

Review by Fackson Banda

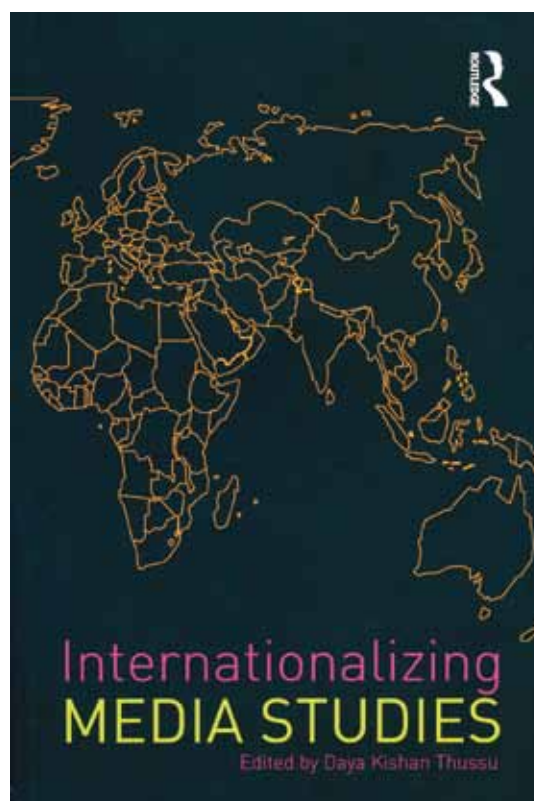
Debates about the structures and processes of globalisation – along with those of localisation – have important implications for the discipline (or is it still a *field*?) of media studies. The first implication, framed as a counter-hegemonic resistance to what some might consider to be the totalising tradition of Western media studies scholarship, is that we can no longer continue to look only to Western centres of academe for intellectual edification. The need for a critical deconstruction of Euro-American intellectual centrism, and the need for recognising and thus reconstructing a truly transcultural onto-epistemological agenda for media studies, has become more urgent than ever before.

Secondly, the rise of China as an economic and cultural unit of analysis in media studies – regardless of all the complexities and uncertainties engendered by China's rise as a soft power – calls for a different set of analytical tools to understand the interpenetration of China with almost all parts of the developed and the developing world. China's unfolding global economic – and political – domi-

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nance is particularly implicated in the economics, politics and cultures of the developing countries. This makes it all the more scholastically urgent to comprehend the structures and processes through which China is asserting its nationalistic and internationalist agendas – both of which are a reflection of China's ideological engagement with the world (Banda forthcoming).

Understood against the background of the changing faces of globalisation, *Internationalizing Media Studies*, a book edited by Daya Kishan Thussu, assumes both a scholarly and political resonance. Scholarly, because it brings to the fore the intellectual realignment that must necessarily take place in order for us to better and more comprehensively understand the influences of the cataclysmic changes that the world is undergoing, not least the apparent dismantling of a unipolar world in which Western knowledge sources had come to dominate our intellectual milieu. It also invites us to think critically about the very discourse of *internationalising* media studies as functioning, to use Tarik Sabry's characterisation in this volume, "through a 'double-critique' structure... one which is mechanized through a dual intellectual exercise that is able to oscillate between de-Westernisation and de-de-Westernisation, authentication and de-authentication." Thankfully, however, Sabry is quick to point out that "the discourse of de-Westernisation, as it stands, is still in its infancy, at a stage where



more intellectual effort is channelled towards authentication than to questioning and subverting of the claims that come with such a process" (201).

The political resonance of the book lies in the fact that it is published in the immediate aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis, engendering a rupture in the neo-liberal orthodoxies that have shaped the practice of economics and scholarship both in the developed and developing world. Although it is too early – and possibly too presumptuous – to agree with Yuezhi Zhao who suggests that "neo-liberalism has suffered a fatal blow" (188), it is evident that the seemingly unassailable (neo)-liberal, Western shackles of much media studies scholarship have come loose. It means that we must tie them back together by using different – or at least more internationalised – theoretical moorings. In and of itself, this should engender a greater sense of intellectual pluralism and empowerment.

The book sets about its project of internationalising media studies through four parts. Part 1 deals with internationalising media research. The analysis is underpinned by several theoretical treatises of globalisation and their implications for media internationalisation, and therefore for internationalising media studies. The debates are by no means new – they principally focus on the enmeshing of global and local influences and how the resultant hybrid identities can inform the analytical trajectories of media studies. The authors make a strong case for the need to understand the empirical dimensions of a hybrid media studies tradition for, as Tristan Mattelart in this volume argues, "These new approaches apprehend moreover the cultural consequences of globalisation in speculative terms. The sophistication of their theoretical analyses contrasts strongly with the poverty of their empirical analyses" (59).

Part 2 is thus appropriately about broadening the field of media studies. Given the now – I believe – trite conclusion that media is a cultural product, it makes sense to study it in relation to the totality of the extant cultural systems. As such, many of us have taken it for granted that our analyses of media are informed by something of the "circuit of culture" (DuGay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus 1997). The circuit-of-culture analytical framework highlights how the different but interconnected cultural moments of production, identity, representation, consumption and regulation articulate in the lived experiences of the people.

Therefore, it is *expected* that the thematic con-

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tent of media studies would include, as this book does, media law and policy (Chapter 6), globalisation and terror (Chapter 7), comparative media law and policy (Chapter 8), and the labouring of international communication (Chapter 9) (cf. Zelizer and Allan 2002). These topics do not necessarily point to a *broadening* of the field, as they are not new to media studies, at least as some of us have taught this in developing-country universities. It is simply *affirming* that such themes are already an integral part of the subject matter of the field of media studies.

Part 3 of the book is a presentation of regional perspectives on internationalisation. I find these perspectives fascinating, largely because they represent what this book is really about. If we are to internationalise media studies, then we must internationalise it *from* the peripheries *to* the centres. It is a moot point that efforts at internationalisation have tended to confirm the dominance of Western centres of scholarship across a variety of disciplines. All the regional perspectives – ranging from Asian, Arab, Russian, to Latin American – are united in lamenting the Euro-American moorings of media studies and in celebrating efforts at making intellectual inroads into the international media studies arena. I am not sure, though, why the chapter on reconceptualising media studies in Africa is placed in Part 4 dealing with what appear to be more country-specific examples of how media syllabi are becoming more and more internationalised. But this does not detract from the very significant contributions this chapter makes towards elucidating how African media studies scholarship is internationalising – from one African country to another, for example. The movement of academics from several African countries to South Africa, for example, is helping to reconfigure the contours of media studies in South Africa, where the field has largely been Euro-American.

Part 4 deals with the challenges of internationalising media syllabi. There are interesting observations here. For example, John Downing seems to throw cold water on the internationalisation project when he notes that the US exhibits a tendency towards "insularity rather than internationalism" (274). There is need for cross-cultural or trans-cultural dialogue, among media studies scholars, if the project of internationalising media studies is to succeed.

In conclusion, the importance of this book lies in the fact that it has harnessed many of the old debates – and some new ones – to explicate a clear case for seeing media studies as truly international in scope and in subject. By setting out some compelling regional empirical case studies, and by buttressing these with critical, postcolonial reasoning, it is clear that the field of media studies can no longer be territorially balkanised. However, it is not clear what the exact direction and process of internationalising media studies will be, but that is beyond the scope of a 320-page book!

References

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