA, which at one point I think it is correct to describe it as an indictment against humanity, but at the same time it's a very optimistic position, given the way the world is presently. This slogan is, "Freedom or death", which has emerged in very fierce battles in SA. Now, in terms of filming, when we talk about objectivity and impartiality, my question is, What do we mean? Impartial to what? And is it correct to use the word "objective", or "being objective", or "objectivity" as meaning "inability to take positions". Because every time I've heard the word "objectivity" or "impartiality" is when these people who think they have a case to put before the world want to put it, then I hear the whole establishment, film establishment, talking about impartiality. I'll give you an example. Quite recently I was involved, indirectly and directly, in a programme that was going to explore the significance and meaning of the cultural boycott in SA. I did this, I was involved in this, precisely because I am the representative of the department of Arts & Culture of the ANC here in London. And many people who had gone to SA to try and understand this, people told them, Before you come to us you must first consult with the ANC, and this is how I came to be involved. And of course you see for us, when we talk about the cultural boycott, we talk about it in terms that we look at it and say to ourselves, For close to 300 years, 75% of the population of SA had been completely excluded from life, had been put in the backyard of history. 25% acted as if they were the only people living in SA. That 25% is white, the 75% is black. A cultural boycott of course is a weapon against the 25%, and for them to develop a conscience about the 75% they've excluded to participate. But at the present moment, the situation has shifted, the 75% has shifted the points of reference in SA. They are now in the forefront of defining a new SA. As they do so, they also articulate it through different cultural manifestations. So we were saying, we should find a way of ensuring that we continuously use boycott as a condition, as a tactic to conscientise the 25%. At the same time, we should use the boycott to encourage the expression of this new SA culture. I remember in many discussions that I had in trying to define how this goes about, first of all I was saying, it's very important in SA to know that when you go there, your point of reference must necessarily be the organizations which people have created for themselves to articulate their aspirations, but also to destroy apartheid. It's very important. And secondly, I kept saying that you cannot divorce, you know, those organizations from even the ANC. Now, as soon as you say that, correctly people say you articulate a political position. But they then say they want a political position opposed to that, to give impartiality or objectivity to the conduct.

So the question that one asks about this - "I'll go back again to the metaphor, the hunted and the hunters. If we say, on the one hand there are human beings who are hunters, on the other there are human beings who are the hunted. How does one become objective? in a situation like that? Or how does one become impartial? It's a question that I've asked many many times. It's a question that I have come to believe it can only be answered by the successes of the hunted re-defining the world, and perhaps in that process the whole concept of impartiality and objectivity will be re-defined. I don't see any other way out of that. I'm saying this also because I recognize, as I said earlier in, that whether the world likes it or not at the present moment, it has to deal with a very very old concept, which has been distorted, misinterpreted, to fit in the position of the hunters and the hunted, and this concept is the concept of democracy. I think this concept has come once more very high on the agenda, and it is the hunted who must contribute to this definition. Whether the world likes it or not, this is what is going to happen."

So I would like to fit in film as an art-form into, you know, this sort of point of reference that I was putting forward. There is something that is called the Third World, but also I think that the Third World does exist in what has been called the First World. And I think the definition of the Third World, whether it is within the First World or outside of it, must necessarily mean lack of democracy. Which means what? Which means, lack of participat

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of the people to make decisions about how nature which surrounds them is going to be used

for their betterment, I would like to define democracy that broad. Of course, for people make decisions like that, they must have certain rights. Rights to education, choice of what they want to do, rights in who represents them in making decisions about what type of education they will have, what kind of health facilities they will have, how they relate to them, etc, etc, one can go on and on about this. So that in the end they are ensured a better life, and they can ensure, they are in a position to ensure a better life for those who come after them. Now Third World, I think, for me, when I define Third World, it means the lack of this democracy. Lack of this ability to make decisions, and this lack is defined and imposed legally by the huns. Now, first of all, what it means is that people in the Third World cannot make films, if we take this concept. It means that people in the First World must make films about this Third World. And I said earlier on that the direction which the lens points is informed by ~~what's~~ education, socialization, sympathies, understandings and aspirations. I do know that there are people among, in the First World who are great defenders of democracy, I understand this, and I think there are film-makers who take that position. But I still think that it is very important that film-makers within the World can also have the right to point the lens the way they want to point it, and eventually be able to express anywhere in the world through film, how they see themselves, how they see the world. But of course I'm defining a very big problem as I'm saying this, it's a very big problem, because it's not happening, things are not happening like that. We have seen how in Latin America cinema novo started, and in my view it defines precisely the problem that I was defining now, We have seen how especially in West Africa people have tried to make films against great odds. We have seen how in the First World, those film-makers who are a consequence of democracy have tried to make films and have had to define something called independent cinema. Which means I'm defining here a struggle to articulate aspirations of a majority in the world, and the question that one asks is, Why should it be a struggle, if in the first place, 1. They are in the majority, in the second place, according to democracy, what they would be fighting for would be just - why must it be a struggle? If it is a struggle, what are they struggling against? I think, if we use film, they are struggling against images which reinforce the correctness of lack of democracy, which reinforce prejudice which reinforce broadly speaking, reinforces and defines this exclusive civilization, which is a civilization intended for the few. I'm defining it this way to say that I think those of us who are film-makers, who are within the broad spectrum that I've defined as Third World, whether it's Third World outside of the First World or inside it, those of us who are inside this, I think it has become very very important, especially now, to define our battle to articulate the truth as a battle and as a struggle, because once we come to terms with this, we'll then come to terms with first of all what is up against us, and secondly, what we have to do to battle against it. But also more important it becomes important also to understand that what we are battling for is just, in the context of the world. One experience that I had when I was in America - I kept asking myself the question, If America is a world power, and if America is a great defender of civilization, and if America is the wealthy country that it is, and if America sets standards of living, why is it that one can still discover ignorance in America? I mean, to come from Africa and arrive in a world power, and still be able to meet people who wonder whether an African got out of a plane and wore a suit, when before that he was wearing a skin, that's the problem, there's a very serious problem. You'll still meet someone in this world power who says, wonders, whether you'll be able to live in a house because they up until then they understood you to be coming from a tree. And one can go on and on with metaphor and examples of that nature. You see, when one confronts this, it is very frightening, especially if you confront it in a country which is a guardian of civilization. It is very frightening. Because it defines very dangerous ignorance. So I'm saying, this is the st... I thi

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one defines in terms of film-makers, but also broadly, in terms of the Third World. I wanted to move from that to go specifically to South Africa. You see, from the time when I was little, very young, I understood that the world is totally against apartheid, I understood that the world had defined apartheid as a crime against humanity, and also defined it as a threat to world peace. Because I thought that the world was civilized, and because the world had defined apartheid in this manner, I sincerely and honestly believed that the life-span of apartheid is very short, must be short. If, you know, the odds against it are defined in terms of the world, but then one grows, one travels, one understands, and of course one begins to wonder what is the meaning, that to start with, apartheid has lived on, and on, and on. And that at a certain point the people who are fighting against the world, who must have had as allies the world, have had to define their fight in terms of saying, We either are going to be free people or we choose death - it raises a very big question for me. For me, one, as an ordinary human being, for me as a political activist, for me as a creative person, it raises one major important question, and it is this: When does humanity accept its responsibility to destroy evil? It is when what has happened, when humanity is able to do this. And I can raise this question precisely because, you know, humanity has gone through two world wars, and we all know these two world wars were very costly, very costly to human life. To human life, nature, civilization. In fact, these two world wars are an indictment against civilization. But besides the two world wars, there have been many other battles which have been fought, which have indicated one simple truth, that there is not one single human being who will accept to be oppressed and exploited, who will be denied to live. Why?

Why is it so difficult for the world to learn this. I mean, at the present moment you look at the situation in SA, you look at the situation in the Middle East, you look at the situation in Latin America - you can go on and on like that. You hear the same voices, same voices, on the one hand you hear voices of hunters, extremely articulate, living in the 21st century, in every respect, articulating their right to become hunters. The situation has changed in terms of the hunted, in the sense that they have had to learn, from being the hunted, new methods of articulating the justness of what they want. I think it is a challenge for film-makers to look at this and say, I think generally speaking human beings have made great achievements which have been defined in the same way as civilization. We have achieved a lot. But also unfortunately impoverished this civilization in the sense that we have excluded millions and millions of people from contributing to this civilization. The fact that at the present moment the question of democracy is so high on the agenda I think is very important for film-makers in the Third World, film-makers in the First World who are in the independent film-making media, to use what I defined as this very powerful media, film-making, and say, How do we utilize both the positive experience of the Third World and the negative experience of the Third World, to contribute to this civilization which must contribute to our understanding of democracy? In SA presently, film-makers have formed an organization called Film & Allied Workers Organization, and one has listened very carefully to what they are saying, can see on the one hand as they define the ideals of this organization how in fact the definition of the ideals are a definition of struggle, and can also see the odds stacked against them. Presently there is a feeling that has come out as this organization was being formed, and one of the members participated in this film, MAPANTSULA, which in my view created a point of departure from what up till now has been defined as SA film. I say this because I feel that first of all MAPANTSULA was done precisely because it used reality as its point of reference, in terms of how they budgeted for it, in terms of how they chose actors, directors, in terms of how they wrote the script, in terms of how they had to adjust to the fact that they were going to shoot this film against the background of very intense repression, and they had to find ways and means of circumventing censorship repression, police brutality, and eventually came up, emerged with this film called MAPANTSULA. | That was

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one set of struggle that they had to fight, and I think they've won. / The second was how they were going to ensure that each frame of this film consistently and continuously articulated the position of the oppressed, position of the exploited, which means the position that wants to contribute to the totality of civilization. / There are many flaws in the film, precisely because it was a low-budget film, etc, and it was the first film of these people who were making it under these conditions, but generally speaking, I think it raised very very important questions about film-making, itself in the Third World, and it also raised very important political issues. Where I felt it flawed a bit was, I think political positions should also be informed by human relations and human experience. To a very large extent this was done in passing, in my view. / But precisely because it has positioned itself among the hunted, and looked at the world through the eyes of the hunted, and looked at the hunted through the eyes of the hunted, in that regard I think it defined, re-defined film-making for SA, one would hope that every film-maker from then on used this as a point of reference. / But also it is important that it happens at the point where the masses of SA have reached one major decision about their lives, and the decision is that they can no longer be ruled under apartheid. Secondly, the other decision that has been made is that ~~they~~ they on their own through their experience must re-define a new SA. And I think MAPANTSULA tries to deal with this understanding, this definition. And of course, looking at MAPANTSULA, the slogan that I was putting forward is expressed almost minute for minute you know in the film, the slogan "Freedom or Death". It emerges. So also MAPANTSULA addressed this very important question which is very specific to SA but also which is a historical definition.

Q: Hollywood discovery of apartheid?

Wally: Well, let me take two films, CRY, FREEDOM and A WORLD APART. First, I will not try to compare the two, because I think they are two different, separate films. And when I talk about CRY, FREEDOM, I'll use what Attentorough said, his initial intention was when he made the film, I think he said, he was not making a film about Steve Biko, he thinks that a film on Steve Biko will be made by SAs. I think once one accepts this, and then looks at CRY, FREEDOM, then one can look at it differently. I think that CRY, FREEDOM is a very positive film. It is positive in the sense that it has made a very strong, very very strong anti-apartheid statement. It has also made a very strong anti-fascist statement. And fortunately it used the "Hollywood discovers apartheid" method to articulate these very two important positions. And because it did this, it did not have to face many obstacles that say a film like MAPANTSULA would. So it was thrust into the world. Because of this, one should acknowledge that Attentorough was very skillful in that. As far as I understand, CRY, FREEDOM has been seen very, very widely, by many different people. Because of this, I think it has challenged what I said earlier on, that one cannot understand how a world power can have extremely ignorant people. So one would hope that a film like CRY, FREEDOM did reach some of these areas, you know, which up until then had not been explored. But then, you see, I think CRY, FREEDOM, at another level articulates what I was objecting to when I started, and it is this: CRY, FREEDOM looks at the struggle of the black, oppressed masses through the eyes of the white journalist. It uses the black masses as a backdrop to the life of a white journalist. I think this is one fault of the film. Secondly, another problem that I see with the ~~er~~ CRY, FREEDOM, is that, whether this was a film about Steve Biko or not, one can never overlook the fact that among the youth, Steve was a national figure, representing many aspirations, and Steve should have been handled in that way, whether the film was about Steve Biko or not. Especially given the circumstances in which Steve had died. I think there is a way in which you handle that which I feel, you know, CRY, FREEDOM did not handle. But then, this is detail, you see. Detail like this will be informed by what I said earlier on, experience which is informed by how one is socialised. Which means, I think, Attentorough, absolved himself when he said in the end, you know, the film on Steve Biko can only be done by SAs, it's an unfortunate realisation, but it is like that.

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Well, in so far as WORLD APART is concerned, my view is that what is very important about WORLD APART is that it defines the vicious struggle for democracy against apartheid. It's very very important. Secondly, I think the method that was used in WORLD APART to see this struggle through the eyes of a young girl is very important, because it then raises very very important human issues. And secondly the fact that the main actor in the film is a woman is very important. Another -very important. And then lastly it uses this within the wide context of SA. I think these three issues are very important to look at. As I said earlier on, the first is that A WORLD APART emerges at the point where the political struggle, the military struggle, the economic struggle against apartheid is escalating. First inside SA, secondly internationally, is very important. Because then, er, because of the three reasons that I've put forward A WORLD APART reminds us of the human element of this vicious battle. Because you know, we can easily become familiar with statistics, the distance between us and the scene of action, you know, makes certain things fade. But also in the context of SA, in a country where er has been ruled racially, A WORLD APART is important in that it reinforces the position of non-racialism which in terms of SA is very very important, especially in view of the position of the ANC, that as we wage vicious battle, we must never allow it to degenerate into a racial battle. I think the first and most important commitment to ensure defeat of censorship is to support the political struggle, which means to continuously put the political struggle in SA high on the agenda, we must find ways of doing this. First, I think it is when people recognize the organizations of the people. And I say this because I believe that the organizations represent what is just, which anyone in the world would be prepared to fight for. The organizations of the people, the African National Congress and the other mass democratic movement affiliates inside the country, we must find a way of continuously giving them a voice. It is out of strengthening this voice, I think, that the new images of people will emerge. There is a fierce battle taking place in SA, which is expressed through life and death. And while I accept that the mind tires to deal with this, if we are creative people, we must find a way of soothing the mind and making accept that the battle that is taking place there is everyone's battle. I think so. I think this is the only time we can justify ourselves as creative people, we must find new ways of saying this. And of course this will take, what, planning, it'll take perhaps at certain points getting to and getting to terms with how we search for these moving images, it will also take great skill, which I think exists, the skill is there, it exists, we have to find how we use it. But I accept that also the mind can become familiar to evil, and use it as commonplace, I understand this, but I think precisely because the mind can do so, this is the challenge to creative people, never to allow the mind to degenerate to that level.