

each other's vision. However, their ultimate goals of taming each other are more economic than political. One would not be too optimistic to assume that the coming of global media will promote press freedom and media democratization in China, for their intervention with local Chinese conditions will not make the best business sense. Conversely, one would not be too pessimistic to conclude that global media are doomed to failure in the Chinese marketplace in the face of authoritarian restriction from the propaganda 'czars' and deep-rooted nationalism at grass-roots level, for the ongoing process of social stratification and cultural diversification has already left little room for any endeavor of conformity, let alone coercion.

More significantly, the tale of 'the taming of the shrew' in the Chinese media sphere is not merely another embodiment of the inherent dichotomy between China and the West; it also manifests the efforts of reinventing the term 'global' in the context of third-world nations. Compared to their Euro-American counterparts, Chinese media appear more 'global' by way of alluding to such news sources as the Qatar-based TV network al-Jazeera, importing soap operas from Brazil and Venezuela, and selling pop music stars from Japan and South Korea. Meanwhile, local institutions also endeavor to make Chinese media products more 'globalized', as evinced by CCTV-9 (English Channel)'s integration into Viacom's distribution system in Euro-America, and by the global success of Zhang Yimou's recent Kungfu-cum-epic, *Hero*. In a Chinese perspective, what the coming of global media evokes in contemporary China is not simply another rehearsal of Hollywoodization or Disneyfication, but rather a plethora of ideological, institutional and discursive conflicts, contests and negotiations at various levels.

### • **Up the Amazon without a paddle: developing nations and globalization**

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Globalization in the last decade and a half has acquired an all-pervasive meaning. We use the term to imply many different processes and ideas. From the creation of a 'global village' where all share similar insights and access to a process of technological colonization where cultural imperialism acquires a global dimension, globalization as a concept has

remained illusive. How does globalization apply to societies on the verge of development or in developing stages like the nations of Latin America? Does globalization in Latin America speak about the processes of class stratification where the elites are becoming more and more dissociated from the rest of the nations' populations due to an increasing gap in economic, symbolic, and cultural capital and consumer taste, or does it speak about a growing awareness of the interconnected economic and social processes that affect the livelihood of rural and low-income residents all over the world?

According to Artz (2003), 'globalization has redistributed resources within nations to the domestic elites and internationally to TNCs' (p. 8). Burbach (cited in Artz, 2003: 8) argues that globalization increases poverty and marginalization within the first world, 'while the third world has a large number of *nouveau riche* who are able to buy and sell in the global economy'.

In Brazil, the largest nation in Latin America and one of the largest economies in the world, globalization is a complex and, in some ways, paradoxical process. In São Paulo, the largest metropolitan area in the nation and one of the largest hubs in a global grid of consumer culture, one can live the life of an affluent global citizen, consuming the same luxury goods and eating the same elegant fare available in metropolitan centers such as New York, Paris, Tokyo, and Milan, while those at the low end of the economic ladder can acquire a few consumer goods most likely produced in sweat shops around the world. From cheap Chinese radios to inexpensive polyester shirts, street vendors sell copies of trendy items and brand-name products, as well as pirated versions of popular records and DVDs. The cosmopolitan life in an urban metropolis such as São Paulo creates an illusion of access and full participation in a global society. But this illusion is fragile, the result of an association of the idea of globalization with consumer culture heavily promoted by transnational advertising agencies through local media outlets.

Globalization in Brazil is associated mainly with sophisticated images seen in the media – both locally produced and canned imports – but primarily in telenovelas (highly popular primetime serialized melodramas) and commercials. A small percentage of the local population has access to cable or satellite television, consuming the same shows that are hits in the United States, watching them in the original English or with subtitles along with global elites around the world. But the majority of the population remains glued to the open-access channels that are still dominated by Globo Network, which has maintained hegemony over the Brazilian television market for almost

four decades (Amaral and Guimarães, 1994; Straubhaar and La Pastina, 2003).

In small towns in the interior of Brazil, where even the local wealthy can barely afford to have a satellite dish to receive more than one TV station (see La Pastina, 2001, 2004a, 2004b for a discussion of one such community), globalization refers to the idea that people know more about George W. Bush than they know about local and regional politics. Globalization for many becomes a sign of displacement and isolation, a condition of peripheral existence. Globalization for the majority in Brazil is certainly not a state of participation in global processes but rather a passive stance of observing the world passing by (La Pastina, 2003).

When discussing globalization in Brazil, it is necessary to acknowledge that Brazilian cultural industries do participate in the worldwide flow of media software. Globo Network, a family-held conglomerate much like the media empires of Mexico's Televisa and Venezuela's Venevision, produces most of the television media consumed in Brazil. The military dictatorship's backing (1964–85) and its early association with US media industries allowed Globo to become a dominant player in Brazil and a force in the global media market (Sinclair, 1996; Straubhaar, 1988). Other TV networks produce some news programs, interview shows, reality TV, and a limited number of entertainment programmes, while importing a variety of sports, films, and other entertainment shows that include Hollywood movies and telenovelas produced in Mexico and other Spanish-language countries.

However, Globo remains the main producer of fictional television in Brazil and one of the dominant forces in the Portuguese linguistic market, exporting telenovelas to more than 100 nations (La Pastina et al., 2003; Melo, 1988; Sinclair, 2004). This presence abroad, however, is the result of a near monopoly within the local market that allowed Globo to attain an economy of scale while limiting audience exposure to alternative voices. Brazilians with limited access to alternative sources of information rely on Globo's programming to be inserted in a global dialogue. However, produced mostly by upper-middle-class, urban men and women from Rio de Janeiro, these programmes accentuate the gap between the urban developed South and the rural agricultural North/Northeast, thus increasing a sense of periphery.

The Brazilian music industry, from the days of Carmen Miranda in the 1940s, has made inroads into the foreign market by exporting stars and rhythms. Bossa Nova, the jazz-samba fusion of the late 1950s and 1960s, remains a marker of 'cool' in most of the world, fostering an

image of Brazil that is associated with a certain exotic sensuality. In more recent years, with the increasing appetite for world music in the West, Brazilian musicians have experienced a growing success in Europe, the United States, and Japan, as well as other parts of Latin America. Nevertheless a sizable presence of US music, and to a lesser extent British and European, penetrates the Brazilian market through traditional radio stations, music channels such as MTV, and the internet.

MTV, which has increased its presence in Brazil in the last decade, has managed to create a hybrid space for the promotion and circulation of local music and indigenous video production as well as a space for the promotion of US and European bands. The large appetite for local music in Brazil has forced MTV to become more connected to the local reality, which was part of the network's strategy to increase its penetration within different markets around the globe. Nevertheless, content diversity does not necessarily mean diversity of genres or style. The Brazilianization of content does not necessarily relate to diversity of format.

After the innovative years of Cinema Novo in the 1960s and early 1970s, when directors were producing challenging movies that bent traditional genre norms, the movie industry in Brazil suffered under the dictatorship (1964–85). The massive US presence that dominated screens all over the nation and the VHS market also severely hindered local production and limited distribution. It was not until the mid-1990s that Brazilian filmmakers began to experience a resurgence of local production and success on the national and international festival circuit as well as among Brazilian audiences. While this success was partly fueled by a strengthening of the Brazilian economy, it was primarily due to the intervention of private companies that created public cultural institutes that showcased national and non-mainstream productions. These initiatives were a response to new federal laws that granted tax breaks for cultural incentives. In large Brazilian urban centers one is more likely to have access to a non-Hollywood movie than in any large urban center in the United States.

But does that mean Brazil is more globalized than the United States? I would like to argue that the Brazilian elites, including the urban upper middle class, are globalized and cosmopolitan. The history of European colonization and the massive immigration that followed the abolition of slavery in the late 19th century created a dependence on European culture and an association between culture and Europe that still permeates the local elites' desire to be part of these global flows.

Contemporary media systems increasingly over the last decades

have become more dependent on international models. The globalization of the upper middle classes who typically control media industries in the non-Western world, the greater presence of cable and satellite television in the lives of the elites, and the flow of information through the internet have increased the sharability of dominant media trends from one part of the world to another. The trend to sell not only the product but the concept, as in the case of reality TV, allows foreign models to be adapted to local reality. The small but significant presence of Latin American models in other parts of the world symbolizes an increase in the globalization of cultural industries in nations like Brazil, which stand on the rim between highly developed media systems such as the United States and dependent systems such as Guatemala, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

Globalization in Brazil is a swirling force in which the country's cultural industries are attempting to erode first-world domination, while at the same time large segments of the Brazilian population remain at the periphery. These marginalized populations are swept along by the currents of globalization, rather than influencing them. Ultimately, struggling within the global flow, nations like Brazil with vast peripheral populations are at the mercy of the mighty stream, without a paddle to control direction.

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### • What is 'global' about Arab media?

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On the surface of things and without looking more closely at the question 'What is global about Arab media?', one could easily overlook the problematic inherent in its structure. The question intentionally invites us to think critically about the 'global' as a category within the context of Arab media. However, the latter, I argue, is also a category worth problematizing, especially as it presupposes two further things – that Arab media are distinct in terms of content and style, and that there exists some sort of a coherent and unified media project that is inherently 'Arab'. This piece examines the viability of the two terms 'global' and 'Arab' and argues, using empirical evidence, that Arab media are dependent and neither 'global' nor entirely 'Arab'.

It is inconceivable and unwise to think of any Arab media as 'global' when even the dominant oligopolistic media players from the first and second 'tiers' (McChesney and Herman, 1997), who enjoy a longer history and more established market structures, are not regarded as 'global': 'Evidence of globalization in the mass media ... is weak' (Sparks, 1998: 119). The media that scholars have uncritically been labelling as 'global' over the last two decades are in fact 'even more restricted in terms of access and participation than are the dominant state-limited media' (Sparks, 1998: 120). CNN, for example, has so often been labelled as a 'global' news channel, even though its worldwide audience (cosmopolitan and mobile elite) does not exceed 1 percent (Sparks, 1998).

For any media to be considered 'global', they must be able to: transcend nation-state boundaries and language communities (Barker, 2000); use English, the language of globalization; and attract a cross-