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EDITORIAL

AMIRA FIRDAUS AND DALE LEORKE

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Welcome to the second issue of *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication*, an online academic journal edited and comprised of work by a global community of graduate media and communications emerging scholars. In this issue we decided to forgo a thematic approach in favor of an open call for papers, resulting in a small but diverse number of articles which all share a strong dedication to the centrality of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in the study of social phenomena. The issue opens with an article by our guest author Lauren Movius. Movius explores the challenges that 'cultural globalisation' presents to traditional theories borne out of the traditions of political economy and cultural studies in which media imperialism is a major theme. Movius argues that current processes of globalisation no longer fit neatly within the two binary positions that present globalisation as a factor in fostering a democratic public sphere, or as homogenising force that debases democracy. She points out that rather than imperialism, commercialism is a more prevalent factor in globalisation, and that globalisation is intertwined with developments in media and communications.

Issues of cultural globalisation also resonate in the second article in which Christopher Bell looks at *Iron Chef America*, a popular culinary game show originating in Japan and later becoming a significant commercial and cultural phenomenon in the United States. Bell breaks down the show's 'rituals' that see renowned chefs battle to out-cook each other for the title of 'Iron Chef'. He also explores the ritualisation of watching the show at home, and the notion of 'parasocial interaction' between the show's competing chefs and its home audience. Arguing that the show shares more in common with sporting events than traditional cooking shows, Bell explores the notion of 'deep play' in *Iron Chef*, illustrating that *Iron Chef* "celebrates the triumph of skill, determination, and hard work so valued in contemporary America". That American values are inherent in a television program adopted from Japan seemingly supports Movius' contention that globalisation processes are not necessarily equivalent to American media imperialism. Bell's exploration of 'media rituals' also parallels the idea of 'media events' as both refer to symbolic rituals and events performed in the media spotlight. Thus Bell's article serves as an appropriate lead to the third and final paper in this issue, an interview with Professor Daniel Dayan, co-author of the seminal text, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Dayan & Katz 1992). In this stimulating interview by Esther Chin, Dayan discusses his lifelong passion bearing witness to history as it is made. In addition to discussing contemporary applications of 'media events', Dayan provides us with a comprehensive introduction to his areas of interest, discussing anti-Semitism, transformations in the discourse of terrorism, 'visuality' and 'witnessing', among other thought provoking topics. Dayan also reflects on his early academic career, taking us back to his exposure as a student to distinguished scholars at the Sorbonne and L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in France, and at Stanford University in the US. Dayan also shares with us how his personal life experiences are intertwined with his professional work.

THE LEARNING CURVE IN JOURNAL PUBLISHING

We are happy to announce that *PLATFORM* has restructured its organisational chart to better reflect the roles and contributions of individual members of the *PLATFORM* family. Where previously, our international Editorial Board consisted of both established and emerging scholars, with diverse but equally important contributions, we have now established a separate Advisory Board consisting of established scholars. Whilst not involved with the day to day operations of the journal, members of the Advisory Board, headed by our Advising Editor, Associate Professor Ingrid Volkmer, provide us with invaluable support by making themselves available for consultation. Our emerging scholar peers in the Editorial Board continue to support us with operational matters such as compiling submissions for Special Issues, nominating peer reviewers and publicising the journal to graduate students in Europe, the Americas, and the Asia Pacific.

Within the Editorial Team responsible for running the journal, our restructure includes the rotation of the Editor-in-Chief position among members of the Editorial Team. Esther Chin, founder of *PLATFORM* and Editor-in-Chief of Volume 1, now holds the mentorship position of Founding Editor, providing the journal with stability in leadership. We have also established a new Essays section, and welcome Sandy Watson and Sebastian Kubitschko as our Essays Editors. In addition to the Essays section, we are proud to announce that Volume 2 Issue 1 will soon be accompanied by a *PLATFORM* Special Issue in collaboration with the Australia and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA). ANZCA is one of several international academic associations *PLATFORM* is affiliated with. We welcome Diana Bossio, Graduate Representative for ANZCA, and Editorial Board member of *PLATFORM*, as Guest Editor of our ANZCA Special Issue.

As mentioned on our website and in our Editorial to Volume 1, *PLATFORM* was developed as a 'platform' for graduate students of media and communications to gain exposure to the rigors of quality academic publishing. Therefore it is our sincere hope that students submitting abstracts and full papers benefit from the feedback and guidance of our peer-reviewers and editors, whether or not their submissions are accepted for publication. At *PLATFORM* we believe that like all endeavors, journal publishing is subject to a learning curve in which challenges are merely a learning experience, not a disappointing failure.

This is true not only for students proposing submissions to *PLATFORM*, but also for the Editorial Team running the journal. Full of enthusiasm, we embraced the challenge of publishing a quality, peer-reviewed journal and successfully came out with our inaugural volume in July 2009, in which each Editorial Team member eagerly involved her or himself with nearly every task that needed to be done. We were happy with the resulting publication but realised that often, more time and energy was expended than was needed. This extra effort inevitably cut into our individual study time, and did so needlessly. This experience encouraged us to seize the opportunity to restructure ourselves into an even more organised and efficient team by distributing tasks and respecting the boundaries and responsibilities of specific roles – one new lesson learnt. Aside from the restructuring of roles and tasks in our core Editorial Team, we also contracted Copy Editors to proofread and format the journal's articles. We thank Copy Editors Marie Christodoulaki and Siobhan Argent for their efforts. Marie went above and beyond the call of duty to prepare an in-house Style Guide for the journal, and we thank her for her extra contribution.

Sifting through the submissions for this second publication (Volume 2, Issue 1) we have

learnt a second lesson – the importance of carefully crafting, distributing and timing our call for papers to ensure that we are able to collect both a wide pool of papers, as well as submissions that fall strictly within the field of media and communications (as opposed to related, but distinctly separate fields such as literary studies, political science etc.). We have learnt this lesson in time for the call for papers for our next issue, Volume 2 Issue 2, which was circulated and uploaded on our website just a few weeks after we began working on Volume 2 Issue 1.

These two valuable lessons represent merely two points on our learning curve. Through our experiences with Volume 1 and Volume 2 Issue 1, we have learnt that there are many points on this curve. Some of these have been addressed (e.g. coordinating the peer-review process; copyediting accepted submissions; assigning copyrights; developing new sections and Special Issues), while others represent a continual effort to develop and maintain *PLATFORM* as a quality academic journal.

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CULTURAL GLOBALISATION AND CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION THEORIES

LAUREN MOVIOUS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, USA

Abstract: This article reviews existing traditional media theories, and analyses the challenges that the current developments of globalisation present to them. The article provides a short history of the concept of globalisation, and reviews the primary theoretical approaches to globalisation that are critical to communication scholars. The article also examines how globalisation challenges the ways in which media and communication have traditionally been theorised. Specifically, the cultural imperialism theory is discussed, as well as the main challenges to the theory. Audience reception studies, which focus on how audiences negotiate meaning differently in specific cultural contexts, are highlighted as the key critique of cultural imperialism.

CULTURAL GLOBALISATION AND CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Few contemporary phenomena elicit such academic and political controversy as globalisation. Following the collapse of state socialism, the worldwide consolidation of capitalism and the culture-ideology of consumerism, academic discussion of globalisation has intensified (Sklair, 2002). These crucial developments have coincided with the electronic revolution, and together have transformed communication media. While globalisation has many facets – economic, political and cultural – it is cultural globalisation that occurs through the media.

Cultural globalisation refers to “the emergence of a specific set of values and beliefs that are largely shared around the planet” (Castells, 2009, p. 117). The source of most global informational flows is mass media. Traditionally this entails a flow of information in a single direction, a dispersion from one to many. Throughout the developed world the globalisation of media is often argued to be tantamount to the globalisation of culture. Indeed, cultural globalisation is familiar to almost everyone; prominent icons of popular culture, like Coca-Cola and McDonalds, are common examples that can be found ‘everywhere’. Looking at global cities (Sassen, 1991) where a consistent brand-name consumerism exists, cultural globalisation can appear to act as a solvent, dissolving cultural differences to create homogeneity across the globe. Is culture becoming increasingly homogenous? For the most part, no.

This article will examine how globalisation challenges the ways we have traditionally theorised media and communications. In order to do this, we must first discuss and conceptualise

the phenomena of globalisation. We will look at paradigms of traditional media theories, specifically the homogenous school of thought. The cultural imperialism theory will also be discussed, and the article will demonstrate how globalisation poses significant challenges for this theory, which cannot sufficiently explain media and communications processes in today's world.

THE GLOBALISATION DEBATE

Globalisation has become a key research field in the social sciences and continues to be a hotly debated topic. No single definition of globalisation exists; as with all core concepts in the social sciences, its precise meaning remains contested. For this discussion, we will use David Held and Anthony McGrew's definition of globalisation, which "denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction" (2002, p.1).

Sociologist Roland Robertson (1992) is considered a key founder of the concept of globalisation, which he defines as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (p. 8). Robertson provides an excellent overview of the historical development of globalisation. He argues that an interest in globalisation arose from a division between sociology, which dealt with societies comparatively, and international relations and political science, which dealt with societies interactively. However, as this division became destabilized, an interest in globalisation developed as a result of new academic fields such as communication and cultural studies.

Held and McGrew (1999) also provide a useful framework for analysing globalisation. They discuss three main schools of thought in globalisation research: the hyperglobalists, the skeptics and the transformationalists. Hyperglobalists argue that we live in an increasingly global world. Globalisation is a direct threat to the nation state, which diminishes in power as the global marketplace comes to rule. Their focus is on economic globalisation, which is argued to denationalise economies, creating global markets that transcend state control, resulting in a loss of autonomy and sovereignty for the state.

The second school, the skeptics, argue that globalisation is a myth (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). They argue that what the hyperglobalists describe as economic globalisation is just a heightened level of economic interdependences. Therefore, they do not think the current global situation is unprecedented. Skeptics also question what exactly is 'global' about globalisation – if it is not a universal phenomenon, then the concept is not valid and lacks specificity. For example, skeptics point to the fact that much of the economic interdependence is limited to OECD countries, and is therefore not really global.

Asynthesisbetweenthesetwocompetingapproachesisrepresentedbytransformationalist scholars, who argue that globalisation has structural consequences and is a driving force in society which influences political, social and economic change (Giddens, 1990; Held & McGrew, 1999). Globalisation is not just a shift in the intensity of exchange, but leads to a re-articulation of political, cultural and economic power. There is a structural transformation and a global shift in how power and authority is organised (Held & McGrew, 2007). The best example of this is the change in state sovereignty and autonomy. There has been a 'reconfiguration of political power' (Held & McGrew, 2007) which is understood as neither globalist nor skeptic, but transformationalist. Globalisation is not a debate about either convergence or divergence, but represents a dialectical process, which can both integrate and fragment, creating both winners and losers.

CULTURAL GLOBALISATION

Transformationalists understand globalisation as a multidimensional process, and not simply economic. Indeed, many scholars have divided theories of globalisation into categories of political, economic and cultural globalisation. The role of media and communications is often discussed in terms of cultural globalisation.

Debates about the cultural impact of global media are at the core of discussions on globalisation (Flew, 2007). Therefore, this article focuses on cultural globalisation. Various scholars have made the case for focusing on cultural globalisation, such as John Tomlinson (1999) who notes the importance of considering cultural practices as central to the phenomenon of globalisation. Anthony Giddens (1990) defines globalisation as “the intensification of worldwide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). Giddens views globalisation as the spread of modernity and discusses time-space distanciation, referring to the way in which instantaneous electronic communication erodes the constraints of distance and time on social organisation and interaction. Some scholars, such as Robertson (1992), talk of a global culture and ‘global consciousness’. Martin Albrow (1996) moves further, arguing that globalisation results in a ‘world society’. He defines globalisation as “all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society”. This notion of a single global society implies homogenisation, which has led to the debate about whether globalisation results in homogenisation or heterogenisation. This debate will be discussed later in reference to media and communications.

In contrast to Albrow, Arjun Appadurai (1996) has more cautiously argued that the globalising cultural forces of media and communications produce complex interactions and disjunctures between different cultures. Appadurai (1990, 1996) discusses five ‘scapes’ which influence culture, and argues that these factors ensure cultural diversity, and not cultural homogeneity or domination. The five ‘scapes’, all of which refer to a type of movement, include ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples. Ethnoscaples refer to flows of people, such as tourists and immigrants. Technoscaples include technology that crosses boundaries. Financescaples refer to flows of currency markets. Mediascaples refer to mass media technology and images. Ideoscaples also refer to images, but specifically to the political and ideological aspects. These ‘scapes’ influence culture not by a uniform effect, but through their ‘disjunctures’. Thus, mass media plays a larger role in cultural diversity than in cultural standardisation.

GLOBALISATION AND COMMUNICATION

Globalisation and communication are deeply intertwined. Marshall McLuhan is an early theorist who made the connection between media and globalisation by combining two concepts: ‘the medium is the message’ and the ‘global village’. Indeed, many scholars have studied the link between globalisation and media and “most theorists agree that there is practically no globalisation without media and communications” (Rantanen, 2005, p. 4). Terhi Rantanen (2005) highlights the role of media and communications in globalisation, by defining globalisation as a “process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space” (p. 8). Terry Flew (2007) argues that media have a central place in globalisation due to three reasons: firstly, that media corporations have increasingly globalised their operations; secondly that the global communication infrastructure facilitates global information flows; and finally that global media play a key role in how we view events across the world in developing shared systems of meaning. This aspect of global

media culture has been the main focus of media theorists.

The breaking up of space and time, brought about by electronic media, has led to individuals being able to interact with one another and within frameworks of mediated interaction, regardless of special disparities. This has altered contemporary methods of communication, leading to new phenomena such as participatory journalism, online communities, and transnational activism organised through online networks. The ICT revolution has transformed the media environment and led to a rise of 'new media', such as digital technologies and networked environments. Leah Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone (2005) argue that new media expands the traditional concerns of media and communications studies by changing the focus from media production and audience to "the artifacts and devices used to communicate...the activities and practices in which people engage in communication or share information; and the social arrangements or organizational forms that develop around those devices and practices" (p. 2).

The expansion of communication flows and global online networks raise the possibility of a new dimension of globalisation, and new forms of global/local media flows. Broadly speaking, new media technologies allow for media content to flow easily across borders and enable users to become producers, which in turn lead to hybrid media forms. To take a specific example, alongside the convergence of previously distinct media technologies, there has also been a convergence in journalism of the roles of journalists and audiences, resulting in participatory journalism (Gillmor, 2006; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2008). New technology and the global distribution of the internet allow people to create or contribute to the news and provide new sources and forms of news.

We may also consider the case of online communities. There has been a rapid growth of social relations and social organisations on the internet (Di Maggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001; Wellman, 2002). The emergence of new forms of online social networks demonstrates new communication patterns in the digital age. Online communities and social networks have led to debates about the emergence of new patterns of social interaction. With new technology, individuals are reorganising patterns of social interaction to create a new form of society, which is conceived as the network society. Online communities shed light on the emergence of new forms of sociability enabled by technology, a departure from previously spatially bounded social interaction.

Thirdly, transnational activism organised through online networks presents new formations of global/local interaction. A classic example of internet activism, where the internet is used as a mobilising resource for campaigns, is the case of the Zapatistas, which Manuel Castells (1997) has called the "first informational guerrilla movement" (p. 79). While the Zapatistas' struggle was a local one, the use of the internet as a transnational communication channel used to directly transmit messages and gain international support, led to 'global reverberations' for social movements (Atton, 2003). The internet and the communications revolution have led to new forms of media activism. Robert Hackett and William Carroll (2006) argue "the digitization and convergence of media technology which fuelled the accelerating process of globalization has...generated new opportunities for democratization through the media...and new incentives for democratization of the media, as computers and the internet bring new policy issues to the fore" (p. 96).

Overall these examples bring into question the relevance of traditional communication theories, of which there are two broad and inter-related approaches. We can look at it from a critical studies approach, such as the Frankfurt School, which focuses on the underlying economic structure and political power of communication. Or it can be viewed through cultural studies, focusing on the role of communication in the creation and maintenance of shared values.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The cultural imperialism thesis has long been a central, as well as problematic, element of political economy approaches to global media. The Frankfurt School and the homogeneous school of thought identify the dominance model, which proposes that globalisation leads to homogenisation of culture through media and cultural imperialism.

The cultural imperialism debate gained momentum after decolonisation led to new states in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Scholars replaced colonialism with a new form of capitalist subjugation of the Third World: neo-colonialism, which was more economic than political, more ideologically than militarily supported. Scholars argued that neo-colonialist powers turned to symbolic means of control, which was facilitated by the integration of global telecommunications systems and the proliferation of television. Armand Matterlart (1979), Herbert Schiller (1991) and Oliver Boyd Barrett (1977) have proposed cultural and media imperialist theories. The mass media, fitting in with the spread of global capitalism, push mainly American culture that promote ideologies of consumption, instant gratification, and individualism. The cultural imperialism thesis argues that media globalisation will lead to a homogenisation of culture, identity and locale. Boyd-Barrett, one of the original proponents of media imperialism (1977), has revised his thesis to take into account different types of audiences, but argues that media imperialism remains a useful analytical concept.

CHALLENGES TO CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

While there is clearly a global increase in the degree to which people's lives are mediated through the media, the homogenising effects of media globalisation are much less clear. Cultural imperialism has been studied by scholars in many disciplines (Golding & Harris, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996; Straubhaar, 1991). John Tomlinson's (1997) discussion of cultural aspects of globalisation forces us to rethink critical frameworks of social and cultural analysis, in particular how we theorise media and communications. Tomlinson states, "the iconoclasm of globalisation lies in the implicit demand to re-envisage the world that arises once the nature of complex global interconnectedness and the process of time-space compression and action at distance are recognized" (p. 173). Thus, the very concept of globalisation is a major challenge for existing conceptions of world culture. Tomlinson discusses how the traditional notion of cultural imperialism tries to absorb globalisation, by arguing that globalisation is simply the latest form of western imperialism. However, he argues that we cannot infer deep and direct effects of media and cultural goods simply from their presence.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION STUDIES

The first and most important problem with cultural imperialism is that it fails to recognise the active audience. Audience reception studies question the homogenising influences of mass produced media content. Studies dealing with the active role of receivers to interpret, negotiate, resist or subvert the polysemic meanings of mass media, have illustrated that audiences in western and non-western contexts have used different patterns of interpretation and media use when encountering western mass media products.

In order to understand the importance of audience reception studies in analysing global media and its impact on viewers around the world, it is helpful to consider the history of media effects research. Early research in the 1930s and 1940s, often market driven, measured effects of the media on audiences by matching output with input following the model of communication in which the stages of sender, message, medium and receiver are utilised (Machor & Goldstein, 2001). Research on television audiences has historically been dominated, particularly in the

US, by large-scale quantitative surveys, often designed using a model of media effects. Within the social sciences, this effects model has been challenged by what is known as the 'uses and gratifications' model. The uses and gratifications model argues that audiences respond to media for the purpose of fulfilling their personal needs, a purpose which may differ from the producer's purpose. This apparent discrepancy led to the international project on the decoding of the US prime time serial, *Dallas* (Liebes & Katz, 1990), which is discussed below.

In the 1960s, the uses and gratifications approach was challenged by a new turn in effects research, influenced by the works of the Frankfurt School. Proponents of the Frankfurt School saw media communication as the 'culture industry', which reinforced in its audience the ideology of the dominant culture. Focusing on the power exerted over the audience by the culture industry, this theory sees mass media as conduits of commodification. This effects model served as an initial paradigm for audience analysis in Britain's cultural studies field. The model was also challenged when Raymond Williams (1974) criticised the technological determinism of the effects model for ignoring how viewers may use television for social change. In the late 1970s and early 1980s this critique appeared in a series of theoretical essays by Stuart Hall, as well as in research studies, such as David Morley and Charlotte Brundson's analysis of British responses to television viewing (Machor & Goldstein, 2001). These influences led to a questioning of both the effects model and the uses and gratifications model. Both models were criticised for failing to take into account economic, political and cultural influences in receiving media. In particular, feminist critiques noted that audience position is influenced by cultural factors such as gender, race and age, not just economics and class, as the Frankfurt School argued.

Media reception has been reconceptualised to focus on the active audience. Theories of the active audience argue that direct ideological effects cannot be assumed exclusively from the presence of a media product. From Hall's 1973 paper on encoding and decoding, and his call for empirical research into audience reception, where audience research and textual analysis is combined, there has been a growing recognition of the complex process of cultural media consumption.

Some of the most well known audience reception studies, with the most detailed information and empirical data, is the work on *Dallas*, which will be briefly discussed here. Proponents of the media imperialism theory would argue that *Dallas* is a symbol of American dominance threatening the variety of world cultures. While *Dallas* is transmitted across the world, research on the consumption of the program demonstrates that cultural context is an important factor in media reception. Ien Ang's 1985 study of *Dallas* shows that Dutch women interpret the text through their own feminist agenda. Viewers may disapprove of the cultural values of the show, but still enjoy watching it for entertainment purposes. There is not necessarily a correlation between consumption of media and an ideological effect. Elihu Katz and Tamara Kiebes' 1991 study of *Dallas* compares different ethnic groups in Israel with groups of American viewers. Katz and Liebes found divergent readings and argued that different ethnic groups bring their own values and judgment to the program. Such studies of *Dallas* are the best examples that audiences are more active and critical, and their cultural values more resistant to manipulation, than media theorists assumed.

Clearly, research on audience reception is problematic when considering traditional theories of media imperialism. While audience research is crucial, we cannot conclude that the dominance of the US in television production is of no consequence. Some scholars question the validity of empirical audience research, which in their attempt to disprove a direct effects model, end up uncritically celebrating the active audience. Instead, we must recognise that

viewers are neither passive, nor completely unmarked by the media. Therefore we must balance an acceptance that audiences are in certain respects active, while recognising that the activity of reception is framed. It is also important to note that this global/local logic does not eliminate cultural domination and inequality completely. The process of globalisation results in very complex inequalities. While it is overly simplistic to assert that the globalisation of media leads to globalisation of culture and cultural imperialism, it is equally simplistic to claim that the localisation of identity resolves all problems.

In addition to audience reception research, there are other challenges to the cultural imperialism thesis. The second main critique of cultural imperialism is that the US is not the only dominant player in terms of media production. There has been a rise of regional and language based markets, labelled as 'geo-linguistic regions' (Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996). This idea of multi-directional flows of media and communications challenges media imperialism's idea of a homogenous culture and a one-way information flow. Globalisation has led to the international circulation of media products. Media produced in one country are distributed not only in the domestic market, but also in a global market. Studies by Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis in the 1970s point to the asymmetrical international flow of television programs, and how there was a one-way flow from the US to the rest of the world. However, there is now strong evidence for the multi-directionality of media flows, as evidenced by centres of television production in Mexico, Brazil, Hong Kong and India. Giddens discusses the 'reverse colonisation' of Brazilian television programs being exported to Portugal. Tunstall (2008) notes that one of the major explanations of US media decline on the world scene is the rise of Latin American, specifically Brazilian, telenovelas. In *The Media Were American*, a follow up to *The Media Are American*, Tunstall (2008) highlights the fact that media companies are owned by a multitude of global, rather than US players. Within the context of globalisation debates of media and global flows of media, Tunstall (2008) argues that national media industries are dominant worldwide, and that US media have a relatively small market share in other countries where national media is dominant.

The third critique of cultural imperialism theories is that they assume a homogenous culture and do not take into account the importance of understanding local cultures. There is evidence of the continued diversity of culture and identity, despite global media and cultural globalisation. The World Values Survey (2002) shows that national and regional identities remain far stronger than a cosmopolitan identity. Survey results show that when asked about their primary identification, 47 per cent of respondents chose local identity, 38 per cent chose national identity, and less than 15 per cent of respondents chose cosmopolitan identity.

The fourth critique of cultural imperialism is the lack of attention paid to evidence that shows audience preference for locally produced content (Chadha & Kavoori, 2000; Tunstall, 2008). Sinclair and colleagues argue that television has always been more of a local than global medium, despite the increasing multi-channel and globalised nature of the industry (Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996). While US television shows may have the most transportability across cultural boundaries, they are not the most popular programs. Viewers prefer locally produced material. "Even when there is imported content, it is no longer acceptable to read off from that fact alone any presumed effects of a cultural or political kind" (Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996, p. 8). Tunstall (2008) notes that US media companies, especially Hollywood movies and TV series, bring in large foreign revenues, but are no longer dominant in terms of market share or audience time, since "the world's people spend very much more time with their own media than with imported media" (p. 3). Indeed, Tunstall argues that people prefer their own national culture and language, and prefer to consume their own national and/or regional media, from Brazilian telenovelas and Indonesian regional language radio, to India's

national and regional film industries. We may make sense of this preference for local content through Joseph Straubhaar's work (1991) on the advantages enjoyed by local producers based on 'cultural proximity' to their audiences.

The view of consumer culture discussed earlier (where the same cultural products and transnational corporations can be found 'anywhere') masks the complex and layered contexts of social interaction, where consumption practices and cultural identities play out. Traditional theories of cultural imperialism do not sufficiently address the transnational and local circumstances of specific places. They do not resolve the seeming homogenisation of culture with the differentiation of local traditions. Theories of cultural imperialism are insufficient in studying transnational media. Instead, a closer analysis of particular contexts of economic and cultural exchange, which only cumulatively will constitute transnational networks of information, must be studied.

IMPERIALISM TO COMMERCIALISATION

Leslie Sklair (2002) argues that some studies which challenge media imperialism, such as studies on the export of Latin American telenovelas and Spanish programs which are sent to US audiences, only disprove media imperialism in the state-centric sense, and actually demonstrate the success of consumerism, whether produced by North or South Americans. Marketing's implicit selling of consumer lifestyles encourages audiences to participate in imagined communities of consumption. Michael Griffin (2002) notes that as audience members move in and out of these imagined communities, they are given socio-cultural messages about place, status and the disjuncture between such imagined worlds and realities of life. Appadurai argues that the act of consumption represents a convergence of global and cultural processes. "What we have now is something beyond a consumer revolution, something we may call 'a revolution of consumption' in which consumption has become the principal work of late industrial society" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 82). Other scholars point to the global movement towards, among other things, a life ruled by commodity capitalism. Sklair argues that it is the spread of capitalism itself that is spreading to affect people throughout the world in various degrees.

While commercialism and a consumer culture are spreading, this is not tantamount to the spread of a unified and homogenous global culture. To identify cultural and media imperialism with the US capitalism is a profound error (Hutton & Giddens, 2000). Globalisation does not equal Americanisation. The processes involved in globalisation are much more complex and multi-dimensional. Jameson (2000) discusses five levels of globalisation: technological, political, cultural, economic and social. While these five aspects reflect American influence on capitalism around the world, none of them are solely controlled by American interests. As discussed earlier, Appadurai (1996) also discusses five global cultural flows: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, and ideoscapas. These multiple dimensions of globalisation highlight the uneven nature of global flows, cultural interaction, and the "production of locality" (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 178-199). The interaction of these 'scapes' points to a trend of the extension of commercial consumerism. Appadurai, drawing on Anderson's concept of imagined communities (1983), discusses 'postnational locations', communities which are based on collectively imagined landscapes of commercial marketing, and not on local culture. Such communities are 'deterritorialised' and linked by their practice of consumption. The main point from this discussion is that the US does not control the global system of images; the US is only one component in the transnational construction of imaginary landscapes. Transnational consumerism does not equal the spread of American culture, nor does it equal a unified global culture.

In sum, audience reception studies, evidence of multi-directional flows, continued preference for local shows, and regional production centres, all challenge the cultural imperialism thesis. However, traces of western life may be imperialising. It has been disproved by a number of empirical and ethnographic studies that media and cultural products alone do not lead to ideological effects. The thesis of cultural imperialism must be re-conceptualised to focus not only on the ideological, but the simulation of ways of life, as a more subtle form of articulation. This area, where the thesis of cultural imperialism is transformed to transnational commercialisation, is important in understanding the role of media in the context of globalisation (Griffin, 2002). There needs to be a bigger body of case studies which explore the implications of transnational and transcultural media. Study must go beyond issues of media concentration and asymmetrical flows, to include an investigation of the commercialisation of transnational media across local contexts, and how the accompanying views of consumerism are used, engaged with, adapted or resisted in multi-cultural contexts.

PLURALIST MODEL

Very briefly, we may consider a second traditional paradigm in media and communications research – the pluralist model. In the neo-liberal environment of the 1980s and 1990s, a new orthodoxy emerged which combined the critiques of media imperialism, and presented them as an alternative approach in stark contrast to the media imperialism thesis. In challenge to the homogenisation school of thought, the heterogenisation school emerged. Instead of viewing the spread of cultural products as leading to homogenisation, this view sees the global flow of images and products as resulting in cultural diversity. Ulf Hannerz (1990) argues that globalisation results in “an organization of diversity rather than a replication of uniformity” (p. 237). This view focuses on the local, in contrast to the homogenisation thesis. Similarly, David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995) suggest that “globalisation is, in fact, also associated with new dynamics of *re-localization*” (p. 116).

This heterogeneous school of thought suggests that media in fact extends communication and culture. Many scholars have argued that media leads to enhanced understanding and democracy. This echoes McLuhan’s idea of the compression of space and time boundaries through new technology leading to a ‘global village’. Proponents of the pluralist model suggest that media promote ethnic and cultural diversity. For example, Marie Gillespie (1995) suggests that the media have the power to sustain identities of diasporic communities, and Lina Khatib (2003) argues that Islamic groups use the internet as a ‘portable homeland’ to strengthen their identities. Indeed, online communities and networks have created new forms of transnational communication.

GLOBALISATION CONCEPTS FOR MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

The above sections have argued that traditional media theories need to go beyond conceptualising globalisation to identifying the problems associated with existing media theories and paradigms. Within traditional theorising methods, we are given two opposing views with a global/local binary opposition. While cultural theorists discuss media and globalisation as a process of fostering international dialogue and increasing the democratic public sphere, political economists describe the processes of globalisation and media as homogenising forces, leading to a debasement of democracy.

Traditional media theories may not have the analytical capacity and explanatory power to make sense of the new media and communications phenomena, but we may usefully apply concepts from globalisation to understand these new forms of the local and global. Indeed,

research and theoretical approaches to media and communications are being increasingly internationalised (Thussu, 2010).

Robertson's (1995) concept of 'glocalisation' is a useful theory, as it takes into account the subtle and complex processes of globalisation and media. Robertson re-conceptualises theories away from homogenisation and heterogenisation, so that they are neither global nor local. Instead, these processes are complimentary and mutually implicative, and the concept captures the way in which homogenisation and heterogenisation intertwine. Glocalisation involves the development of overlapping global local linkages, what Appadurai calls 'deterritorialized global scapes'. The concept of glocalisation has the potential to advance understanding of global media and communications.

Several other key globalisation theories are usefully applied to media and communications research. People participate and respond in different ways to globalisation; there is no one experience of the phenomena, and this in itself is an important part of the process. The concept of transculturation is the process of cultural forms moving through time and space, interacting with other cultural forms to produce new forms – hybrids. The concept of hybridity has been increasingly used to make sense of the relationship between globalisation, global media and culture. Flew (2007) notes that the concept of hybridity "suggests the possibility that identity formation in the context of globalisation may not so much be suppressed as in fact proliferate" (p. 162). This echoes Tomlinson's argument that "far from destroying it, globalisation has been perhaps the most significant force in creating and proliferating cultural identities" (2003, p. 16). The concept of hybridisation has been important in media and communications research, although hybridity has only recently gained visibility in international media studies. The concept allows for more nuanced approaches in analysing global/local interaction, while taking into account how the local, global and national interaction can lead to new hybrid forms of media and cultural products. Indeed, there is a need to move beyond a local and global binary and instead examine the complex processes at work in these interactions.

POST GLOBALISATION?

As discussed in this article, globalisation challenges the way we theorise media and communications. This is due in part to the complexity of globalisation, as we have seen from the above discussion of the globalisation debate. To return to the notion of globalisation, its processes and effects continues to be debated.

The two camps, the globalists and the skeptics, which were discussed earlier, continue to debate globalisation. Indeed, with recent world events, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the Iraq war, there has been an increase in the talk of the *end* of globalisation. Skeptics argue that in the aftermath of 9/11, there was a return to geopolitics, and therefore globalisation is not an existing condition. Held and McGrew (2007) note several scholars who discuss post-globalisation: Niall Ferguson (2005) discusses 'sinking globalisation' and John Saul (2005) writes of 'the end of globalism'. Declines in global trade and direct foreign investment, in addition to geopolitics and unilateralism, represent for skeptics "the erosion of the liberal global order which underwrote the intensification of globalisation, and the continuing primacy of the state, territorial power, geopolitics and even empire" (Held & McGrew 2007, p. 6).

The globalist assessment makes a convincing argument that globalisation continues as an important concept and description of our current state, although perhaps there are multiple globalisations, and a 'clash of globalisations', instead of a turn to post-globalisation and the end of globalisation. In the dialectic of globalisation, we can identify a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. The thesis and antithesis are seen in the debates between the globalists and skeptics,

and in the globalisation/anti-globalisation debate. A synthesis is reached between these two extremes in the transformationalists.

We can also attempt to overcome the fatalism of globalisation, and instead understand that these processes are not inevitable. Thus, we can imagine and propose alternatives. This discussion engages some of the most important political debates of our time. Indeed, Held and McGrew (2007) note that the enduring nature of globalisation deals with “some foundational questions of political life: who rules, in whose interests, to what ends, according to what ethical principles, and by what means?” (p. xi). Thus, the question of how to govern globalisation is key, and societies must confront the future trajectory of social change. Held and McGrew (2007) present a synthesis and suggest an alternative: cosmopolitan social democracy. This approach avoids the extremes of neoliberalism, which proposes no solutions to market failure, and the radical position of extreme optimism for the local to deal with global problems. Cosmopolitan social democracy “provides a framework for progressive thinking and political action...” on questions of global problems, and for how “these issues are best addressed or governed, and how global social justice and security can be provided” (p. 217).

Held and McGrew (2007) note the difficulties of implementing cosmopolitan social democracy, but emphasise that it is nonetheless important to attempt. “The stakes are very high, but so too are the potential gains for human security and development if the aspirations for global democracy and social justice can be realized” (p. 236). Therefore, scholars should continue to deal seriously with globalisation and engage with questions of how globalisation can be governed to lead to a more just and stable world.

Furthermore, the relationship between globalisation and communication, and more specifically, questions about global media governance, is an area not only of increasing interest among scholars, but also one of vital importance, given the essential role that communication plays in our lives. Manuel Castells has suggested that “perhaps the most decisive social movements of our age are precisely those aimed at preserving a free internet...carving a space of communication autonomy that constitutes the foundation of the new public space of the Information Age” (2009, p. 415). Notably, the area of social movements that aim to shape the use and regulation of the internet and other communication networks is a topic increasingly researched (Couldrey & Curran, 2003; Downing, 2001; McChesney, 2008; Movius, 2008) and an area for future research. The role of media and communications in globalisation often receives little attention from scholars outside communication studies. However, if we agree with Rantanen (2005) that there is no globalisation without media and communications, then we may argue for the need for other fields to consider media and communications as integral to the analysis of globalisation.

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“TONIGHT’S SECRET INGREDIENT IS...”: IRON CHEF AMERICA AS MEDIA RITUAL

CHRISTOPHER BELL

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO-BOULDER, USA

Abstract: The Food Network program Iron Chef America creates a media ritual space in which public displays of virtuosity and the engendering of parasocial relationships combine to present both the media ritual itself (the cooking competition) and the media ritual it engenders (the viewing of and parasocial interaction with the cooking competition). These rituals though separate and distinct are inextricably tied together. Couched in the ritual tropes and memes of sporting events, Iron Chef America is an attempt to mediate mundane activity by transforming it into competitive action. As a result, the program ritualises the ‘deep play’ aspect of cooking as spectator sport, and in the process, reinforces the ritual structures of American society, celebrating the triumph of skill, determination, and hard work so valued in contemporary USA.

INTRODUCTION

Allez cuisine!

The familiar rallying cry of the Chairman’s nephew rings out across my living room, where an odd assortment of characters has gathered. My college buddy Dale watches with an intense disdain for reality television in general and this program in particular. My wife flips through a magazine, watching only sporadically, because “only the last five minutes are any good.” I watch intently, my note pad and pen in hand, as if any of the notes I take will be of any use later. The cats could care less what the secret theme ingredient of the night is; they are content to snuggle up together on the blanket covering my wife’s feet. This is not a first-time occurrence in my living room. This cast of characters assembles every Sunday night to watch (or pretend not to watch, or to watch begrudgingly) this media event. The viewing and subsequent deconstruction of *Iron Chef America* is our ritual.

Iron Chef America is based on the format of the sensational Japanese cooking program *Iron Chef* and airs on the Food Network in the United States. Although it is ostensibly a network which broadcasts informational and instructional programming, Cheri Ketchum (2005) argues that Food Network’s programming creates an “intricate web of discourses that sustain consumer culture as viewers are told their dreams should be realised through the acquisition and use

of particular goods” (p. 217). In this paper I argue that *Iron Chef America* provides a contrary example to Ketchum’s reading of Food Network’s programming. *Iron Chef America* runs counter to the discourse of consumer culture since the goods and the skill of their use are outside of the bounds of plausibility for the viewing audience. *Iron Chef America* is therefore more ritualistic than the programming surrounding it on Food Network, since the main thrust of the show is competition and the public display of virtuosity, which leads to the creation of a ritual space in which the audience combines with the host, judges and competitors to engage in this media ritual.

In this respect, I argue that *Iron Chef America* functions more like a sporting event than a cooking show, or any other form of reality television. However, *Iron Chef America* also relies upon methods not employed by most sporting events, chiefly the cultivation of what Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl term ‘parasociality’, in order to hook viewers and keep them coming back each week for a new competition. Coupling Horton and Wohl’s theory of parasocial interaction with Burke’s rhetorical theories of identification and Couldry’s theories of media ritual and deep play, this article examines a media ritual with a peculiar duality; there exists both the ritual itself (the cooking competition) and the ritual it engenders (the viewing of and parasocial interaction with the cooking competition) that are separate and distinct, yet inextricably tied together. First I explain parasocial interaction and its relationship to reality television through Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification. Next, I explore media rituals in general, and the specific rituals *Iron Chef America* represents. Finally I connect *Iron Chef America* to the larger American ritual framework through ‘deep play’ and discuss the specific hegemonic structures the program reinforces. In the process, I illustrate the manner in which this uniquely Japanese television sensation has been distinctively Americanised.

IRON CHEF AMERICA

Iron Chef America is a relatively young production, although it is based upon a Japanese program with a long and fascinating history. *Ryôri No Tetsujin* (translated as “Iron Men of Cookery”) began airing on FujiTV in 1993 in Japan.¹ Waller and Waller (1995) describe the birth of *Ryôri No Tetsujin*:

Nihon Telework brain trust’s chief producer, Toshihiko Matsuo, confesses he got the idea watching his son playing a video game. “Yeah, I thought of a cooking show with a computer-game format. . . . Something like ‘Dragon Quest.’ A self-indulgent king who wants to taste all the world’s cooking delights. He keeps ‘iron chefs’ in the basement and they’ll take on challenges of other chefs. He’ll invite his gourmet friends over to taste and sit in as judges! That was it!” It was, and is.

(Waller and Waller, 1995)

The program began as a 30-minute broadcast; later, after 23 episodes and a steadily increasing viewership, the show was extended to an hour.² Over the course of six years, *Ryôri No Tetsujin* aired over 300 episodes, finally wrapping up in September of 1999.³ *Ryôri No Tetsujin* had seven Iron Chefs over the course of six years; three specialising in Japanese cuisine, two in French cuisine, and one each in Chinese cuisine and Italian cuisine. The vast majority of episodes were taped with only three Iron Chefs: Chen Kenichi (Iron Chef Chinese), Rokusaburo Michiba (Iron Chef Japanese), and the legendary Hiroyuki Sakai (Iron Chef French). Sakai and Michiba were nearly unbeatable; Sakai’s record was 70-15-1 (an 81% win percentage) while Michiba racked up an astounding 32-5-1 record (84% of his matches ended in victory).

The format of *Ryôri No Tetsujin* was similar to that of any other competitive enterprise:

a host, the eccentric and ostentatious Chairman Takeshi Kaga, would invite a challenger into his elaborate Kitchen Stadium. The challenger would select one of the Iron Chefs to compete against. Chairman Kaga would give the history and background of both the competitor and the Iron Chef, then introduce the most important element of the battle: the secret ingredient. Each chef would have to prepare up to five dishes in 60 minutes, using the theme ingredient in each dish. Then a panel of judges ranging from culinary experts and food critics to popular actresses and government officials would sit down, taste all of the dishes, and give a score to each of the two combatants. The scores would be tallied, and one chef would be declared the winner.

In 2001, the American network UPN attempted to reproduce Iron Chef for a US audience. Dubbed *Iron Chef USA*, the new program was an abysmal failure which aired only two episodes before being cancelled. While William Shatner was received well as the host, the program lacked the aura of credibility and mastery of the original (as well as lacking its campy charm) and failed.

Food Network made a second attempt to revive the series in 2004, airing *The Battle of the Masters*. This time, they invited Iron Chefs Sakai and Morimoto to compete, and installed three of the network's most popular stars as Iron Chefs: Bobby Flay, Mario Batali and Wolfgang Puck. The four episodes of *The Battle of the Masters* were successful and the program was launched as a full series in 2005. However, instead of Wolfgang Puck, *Iron Chef America* cast Masaharu Morimoto, Iron Chef Japanese of *Ryôri No Tetsujin*, as the third Iron Chef. Iron Chef American Bobby Flay, Iron Chef Italian Mario Batali, and Iron Chef Japanese Masaharu Morimoto were joined by a fourth, Iron Chef Greek Cat Cora, the first female Iron Chef in any incarnation of the program. Much later, Iron Chef Mediterranean Michael Symon was added via the program *The Next Iron Chef*.

Iron Chef America retains all of the logistics and scoring mechanisms of the original, although the secret theme ingredients are, on the whole, decidedly tamer than those found on *Ryôri No Tetsujin*⁴. Also unlike the original, two of the four judges are normally professional food critics (only one was mandatory on *Ryôri No Tetsujin*). Also unlike the original, the challenger and Iron Chef are given a short list of possible theme ingredients beforehand, of which one is selected at the time of competition.

PARASOCIAL INTERACTION

When Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl published their widely cited paper on "Mass Communication and Parasocial Interaction" in 1956, their focus was on early television 'personalities' such as talk show hosts and game show announcers. According to Horton and Wohl:

One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media – radio, television, and the movies – is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer. The conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group. The most remote and illustrious men are met *as if they* were in the circle of one's peers; the same is true of a character in a story who comes to life in these media in an especially vivid and arresting way. We propose to call this seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a *parasocial relationship*.

(1956, p. 215)

The creation of this illusory face-to-face relationship with the competitors (in this case the Iron Chef and the challenger) is one of the elements that distinguish *Iron Chef America* from other sporting/competitive enterprises. While certain personalities do emerge (for example,

on the football field or basketball court) the majority of players are not individually identified, focused on, and presented to the audience in the intimate way that *Iron Chef America* develops.

To say that reality television has been on a steady rise is a drastic understatement. Reality television can be manufactured cheaply and relatively quickly, which makes it an ideal programming choice, both economically and parasocially. Horton and Wohl could not possibly have imagined the explosion of reality television throughout the 1990s and 2000s which would herald the advent of a new breed of 'personality': the reality television contestant. While the parasocial relationship between competitor and audience member appears to be a two-way street, as Horton and Wohl (1956) state, it is not:

The more the performer seems to adjust his performance to the supposed response of the audience, the more the audience tends to make the response anticipated. This simulacrum of conversational give and take may be called *parasocial interaction*.

(Horton and Wohl 1956, p. 215)

This is not an instance of merely 'playing to the camera'. The performer must anticipate not only the response of the judges and the studio audience, but must also carefully craft a persona for the audience at home. Kenneth Burke (1969) sums this process up by stating that, "in identification lies the source of dedications and enslavements, in fact of cooperation" (p. xiv).

Although not all 'conversations' or give-and-take between audience and persona may be classified as 'identification' the rhetorical process of identification is in truth, the very basis of parasocial interaction and the formation of parasocial relationships. Burke (1969) offers that:

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so.

(Burke 1969, p. 20)

If we assume that A is an audience member and B is a competitor (either challenger or *Iron Chef*), clearly their interests are not joined. The viewer will not share in the challenger's success; the viewer will not have a job in the challenger's kitchen, or a stake in the increased flow into the challenger's restaurant, or even taste the food that the challenger is presenting. Therefore, the challenger (B) must persuade the viewer (A) that their interests are joined. In other words "two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an 'identification' that does not deny their distinctness" (Burke 1969, p. 21).

Emphasis is placed on the hard work, determination and passion of the challenger, which are values it is assumed viewers share. These common principles ("everyone wants to be the best at his/her profession," and "If I work hard, I could participate in a competition in my field too.") join the viewer (A) with the competitor (B). Thus A is identified with B, not through real common interest, but by being persuaded that common interests exist, however vicarious they may be.

This common interest can manifest itself in a variety of similarities, attractions or identifications (see Anderson and de Mancillas, 1978; Rubin and McHugh, 1987). However, the principle of identification in a sporting/competitive enterprise like *Iron Chef America* works specifically because the viewer (A) and the competitor (B) are *not* the same. As Burke (1969) writes, "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would

be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity.” (Burke 1969, p. 22). We will return to this principle later in this article.

Parasocial interaction requires identification, predominantly, but does not require much else on the part of the viewer. Burke (1969) states:

In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time, he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another.

(Burke 1969, p. 21)

The responsibility for maintaining this consubstantiation lies solely with B. The viewer cannot intensify the relationship on his or her own; it is also not a partnership. There is no negotiation involved. Only the celebrity/star/competitor (or at least the producers, directors and editors controlling the manner in which the celebrity/star/competitor is presented) can control the manner in which the relationship develops. Horton and Wohl (1956) echo that:

Parasocial relations may be governed by little or no sense of obligation, effort, or responsibility on the part of the spectator ... the interaction, characteristically, is one-sided, non dialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible to mutual development.

(Horton and Wohl 1956, pp. 215)

The point being that the parasocial relationship cultivated by *Iron Chef America* is a large part of what distinguishes the program from other competitive enterprises/sporting events, and the maintenance of that relationship and subsequent interaction is largely audience-driven. It is this principle which the media ritual *Iron Chef America* represents.

MEDIA RITUALS

In the introduction to this paper, I referred to the weekly watching and deconstruction of *Iron Chef America* by my friends and family as our ‘ritual.’ There are three elements to this statement. Firstly there is the repetitive aspect of the claim. To state that we get together weekly to perform the same set of actions is to imply the expression of habitual behavior. Secondly there is the fact that the actions in which we participate weekly take place in the same manner with very little variation. I sit in the same place on the couch every week, my wife always has a magazine, Dale always drinks the same brand of beer, and so forth. These actions take place without having to be discussed; they have been repeated within the group so many times that they are now expectations. Thirdly there is the question of *meaning*. Supposedly we are all in the living room of my home to watch *Iron Chef America* and to discuss the manner in which the competition has transpired, how the secret ingredient was utilised and so forth. However, there is what Nick Couldry (2003) refers to as a “transcendent value” (p.3) to the weekly undertaking of this ritual; this gathering is an expression of *family*. Our weekly gathering means something, and that meaning has very little to do with the activity itself. In this way, the weekly watching of *Iron Chef America* is, in my home, a highly ritualised behavior. But is it a ‘media ritual’?

Couldry (2003) defines a ‘media ritual’ as “any action organised around key media-related categories and boundaries, whose performance reinforces, indeed helps legitimate, the underlying ‘value’ expressed in the idea that the media is our access point to our social centre” (p. 2). In other words, a media ritual is any action taken by an individual which strengthens the notion that the media are what hold our society together. Following this line of argument, since *Iron Chef America* is the vehicle for bringing together this group of people in an outward expression of the ideology of family, the viewing is in fact a media ritual. It places the television

at the center of social interaction.

But 'media ritual' also refers "to the whole range of situations where media themselves 'stand in,' or appear to 'stand in,' for something wider, something linked to the fundamental organisational level on which we are, or imagine ourselves to be, *connected* as members of a society" (Couldry, 2003, p. 4). That is to say that although our weekly viewing party is a media ritual, the very program *Iron Chef America* is, in and of itself, a media ritual. In this case, the 'something wider' which is 'linking to the fundamental organisational level on which we are connected as members of society' is competition. This competition, in turn, reinforces specific hegemonic structures through the ritualisation of the mundane activity of cooking.

COMPETITION, SOCIETY VALUES, AND THE ICA RITUAL

Iron Chef America is first and foremost a competition. While the competition certainly appears to be amiable on most occasions, the agonistic nature⁵ is still omnipresent; the goal in participating is to beat the other chef, with the differential determined via the scoring process. In turn, the audience takes the rightful place of the spectator as fan; the performative aspect of the ritual is in the conventionalised habituation that conforms to the show's format. Habituation in this instance refers to the process by which an individual becomes accustomed to certain predictable events through repeated exposure to a stimulus. In this case, the habituation is of two varieties. First, there is the habitual exposure to public acts of virtuosity⁶ which engenders a parasocial relationship with the performers. Parasocial interaction in reality television, and in competitive reality in particular, normally requires the viewer to engage in the previously described Burkean process of identification with the competitor. However, as noted earlier, in the case of *Iron Chef America* the parasocial relationship is developed through precisely the opposite. Skill, mastery and expert knowledge render the Iron Chefs (and their challengers) as virtuosos. The audience member will never have the skill or experience or know-how of the Iron Chef, and this is made clear at every turn. Gavin McNett (2000) offers:

Iron Chef is Formula One racing: There's a certain architectonic quality about it that fascinates you because you can't even imagine doing it at home. As with Formula One, you can't always tell what you're watching, but you can be confident that the competition is taking place at levels far beyond those that you can perceive. "He's throwing out the apricot sauce!" the *Iron Chef* commentator exclaims, as the crowd bursts into a stunned roar. "The foie gras! He's heading for the foie gras!" Whatever he's doing with that crême brulée, you know you'd better stay the hell out of his way.

(McNett, 2000)

Fortunately there is a high priest of this ritual – Alton Brown. Brown is a food scientist and the host of the popular Food Network program *Good Eats*. He also serves as the play-by-play commentator during the *Iron Chef America* competitions. Amiable and knowledgeable, Brown often provides insights into the performance of the chefs, as well as *bon mots* about the ingredients being used or the dishes being created. It is understood that the viewing audience will not be able to experience the ritual on their own; the high priest not only navigates, but inculcates parasocial interaction by pointing out and describing the acts of virtuosity as they occur. He is the essential bridge between the two simultaneously occurring rituals.

Iron Chef America connects parasocially to the audience through its particular 'ritual frame'. Couldry (2001) defines a 'ritual frame' as "a cognitive, imaginative and practical space through which everyone can access simultaneously the things that mark off the 'social' – what is shared by everyone" (p. 158). In the case of *Iron Chef America*, as stated earlier, one ritual frame

is competition. Although not everyone has participated in an intense culinary battle against the most brilliant chefs in the world, everyone can connect to a time where he or she had to directly vie with another person for a single reward. Any individual can conceptualise the competitive scenario, and can imagine the feelings involved. It is one of the most basic of ritual frames; life is a competitive business and people can always relate to struggle. A second, equally basic, ritual frame in play in *Iron Chef America* is the work of cooking. Both cooking and eating are highly ritualised activities across societies and cultures (de Certeau, 1998). Everyone can relate to the business of eating; everyone can remember or imagine an amazing meal he or she has eaten in the past. The ritual framework of *Iron Chef America* is solid and easily interpreted.

The rituality of the proceedings is only enhanced by the visual and auditory composition of the televisual space. The ominous, thundering music underscores the gravity of the competition, while the entrance of the challenger, shrouded in an intense backlight so that only the silhouette of the approaching contender can be seen, is a visual *aide memoire* of the Promethean activity about to take place. The contestant emerges from the bright light of the outside world to the darkness of Kitchen Stadium to do battle with the uncompromising prowess of these culinary titans. The Iron Chefs themselves rise from the depths of Kitchen Stadium in a cloud of smoke, to the sound of a knife being sharpened. With arms folded over the chest or hands on the hips, each is a picture of defiant confidence. But the ritual does not hit its stride until the most important element of the clash is revealed. On a golden pedestal, in a billowy haze of steam and smoke, the secret ingredient rises up out of the floor and is presented with such flourish and reverence by the Chairman, one would think the secret ingredient on any given night might be enriched uranium or the Shroud of Turin. Visually and aurally, the entire show is given an extra air of rituality, as though the competition was a matter of life and death, or the battle for the chefs' immortal souls.

It would be imprudent to assume that the ritual of *Iron Chef America* functions in the same way as other rituals within American society, or even within American television. Gudelunas (2002) points out that:

Television has not only affected and modified those rituals that consciously or unconsciously anticipate extensive media coverage but also taken over some dimension of traditional ritual to become the source of much of the symbolic imagery and shared values in our culture. From this perspective, television can be at times both highly ritualistic and a type of ritual medium itself for the culture.

(Gudelunas 2002, p. 109)

Iron Chef America is not only a *media* ritual, but more importantly, a *mediated* ritual. The mediated ritual exists in a variety of contexts, particularly in the United States. Whether it is formed around tragedy (King 2007), politics (Brewin 2008), entertainment (Haastrup 2008), or sport (Olsen 2003), the mediated ritual (i.e. the ritual that not only physically separates the performer(s) from the audience, but is created specifically for the audience) has become commonplace in American society. Unlike many other types of media rituals, *Iron Chef America* is not simply the transmission of an event – presumably, nobody staged O.J. Simpson's white Bronco ride, or the publicly televised explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*, or the outcome of Super Bowl XLII. Competitive cooking as a ritual is constructed entirely for the television, as it exists outside the normative bounds of tradition (cooking in the home). It has only the sporting event as a pre-existing model. Cooking is an intimate activity when performed in the home, or an industrial activity when undertaken in a restaurant. It does not necessarily lend itself to direct head-to-head competition. For example, although restaurant chefs strive to be the best (achieving a five-star rating, procuring employment at an upper crust establishment etc.),

this is primarily indirect competition. Rarely are head chefs in the same room with each other, pressed by a time limit and forced to use specific ingredients. Even if this peculiar situation were to occur, it is doubtful that it would be televised. The television itself becomes an integral part of the ritual, and the viewing of the program becomes a ritual in and of itself. As Eastman and Riggs (1994) state, "Rituals arise from contradictions between television's immediacy and its mediation of an event, in other words, its distancing of a participatory event" (p. 257). The ritual of *Iron Chef America* is a construct. Food Network, and, by extension, the physical entity of the television set, not only presents the ritual (the sporting event of competitive cooking), but also has become its own ritual differentiated from the ritual it was attempting to mediate (cooking). *Iron Chef America*, therefore, is both a cooking show and more than a cooking show.

The three rituals (the competition, the television and the viewing of the competition) are held apart by *ritual boundaries* which compartmentalise the rituals in very important ways. Couldry (2001) writes:

Specific to this sense of ritual performance is a sense of a ritual *boundary*, embodied in the set and the basis of its ritual status. The boundary in question is that between the world in which visitors usually operate (the 'ordinary world') and the world the set inhabits, the 'media world.'

(p.165)

A definitive ritual boundary exists between the audience and the cooking competition. The Iron Chefs are of course 'real' people, but even more so than most celebrities, as all four of the Iron Chefs own prominent US restaurants. One can quite probably meet these Iron Chefs in real life, go to their restaurants and eat their food. However, this is not the same experience as *Iron Chef America*. The ritual boundary prevents you from having that experience in the 'ordinary world' As mentioned before, eating is not the same ritual – one probably will not experience the ultra-expensive ingredients (Japanese Kobe beef or black caviar or shaved truffle), or the rare (big-eyed tuna or giant lobster), or the just plain bizarre (goat or ostrich). Even if it's a common ingredient, one probably won't ever consume a meal prepared personally by the chef with the kind of on-the-spot innovations and creativity that the cooking competition requires. The ritual boundary ensures an entirely different experience.

IRON CHEF AMERICA AS DEEP PLAY

If *Iron Chef America* is more sporting event than cooking program, it stands to reason that there is a clear division between the recreational form of the activity and the competitive form. That is to say that although there may be some instructional merit to the proceedings, it is generally assumed the viewing public will not be able to perform at the same level of expertise as the competitors. Like any other sporting competition, there is a big difference between playing for example, recreation-league flag football on the weekend and playing wide receiver for the Indianapolis Colts. However, the operative condition in both circumstances is *play* – it is the quality and level of play that is in question. Couldry (2003) offers that, where play is concerned in conjunction with media:

Television 'deepens the play', where 'play', following Victor Turner, has the serious sense of a process, framed apart from the normal flow of everyday life, in which society can reflect upon itself. Serious play is, in one respect, the successor to, not an example of, rituals based in organised religion, but in a broader sense, such play –and the media events that focus it – still constitutes ritual, but in another register.

(p. 283)

Play is an integral part of American society; recreation is a ritual all unto itself. But beyond that, play also helps society reinforce the qualities it values through the systematic rewarding of competitive victory. Each competitive exercise, while couched in the language of play, is essentially what Goffman refers to as a *character contest* in which the participants must not only triumph, but do so while demonstrating the characteristics esteemed by society. Susan Birrell (1981) relates:

Goffman distinguishes four motifs around which character contests in North America might revolve: courage, gameness, integrity and composure. From Goffman's definitions one can immediately perceive their ready applicability to sport.

Courage: the capacity to envisage immediate danger and yet proceed with the course of action that brings the danger on

Gameness: the capacity to stick to a line of activity and to continue to pour all effort into it regardless of set-backs, pain or fatigue

Integrity: the propensity to resist temptation in situations where there would be much profit and some impunity in departing momentarily from moral standards

Composure: self-control, self-possession or poise

(Birrell, 1982, p. 365)

Competitors in public displays of play, such as televised sporting events or *Iron Chef America*, are expected to demonstrate at least one of these motifs. If a competitor does not exhibit at least one of the motifs, or worse, displays characteristics in opposition to the accepted motifs, the result is sharply negative. For example, the practice of point shaving⁷ is illegal (an affront to integrity). On a much more minor scale, if one has seen it, it is difficult to forget Iron Chef Masaharo Morimoto's utter disgust and offense at Bobby Flay's outburst of triumphant jubilation during their historic battle on *Ryôri No Tetsujin*. Flay climbed onto his countertop and stood on his own cutting board, which Iron Chef Morimoto considered the height of classlessness and insult (the spectacle of a lack of composure). The program's visual construction along the tropes and symbols of a sporting event lends an air of authenticity to the demonstration of character values. As Mark Gallagher (2004) states:

The program constructs the act of cooking not only as an art and as a form of service but also as a test of strength, speed, endurance and mental dexterity (and to a less visible extent, management, as each chef must efficiently direct a team of cooking assistants). The representation of the kitchen as the stage for physical and strategic trials links the program to Western competitive values promoted in sports, business and other forums.

(p. 182)

Birrell (1981) states that "sport has ritual significance when character based on valued social attributes is demonstrated. In such situations, the athlete is an exemplary figure who embodies the moral values of the community and thus serves as a symbol of those values" (p. 373). This is echoed by Meyers, who states:

Campbell ... characterises the *monomythic* hero in ritual and literature as one who "ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man". Might he not as well be describing an athlete and the athletic contest—"the quest for the gold"? The conflict or *agon* that is the basis of drama and much literature finds expression

in the 'agony' of sport.

(p. 342)

There is a connection between the embodiment of the community's moral values and the public demonstration of virtuosity, in that skill is an offshoot of composure. The self-control of the perfect jump shot, the poise of the clutch field goal, or the self-possession of Iron Chef Masaharo Morimoto's amazingly precise knife work, all reinforce dominant hegemonic codes of how a hero 'should' behave. However, competitive public events perform an alternate, dual hegemonic function. As Stijn Reijnders, Gerard Rooijackers and Liesbet van Zoonen (2005) offer:

Events of this type have been popular over the years because they possess an important ritual significance. They stimulate social harmony, on the one hand by cultivating a strong sense of belonging to a group and on the other by introducing a ranking into that sense of belonging.

(p. 5)

So, while there is the denotative demonstration of heroism and prized cultural characteristics on the surface, underneath and simultaneously, there is the connotative message that the competitor is special, one of us but not one of us. It is the very foundation of 'celebrity' as a social construct. It is important to note that the competitor may not even be cognizant of his or her role in the perpetuation of cultural norms. As Birrell (1981) reminds us:

Through the idealization of performance ... individuals are not attempting in a deceitful way to claim values for themselves that they do not in fact possess. They are attempting to demonstrate through their selves the ideal role characteristics valued by society. Through their behavior, they are reaffirming significant values of the moral order.

(p. 360)

The ritual of competition also fulfils the need for societies to create dual-role hegemonic structures which, on the one hand, honor and fortify the status quo and bring people together as a collective, and on the other, remind people that the virtuoso is not really a part of that collective. The virtuoso is a hero, one among a cavalcade since time immemorial. As Meyers so eloquently points out:

The universal action of play relates to the triumph in the contest and the agony of losing, a veritable metaphor for death. During the fall, winter, spring and summer solstices we attend matches, or turn on the television to watch the struggles between the combatants dressed in their colorful uniforms reenacting the ritual patterns of thousands of years, the conflict between the old and the new, the strong and the weak, for mastery.

(p. 341)

IRON CHEF AMERICA(N)

In 1962, Steele and Redding characterised several defining, foundational principles of American life: Puritan and pioneer morality, the value of the individual, achievement and success, change and progress, ethical equality, effort and optimism, and efficiency, practicality and pragmatism among them (Steele & Redding 1962). In some respect, *Iron Chef America* replicates and reinforces each of these foundational principles on a weekly basis. The idea of Puritan and pioneer morality, that the world is divided into those who play fair and those who do not (Steele & Redding 1962, p. 85), is central to the competition. No chef, not even the Iron Chef, is given any advantage: the kitchens are identical, both competitors find out at the same time about the secret ingredient

and so on, in order to keep the competition equitable and fair – a ‘real’ American doesn’t cheat. The value of the individual – that success is an individual-level event (Steele & Redding 1962, p. 86) – is of course primary in the Kitchen Stadium; each competitor has a team of assistants, but they exist only in service to the individual competing, and receive none of the credit for a winning effort – a ‘real’ American wins for him/herself.

The value of achievement and success – that what one already has is not as important as what one is capable of acquiring next (Steele & Redding 1962, p. 86) – is also a key element in *Iron Chef America*. Each competitor, both the Iron Chef and the challenger, is already accomplished within his/her profession, but the opportunity to win and prove oneself to be better than another within that profession is enough to drive a ‘real’ American to compete. This also falls in line with the value of change and progress; that human abilities can be improved and the best is yet to come (Steele & Redding 1962, p. 86). Through this ritualised competition, both the Iron Chef and the challenger are becoming better at their respective crafts, as steel sharpens steel – once again something that all ‘real’ Americans value.

Ethical equality, that all people have an equal right to compete, regardless of age, race, gender, and so forth (Steele & Redding 1962, p. 87), is much more prevalent in *Iron Chef America* than it ever was in *Ryôri No Tetsujin*. The inclusion of Iron Chef Cat Cora is symbolic of the ‘real’ American value of equal access (as dubious a claim as that can be when examined societally). Cat Cora (because she is a woman competing in a ‘man’s field’) also symbolises the American ideal of effort and optimism – that every ‘real’ American can find success through hard work, striving, and refusing to give up (Steele & Redding 1962, p. 87). Finally, *Iron Chef America* reinforces the idea of efficiency, practicality and pragmatism (solving problems as they arise) weekly. It is in fact the central theme of the program, and ‘real’ Americans are nothing if not problem solvers.

These hegemonic structures are essential to the ritualised deep play functions of *Iron Chef America*. *Iron Chef America* conforms to the ritual structures of United States society, and celebrates Steele and Redding’s contemporary American values.

CONCLUSION

Iron Chef America exists both as media ritual and as the center point of a distinct mediated ritual. There is a clear ritual boundary between the two, which is bridged by the all-knowing host/high priest of the event. The mediated ritual, the viewing of the program, may follow traditional definitions of ritual in terms of repetition, faithfulness in convention and practice, and in the formation of meaning. It combines the tropes and structures of sporting events with the integral and endemic parasocial relationships and interactions of reality television to create a product which is neither wholly sport nor wholly traditional reality program. The media ritual itself is a complicated amalgamation of competition, play and public virtuosity. The character and quality of play at work in the competition reinforces societal values, rewards those who demonstrate societally-esteemed virtues.

Iron Chef America, through its structure, host and participants, attempts to generalise (through deep play) specifically American concepts of ‘what it means’ to compete, to be ‘the best’, and to display virtuosity. Ultimately, this is the greatest success of *Iron Chef America* – the skillful marriage of parasocial interaction with deep play in order to directly reinforce the hegemonic, traditional values of American society. Not every person in America can throw a football or sink a three-pointer or hit a 90 m.p.h. curve ball, but every individual can enter the kitchen and prepare a meal. In utilising this everyday activity as the vehicle for competitive action, the program engenders identification and parasocial interaction at a level a traditional

sporting event cannot match. This makes this particular media/mediated ritual an extremely successful vehicle for nurturing conformation to traditional American values.

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.bhatt.id.au/blog/ryori-no-tetsujin-aka-iron-chef-sbs-tv/>

2. <http://www.bhatt.id.au/blog/ryori-no-tetsujin-aka-iron-chef-sbs-tv/>

3. <http://www.bhatt.id.au/blog/ryori-no-tetsujin-aka-iron-chef-sbs-tv/>

4. *Ryôri No Tetsujin* once included Chinese 100-year-old egg as a secret ingredient; other notable theme ingredients include lotus root, suckling pig, pigeon, scorpion fish and snapping turtle. *Iron Chef America* rarely features anything more exotic than snails, rabbit, or buffalo – uncommon, but not nearly as unusual.

5. In *Ilium*, author Dan Simmons writes, “The agon is simply the comparison of all like things, one to the other ... and the judgment of those things as equal to, greater than, or lesser than. All things in the universe take part in the dynamic of agon ... one must be able to compare men – or women – and that is why we need to know our fathers. Our mothers. Our history. Our stories.” (Simmons 2003, p. 468) Agon is part of the very fabric of competition.

6. Hannah Arendt (1963) defines a ‘public act of virtuosity’ as “an excellence we attribute to the performing arts ... where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product which outlasts the activity that brought it into existence and becomes independent of it” (Arendt 1963, p. 153).

7. Point shaving is the act of deliberately not scoring points in a sporting event in order to affect who wins bets against a point spread. A player who is point shaving might intentionally miss shots or cause turnovers in order to keep the score within a particular margin. It most commonly occurs in basketball, but can be found in other sports contests as well.

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BEARING WITNESS - BETWEEN THE PROFESSIONAL AND THE PERSONAL: AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL DAYAN

ESTHER CHIN

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Daniel Dayan is well known for his research into the 'public sphere'. His recent work has distinguished 'public' and 'audience', detailed the conditions for their development (Dayan, 2005), and discussed the ethical dimension of contemporary mediated public engagement through a critical review of Roger Silverstone's concept of the 'mediapolis' (Dayan, 2007). Dayan has defined publics by their (self-) recognition as such, their collective 'commitment' to a stand, as well as their construction around a medium (such as television), an issue, and/or a 'media event' (Dayan, 2001).

Dayan is most famous for co-pioneering and developing, with Elihu Katz, a seminal work on 'media events' (Dayan & Katz, 1992). In this interview he considers the applicability of this concept to different cultural contexts, beyond the 'ceremonial' events studied in his 1992 book, and the Beijing Olympics of his 2008 book (Price & Dayan, 2008). He also provides an overview of the concept as it has developed from its conception to its contemporary relevance (for example, terrorist attacks).

Dayan's article on terrorism, the second intifada and the media (Dayan, 2002a) is one of many examples of his sustained criticism of new forms of anti-Semitism (Dayan, 2002b). Expressing concern for the forms of anti-Israelism that are no longer rational but have become a 'passion' (as put by Dutch political scientist Abram de Swaan) Dayan notes that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict narrative has generated an updated anti-Semitic vocabulary and created original forms of 'Judeophobia'.

While negotiation between the professional and the personal is visible in previous academic (Dayan, 2002a) and journalistic interviews, it may be significant to those familiar with Dayan's work that he has recently appeared as an expert witness in a court case addressing the validity of images in news broadcasts.¹ This first-hand experience of being a legal witness may provide greater context to understanding the significance of theoretical notions of 'witnessing' in his work and teaching (see for example his latest course 'Media, Performance and Visibility: Witnessing, Monstration, Reaction').

In this interview, Dayan discusses his professional and personal influences and interests, and how they have shaped his 'informed subjectivity' as a 'witness [with] a toolbox' (Dayan, 2002a, p. 82). The PLATFORM editorial team thanks him for his approachability and for kindly sharing his insight and experience.

Dayan is Directeur de Recherche (Research Director) at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS, the French National Center for Scientific Research), Paris; and a fellow of the Institut Marcel

Mauss (Marcel Mauss Institute), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences), Paris. He is Visiting Professor (Fall 2009) at The New School for Social Research, New York. In 2005, Dayan was a resident fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Hebrew University in Jerusalem; and an Annenberg Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. Dayan has been a professor at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po), Paris; and the University of Oslo; and has also taught at Stanford University and University of Paris II. In 2006, he gave the 'freedom of speech' lectures at the University of Bergen, and from 2000-2004, he participated in the European Science Foundation Research Program 'Changing Media, Changing Europe'. Dayan holds a PhD in Aesthetics, supervised by the French semiotician Roland Barthes at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, as well as degrees in Anthropology, Comparative Literature, Semiotics and Film Studies from Stanford University, La Sorbonne and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

PLATFORM: Your work has been conducted across a number of disciplines such as philosophy (e.g. aesthetics, hermeneutics); anthropology (e.g. the anthropology of ceremony); television/film studies; and political sociology (e.g. the sociology of terrorism). How did these interests develop, and can a consistent theme be detected across them?

Daniel Dayan: I was a student in France during the sixties. Embarking on a theoretical study of film or media looked then like an incongruous idea. Of course there were studies on media and film (Bazin, Cohen-Séat, Metz, Friedman, Morin) but some of these were not academic, and most ignored each other. The various fields I studied – which also included comparative literature – offered me the possibility of addressing what became a respectable field only much later.

As a student at the Sorbonne and at Stanford, I sat in many classes and took only the courses that I found inspiring, whether or not they were in the same department or part of the same curriculum. I studied with Levi-Strauss, Leroi-Gourhan, Jean Rouch, Roger Bastide, Albert Memmi (anthropology), René Etiemble (comparative literature), André Martinet (linguistics), Roland Barthes (semiotics, aesthetics). Unfortunately, and despite his invitation, I never studied with Erwin Goffmann, whose thinking influenced me throughout my career.

Many of my teachers were not part of the Sorbonne, but taught at L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. This school could be compared to the London School of Economics (LSE) or to New York's New School for Social Research. It was home to the historical school *Les Annales*. It was also the cradle of structuralism (Levi Strauss) and post structuralism (Barthes, Derrida). I decided to take my PhD there. In a way, the range of disciplines I chose to study was an 'assemblage' that became 'territorialised' only much later. 'Cultural studies' would offer almost the same mix of disciplines: semiotics, sociology, anthropology, film theory, television studies, reception theory. But as John Corner put it, Cultural Studies were built around a political nexus: investigating the 'popular'.

Political sociology was not one of my initial interests. My interest for terrorism stemmed from reasons that were only in part political. I was astonished at the disinterest of media scholars in terrorism. Later I became equally amazed at the astounding silence of most visual semioticians during the controversies surrounding the 'Mohammed cartoons'. Was the content of such images self-evident? What was the point of being an image expert if you had nothing to say?

Terrorism originally interested me because it was a new and proliferating television genre, a genre in which the role of the media seemed at least as important as that of the violent actions they reported. Journalists and terrorists were inextricably imbricated. Their paradoxical, often

hostile dependence on each other led me to think of terrorism as a new type of 'media events'. My interest in terrorism also stemmed from two other reasons.

I was acutely aware of the fact that the conceptual apparatus through which we describe warfare was anachronistic: most contemporary conflicts were reported through inaccurate narratives. The semiotics of wars used to involve symmetry, reciprocity, neatly differentiated roles. Now, as Arjun Appadurai has shown, large vertebrates were fighting protozoa. Mosquitoes were fighting elephants and winning the battles. Asymmetry was not some accidental feature. It had become the rule. Also, roles changed. One no longer had to be either a civilian or a soldier. Except in the world of legal fiction, you could be both. It was a matter of time-budgeting. Following French sociologist Gerard Rabinovitch, I further noted that most narratives of wars focused on two main sets of actors: peoples and nation-states, civil societies and leviathans. Any significant protagonist in a conflict had to be either one or the other. There was no third possibility. Yet, Rabinovitch insisted, such a binary model was misleading. It ignored the existence of a third protagonist, a protagonist that was neither the state nor civil society. This actor, a key actor of modern warfare, consisted of mafias, cartels, armed groups, states within the state, and international organisations. Sometimes this third actor could be collapsed with civil society. At other moments it conquered, replaced or confiscated the state. Yet this third actor could lead an independent and relatively stable existence over decades and thus could be said to be neither state nor civil society. But such an existence was not validated by a status or a name. My questions then concerned the narrative challenges encountered by journalism. How do you deal with asymmetrical situations when the very words you use imply symmetry? How do you deal with triadic situations, when the narrative you use is that of a dyad?

My second curiosity concerned the transformation undergone by the discourse on terrorism. Over one century, from a discourse of condemnation (Conrad, Dostoevsky) it turned into a discourse of acquiescence, or (sometimes explicit) admiration (John Adams' opera 'The death of Klinghoffer', Karl Heinz Stockhausen's or Jean Baudrillard's commentaries on 9/11). At the end of the 19th century, terrorism was essentially despicable. At the beginning of the 21st, it was largely condoned. Was it a matter of identity (new sets of actors and victims)? Was it a matter of pity, of heightened sensitivity to the suffering of the human groups which terrorists claimed to represent, in line with Boltanski's description of 'distant suffering'?

Influenced by Boltanski, I tried to describe some of the argumentative topoi through which 'distant terrorism' was addressed in the 21st century, once earlier topoi such as revulsion, horror, accusations of inhumanity had been rejected. (1) The topos of 'anti-anti' did not directly celebrate terrorism, but attacked those who attack it. It often took a legalist form. (2) The topos of 'the noble bandit' took terrorists out of context, and turned them into an object of Western post-adolescent rêverie. (3) The topos of 'performative fear' stated that there is no such empirical reality as terrorism. Terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. Our fears had invented it. (4) Finally the topos of 'tu quoque' dissolved the reality of terrorism by stating that everyone partakes in terrorism, and in particular, the states that combat it, and the individuals who are its ostensible victims. Actual terrorists became lost in the immense crowd of 'real' terrorists. Terrorism had become either condoned or invisible. Yet, terrorism by definition is an exercise in visibility. How could it be at once visible and invisible? And for whom?

P: You are especially distinguished by your co-pioneering work (with Elihu Katz) on 'media events', a concept first articulated in *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Dayan & Katz, 1992) and elaborated in subsequent publications (Price & Dayan, 2008; Dayan, 2002a; Dayan & Katz, 1995). Will you provide a critical review of the concept of 'media events', as it

has been used by you, your colleagues and others who have been influenced by it, situating it in relation to both academic and non-academic debates?

DD: You are asking me to turn into an intellectual historian. Let me try.

By focusing on television's symbolic events, Elihu Katz and myself became part of a tradition that already included Gladys and Kurt Lang, Philip Elliott, Edward Shils, Daniel Boorstin. This tradition grew to include our own work and that of our 'traveling companions', commentators and critics, including Jeff Alexander, James Carey, Nick Couldry, Peter Csigo, Daniel Hallin, Michael Schudson, Paddy Scannell.

Let me first point to how we used the concept, by mentioning Scannell's useful distinction between mere 'happenings', (things that happen and belong in the realm of news) and actual 'events', situations that are endowed with a symbolic dimension. Many happenings become events, but they do so in retrospect. Their symbolic dimension emerges weeks, years or centuries after the fact. But there are situations whose symbolic dimension is simultaneous to the event. The 'event' is enacted and received as symbolic. It is symbolic from the start. When it acquires a certain size and is performed on television, it is what we call 'media event'.

An event that manages to be already symbolic at the moment it occurs does not just happen. Such an event is willed into being. It may already belong in a repertoire of symbolic forms and be described as a 'ritual'. It can also be seen as an expressive venue for those who perform it, and defined as an 'expressive event'. In fact, the same situation can be legitimately addressed in either way. Choosing one or the other description is a matter of research strategy. By stressing the ritual dimension, you tend to narrow your corpus but get a better focus on the symbolic power of gestures. By stressing the expressive dimension, you open up the range of situations considered and their very heterogeneity allows you to grasp key internal differences.

Let me now address non-academic uses of the phrase 'media events'. In academic contexts, it concerns a restricted corpus of willed performances: expressive or ceremonial events. In normal parlance or journalistic use, the notion of media events has a much wider meaning. It includes anything (a happening or event) that is given full media attention. For journalists, the phrase 'media events' can refer to at least three different phenomena: (1) major news events such as televised wars, assassinations, earthquakes; (2) extended social dramas like the Simpson trial or, earlier, the Dreyfus affair; (3) our own 'expressive events', television rituals that typically last a few hours or at most a few days.

Today, the wider vision and the narrower one tend to become less antithetical. This has to do with the banalisation of the media event format through its adoption by everyday journalism. Yet the blurring of a clear distinction between media events and major news events is a reality that I fear. The danger has been forcefully stressed by Dan Hallin and Michael Schudson when they object to allowing a 'public sphere of consensus' altogether swallowing the public sphere of 'legitimate controversy'. I believe it is important to separate the latter from the former, to maintain the specificity of 'journalism as usual'. In other terms, it is important to keep media events distinct from news events, to keep factual statements distinct from gestures, to keep a genre devoted to forceful 'speech acts' distinct from a genre in which 'propositional content' is of the essence.

Last point. For me a 'media event' is a major, gigantic, societal 'speech act'. I would like to insist today on two sorts of events that our 1992 book hardly addressed. First are those events which

Jim Carey characterised 'political rituals of shame, humiliation, excommunication'. Second, and symmetrical to the first, are the many 'rituals of truth and reconciliation' organised around the world. These always involve a dimension of acknowledgment: they confirm that purported massacres, victimisations, atrocities indeed took place. This acknowledgment is a form of regard. It involves an ethics of recognition. Thus, there are 'media events' of regard, respect, recognition, and 'media events' of insult, disrespect, contempt.

P: You have most recently engaged with the concept of 'media events' using the case of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Is 'media event' a universal concept that can be adapted as a sort of 'ideal type' to the analysis of any 'event' and/or context, including those associated with 'non-western' contexts such as the Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa?

DD: My first answer is Yes. Media events can be adopted by any society and adapted to the society's needs. All societies have funeral rites. All societies organise public responses when traumas occur. No society can dispense with some way of managing collective attention, nor can it dispense with a hierarchy of attention. Media events are a major attention instrument. In a way they are the equivalent of a drum roll. But is such a 'drum roll' culturally neutral? When 'media events' are those of 'others' are they 'other' media events? What is it that heightened attention highlights?

On the surface, the media events of 'others' look like our own. Broadcasting the run around the Kaaba in Mecca does not immensely differ from broadcasting the pope's Urbi et Orbi blessing in Saint Peter's square. Both religious traditions use the rhetorics of media events to invite distant audiences to join in a celebration. Take another example: the Olympics. The stadium may be larger in Greece, or smaller in Australia, or look like a bird's nest in China, but all stadia are meant to be comparable. Olympic cities around the world have been turned into the same 'unplace'. Does this mean that media events are delivered, ready-to-perform, with a few blank spaces indicating "Please add your name, address, zip-code, and some folklore"?

In fact, media events profoundly differ in terms of whether or not they are democratic. Look at the uneven distribution of two subgenres. 'Coronations' are to be found everywhere, because all societies have (or fabricate) traditions. 'Contests' tend to remain attached to pluralist societies. They may be found elsewhere, but when the context is not democratic, they turn into pseudo-contests, rigged contests, contests in which the actors fake their commitment to a rational-legal order.

Yet the question you asked is not about ideological context. It is about civilisational difference. Where should we look for an answer? First, in our own past. Occurrences of martyrdom are displayed in countless paintings, churches and museums. Yet the willing and deliberate embracing of death, is rarely, if ever, the occasion of western media events. Similarly, punitive events, events meant to frighten and intimidate, have been providing highly visible ceremonies for centuries. Yet, they have now disappeared from the range of spectacular practices. Even the western countries where capital punishment still exists are reluctant to bring hanging, injection or guillotine to collective attention. However, spectacular punishment is still alive in other parts of the world and occasionally emerges in full view. The beheading of Daniel Pearl is meant as a symbolic gesture intended for collective viewing. Videos of suicide-bombers are conceived in view of TV broadcasts, and also meant to be sold as videos on market places.

Thus I could suggest at least one difference between western media events and 'other' events. It has to do with the visibility or invisibility of death. No corpses are to be seen on 9/11. To

explain such a difference, perhaps we should turn to Foucault's distinction between societies where one practices 'spectacular punishment' and the 'disciplinary' societies of our 19th and 20th centuries.

P: At the *International Communication Association* conference in Chicago, USA (May 21-25, 2009), you highlighted the difference between 'visibility' and 'visuality', ideas that seem to feature in your current work. Will you explain the distinction between them, and the importance of this distinction?

DD: Let me offer an example. Moments of 'shame' as described by German philosopher Claudia Welz, are moments in which we feel the need of erasing our body. The person who experiences shame wishes to disappear altogether, to be swallowed by the ground. In shame, subjects are at war against their own visibility.

Now take the question of shame from another angle. Can one photograph shame? One can certainly capture gestures through which a subject responds to shame such as hiding, covering genitals or breasts, lowering or averting the gaze. But is this shame or merely the gestural behavior associated to shame? The experience of shame, the slow invasion of your body by an irresistible emotion is certainly accessible through narrative. Is it accessible to photography? This question is no longer one of visibility, but of visuality. With visibility what was involved was a suffering subject, an ethical subject, a strategic subject. What was involved was an interaction between this subject and other subjects. Visibility involved a relation. With visuality, what is at stake is the specificity of a 'substance of expression'.

Visibility involves a pragmatic dimension. It belongs in the realm of social relations. It concerns psychology, sociology, ethics. Visuality rather asks semiotic, or rather 'mediologic' questions. For example: Is there an iconic dimension to the writing of mathematical equations? Or (as in Saussure's suppressed writings) is there a 'paragrammatic' dimension to Latin poetry?

All this suggests that visibility does not necessarily require visuality. We do not need the mediation of images to make ourselves visible to each other, to call on each other's attention. Children do it simply by crying. Yet visuality is an instrument for visibility. Television clearly associates the two. It performs visibility through visuality. Take another example: when we look at distant historical periods, what we are left with is their visuality. We are left with Versailles, and not with the spectacle-state of the sun-king. Visibility as interaction has disappeared. We are left with its trappings. Visuality allows us to imagine former visibilities.

P: Your work has significantly been focused on the production and reception of audiovisual media (television and film). How do contemporary media developments such as globalisation, mediation and digitalisation influence the study of these media? As many contemporary media users use a broad repertoire of media, how useful is it to isolate distinct media for analysis?

DD: Let me start with the second part of your question. The present situation often represents a nightmare for semioticians used to weighing the influence of medium on content. What is the point of studying in exhaustive detail the semiotics of a given photograph of an event when the same event reaches you at the same time on television, on internet, by phone and in print? We have reached a situation in which the multiplicity of mediations dwarfs the specifics of each mediation. Are we to treat mediated situations as if they were the referent? Perhaps we could rather, at this stage, change the level of analysis. How then could we address the juxtaposition

and reciprocal interaction of different sign-systems? Evaluate their effects on cognition?

Barthes stated that all semiotic systems were complex systems utilising language as one of their components. But Barthes was pointing to simpler situations (language plus image, or language plus fashion). And he was dealing with situations in which different subsystems were already combined. What happens when such systems exist independently, and meet in our heads?

Now the first part of your question. In a recent paper ('Showing and Sharing', *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Sciences*, 2009) I referred to the work of historian Jeffrey Ravel on theatre-going publics in 18th century France. Ravel focuses on those spectators (usually young men) who instead of being seated, stand crowded together next to the stage in the theatre's cheapest area, called the 'pit' or 'parterre'. Parterre spectators allowed themselves to talk back to the actors on stage, to denounce their performances, to deride their acting style and delivery. Parterre members went so far as to tell the king's appointed actors to forget about the king and conform to their own wishes. They were literally stealing the performance both from its appointed actors and from its appointing patron. Parterre members were not merely heckling. Parterres represented a constant threat to officially sanctioned performances. They were striking at the royal 'public sphere of representation'.

Certain blogs or websites seem to adopt a similar role today, when displaying and discussing already displayed images. They talk back to major centralised media, to the media of 'centre and periphery', to the media of the imagination of the collective. Their performances share at least two dimensions with those of parterres. First, like parterre members, the bloggers disrupt a certain order of representation (the role of central television in the imagination of the collective) by daring to challenge the monopoly of established official displays. Second, they make clear that members of the public can be performers as well, that members of the public can be the initiators of alternative access to current events. What characterises the new public sphere is this proliferation of discordant images, and finally a contrary situation in which images speak to other images of the same events.

P: Will you meditate on the relationship between your personal and professional thinking and/or life? Do you draw distinctions between them?

DD: I have no doubt that my personal life, my personal interests and preferences influence, if not the content of my research, at least its agenda. For example, I was a kid in Casablanca when the king of Morocco who had been deposed by the French colonial power came back from exile. This was a moment of collective fervor. It was part of a larger movement throughout the world, colonisation was over and new countries were entering the independence process. In Morocco, large bedouin tents were erected for street celebrations, people were coming to you with improvised gifts, some swore that the profile of the king was neatly visible on the moon. I shared the popular enthusiasm, enjoyed this effervescence. I also felt that this could be the end of the world I had known, a prelude to the dispersion of my family, a prelude to exile. All this probably influenced my work on media events and on diasporas.

My personal background entailed other consequences. I speak and read many languages which has allowed me to teach or lecture in numerous countries. Yet, in two of the languages I speak (Hebrew and Arabic) I am in fact illiterate. This experience of illiteracy became a professional skill. While I master the very formal rhetorics of French oratory, I can also function like an illiterate person, rely on proverbs (the poor man's encyclopedia), and improvise lectures like a street-story teller.

But my professional life also influences my personal life. Professional expertise does not disappear when I walk in the street. I keep seeing things with the gaze of an anthropologist, sociologist, or semiotician. My gaze is trained, and it remains trained. Thus I keep noticing little, banal, ordinary monstrosities. I am astonished at what I see. I ask (in Brechtian manner) "how could this, which I see, be at all possible?" This astonishment is often at the basis of both personal, political, choices and research questions.

P: I have been most significantly impressed by the clear emphasis you give to the ethical notion of 'commitment' – theoretically, professionally and personally. Theoretically, your work has been influenced by critical theory (Dayan, 2002, pp. 80-81). Professionally, you have referred to yourself as a "witness [with] a toolbox" (Dayan, 2002, p. 82). You have also reflected on personal risks you have taken in encountering and confronting racism. In your view, what is the meaning of 'commitment' and how does it relate to the idea of responsibility?

DD: This is a beautiful question, and a difficult one to answer because of all the nuances I would like to introduce. All my answers converge around one notion: the ethics of 'seeing'. But let me follow some of the directions you suggest.

Theoretically, I am attached to critical theory, but in a critical manner. Barthes taught me something he learned from his own teacher, Brecht: to be astonished at realities that might seem banal, common-place and not particularly interesting, at realities that are invisible because they are the rule. Barthes turned Brecht's astonishment into a method (his *Mythologies* are Brechtian songs turned into essays). I inherited a frame of mind that comes from the Frankfurt School. Yet, in regard to this frame of mind, I often practiced what Foucault calls 'Paresia', the virtue of (respectfully) disagreeing with your teachers. Thus I admired Sartre, but not his admiration for Mao. I admired Foucault, but not his celebration of Khomeini. I admired Deleuze as an extraordinary literary critic, but remained puzzled by his 'anti-oedipus' or his celebrations of 'schizophreny'. I practiced Paresia by applying the approach of my teachers to subjects they did not want to see, by pointing out that sometimes those who teach us new visions tend to restrict their own. I practiced Paresia by insisting that I saw what I saw² whether or not it matched official accounts. In some cases this consisted of pointing out that the images and stories offered on major news channels contradicted each other, and that either images or narratives had to be inaccurate. In some cases it amounted to saying that the emperor was naked, or that there was no emperor at all. Of course this insistence was not always welcome.

Professionally, I see my role as that of an 'expert'. I do know something about media. Being raised in the French Sartrean tradition, I know the difference between intellectuals and experts. Intellectuals are exalted figures who must take the risk of meddling with what is 'none of their business'. Experts are lesser, petty figures. They speak of the little domain they know. Experts are meant to be the experts of something, but almost always end up being the experts of someone. An expert is an argument standing on two legs, a resource. I am skeptical of this dichotomy in which the intellectual is a superman and the expert a mere instrument. I believe that intellectuals should equip themselves with some expertise. Sartre did exactly what he advocated, often with catastrophic results, embracing causes he knew nothing about, assuming that generous impulses could never be wrong, haughtily dismissing embarrassing 'détails'. I also believe that experts should be intellectuals, enter public debates, take the risk of being committed to what their toolbox (knowledge, disciplinary training, education, culture) enables them to see. This is often what I have tried to do in Paris, by taking part in debates on and about television or by giving interviews to newspapers.

Personally, I happen to be, among other things, a Jew. Since, for historical reasons, I have been directly exposed to anti-Semitism this aspect of my identity tends to supersede many others. Yet I have had to decide for myself what being a Jew means. It first means that I am not to be gagged and blindfolded by community loyalties. It also means that I am not to find myself floating above the world like some abstract, universal conscience. I do not believe in universalism as a status. I believe in universalisation as a process through which one confers a universal dimension to an always situated position. In other terms, I am neither an 'organic' Jewish intellectual nor a current version of baron Munchhausen, lifting himself in the airs by pulling on his boot straps. This brings me close to what Walzer calls a 'connected intellectual'.

As a connected intellectual, I am particularly sensitive to certain issues. I often leave the ranks of the 'advocacy' publics spectating the world from a noble (and safe) distance, and join those 'orphan' publics that must fend for themselves. Should I feel guilty for fighting the type of racism that is directed against me? I believe that reacting to situations that I experience first hand is at least as important as adding a signature at the bottom of a manifesto.

My particular form of commitment has to do with my training. Years ago, Michael Schudson wrote a beautiful paper in which he discussed a cognitive experiment. Spectators were shown trout and told these trout were hamburgers. When later asked what it was that they saw, most of them said they saw hamburgers. When I have seen a trout, my professional training gives me the confidence to insist it was a trout. This exercise requires a certain aplomb. I admire the confidence that characterised people like Hannah Arendt, or Raymond Aron. Both walked through the 20th century with their eyes wide open. Both were trained as philosophers, and their training allowed them to see what others could or would not see. But their major virtue was courage. The courage of speaking out what they saw.

At my modest level, I often see things – often small things, details – that others (my friends, my colleagues, my students) overlook. My training allows me to notice those details. My commitment consists in speaking out what I saw.¹ In many cases, remaining silent would be either frivolous or cowardly; it would be akin to crossing the street when someone is beaten-up in order not to be caught in a fight. I am not often courageous, but, when I am, my commitment consists in pointing to those details that completely change our perception of certain situations. Having my eyes open entails a responsibility. I am a witness (a witness with a toolbox).²

P: Tell us about your life as a PhD student, and your PhD. As an established academic, what advice would you give to graduate researchers working in media and communications, regarding the construction of personal or professional worldviews in general, as well as specific professional choices and practices (e.g. publications, conferences, teaching)? How has the academic profession developed since you were a graduate student, how does the academic profession compare to that in the past, and what are the implications of these ideas for new generation graduate students?

DD: I have described my life as a student by answering your first question. My PhD was an amplification of my work on 'suture' in classical cinema and dealt with the aesthetics of John Ford. It was much more ambitious than my essay on the 'tutor code' (which was an MA paper at Stanford). I relied much less on Lacan or Althusser, and much more on Benveniste, Derrida, Austin. My dissertation became a book in French. It was taught at the Sorbonne and used as an example of the 'semio-pragmatic' approach, but it never enjoyed the polemic success of the 'suture' paper.

Concerning careers, there are many reasons why I should not serve as a model. First of all, I never exclusively focused on being an academic. I wrote short stories and scripts, worked as a translator, spent one year as a director at Théâtre de la Cité Universitaire in Paris. Also I never conducted my career in any systematic way. I accepted the first job offer I got, because it emanated from a scholar I admired: Elihu Katz. My role model was (once more) Roland Barthes who did not consider himself a teacher, but as a writer or an agent of intellectual subversion. Barthes had no publishing strategy. He gave texts to whoever asked, including obscure journals. Despite some (lucky) exceptions, I have tended to do the same. This attitude involves an enormous amount of aplomb (or fatalism). It is one that today's students can hardly afford. Except in France or Italy where a system of castes (Bourdieu's 'noblesse d'école') still dictate careers, today's scholars must act as 'scholarly entrepreneurs'. They cannot dispense with strategy.

The only advice I am able to give concerns two virtues. The first is audacity: moments of luck are often disguised as challenges. The second is honesty: acknowledging the failure of a research or the inadequacy of a hypothesis can often become an original contribution.

P: What are you working on at the moment?

DD: My current work is concerned with the role of media in managing – granting, denying or imposing – *collective attention*. It stresses the role of the media but also analyses the attention-seeking strategies developed by social actors. I look at various modalities of *visibility* in contemporary societies, such as 'appearing' (Arendt, Goldfarb, Goffman), 'regarding' (Honneth), 'surveilling' (Foucault, Meyrowitz), 'witnessing' (Peters, Dulong, Pinchevsky & Frosh), 'contemplating' (Bill Viola and video art), 'spectating' (my own work on 'enunciative' shifts in American cinema, from John Ford to Jonathan Demme).

Practices of *showing* are of particular interest to me because they combine both attention and visibility. Under the general rubric of 'monstration', I am trying to re-explore such 'genres' as video art, classical cinema, television news and reality TV. I often rely on my earlier work (ethnographic explorations of situations of conflict; controversy or terrorism; theoretical essays on gazing; and film). I also bring a new emphasis on journalistic practices and the problem of truth. A reflection on 'performatives' and 'deictics' finally allows me to revisit paradigmatic media approaches and to read them against the grain.

ENDNOTES

1. P: As a professional image expert, Dayan was one of the witnesses who testified in the defamation case opposing the director of a French media watchdog agency Media-Ratings to French public television broadcaster France-2 and its prominent Middle East correspondent Charles Enderlin. In 2000, France-2 had broadcast 55 seconds of footage showing a 12 year old Palestinian boy, Mohammed Al-Dura, and his father, Jalal, described as caught in crossfire between the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The images showed the boy crying and clinging to his father, the father gesturing for the shooting to stop, and then the still body of the boy slumped in his father's lap. Accompanying these images, Enderlin's reporting asserted that the boy had been killed by the IDF, and when the France-2 broadcast was replayed by international television networks, the boy became a symbol of Israeli violence against Palestinians:

Osama bin Laden referred to al-Dura in a post-9/11 video; the killers of Wall Street

Journal reporter Daniel Pearl placed a picture of him in their beheading video; streets, squares and academies have been named after al-Dura. He became a poster child for the [second] intifada.

(Gross, in Gur, 2008)

When the watchdog agency was sued, in 2004, for claiming that France-2 had staged the above footage and deliberately deceived the public, Dayan testified, in 2006, that, while the footage may not have been staged, the images which France-2 broadcast were inconclusive and did not provide visual evidence supporting the statements Enderlin had made in the accompanying report (Augean Stables, 2006). Dayan thus rejected France-Television's narrative. He also questioned the transformation of a controversy about specific images into a debate about the credibility of a journalist (C. Enderlin) who did not attend the event and actually never claimed to have done so. See:

Stables, A. (2006) Court's Decision on Karsenty. <http://www.theaugeanstables.com/al-durah-affair-the-dossier/courts-decision-in-the-karsenty-case/>. (Accessed 10 November 2009), and

Gur, H.R. (2008) French Court Overturns al-Dura Libel Judgment. The Jerusalem Post. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1211288137213&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFullArticle> first published 21 May 2008, updated 24 May 2008.

2. DD: Here is an example of what I would 'see' and point to. The following lines are an excerpt from a testimony written by Michael Posner, current US Assistant Secretary of State in preparation for the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. In this case, it is of course Posner that points:

... In the past 5 years, the Council and its predecessor organization, the UN Commission on Human Rights, have commissioned more than 20 reports on Israel, far more than any other country in the world. Since the Council was created in 2006, it has passed 20 resolutions on Israel, more than the number of resolutions for all 191 other UN members combined. The Council also has held 11 special sessions, 5 focused exclusively on Israel ...

This is an abstract, arid statement; full of figures, numbers etc.. Yet, to anyone who has read about agenda-setting, this apparently dry list of figures represents an almost freakish concentration of visibility. It means that the council is in fact clogged, prevented from devoting adequate time to other situations around the world, many of which deserve at least equal attention and some, much more. How can one explain this amount of attention? Is the gravity of conflicts judged on the basis of some objective criteria (for example, the numbers of human beings wounded or killed)? In this case, obviously not. Is it rather a matter of the identity of the nations involved? It seems so. But what does it entail?

Back to astonishment. Of course, my astonishment is not a proposal for censorship, though it will be, no doubt, accused of being one. Stigmatizing all violations of human rights, including those discussed at the United Nations, is necessary and legitimate. Yet my astonishment remains. It asks a simple question: Why? What makes this disproportion not only possible, but banal?

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