this is where the war ends, in a separate peace, the movie and record companies in their walled city, and all about them the unfenced commons.

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The media were American: US mass media in decline, by Jeremy Tunstall, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, 465 + xiv pp., £31.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-19-518147-0

When I took Bill Clinton's *My Life* on a long flight as reading material some years ago, I was aware that there were two ways you could approach the book. You could start at page one, find out about Bill's childhood, who he dated before he and Hilary got together, his years on the National Governors' Association, and then his years as US President. You could go from page 1 to page 800, or you could start by going to the index, looking up a particular item of interest, say 'Monica Lewinsky', and read from there.

While Jeremy Tunstall offers nothing as salacious with *The Media Were American*, it is a book that can be approached in two comparable ways. You can follow Tunstall's encyclopedic and expansive analysis of media worldwide, with chapters such as 'India's Multi-Ring Media Circus' and 'China: Capitalist–Communist Media Stir-Fry', and his analyses of phenomena as diverse as the role played by radio in genocide in Rwanda, how cultural nationalism drives French media policy, or the 'singing revolution' through which the Baltic states were to leave what was once the Soviet Union. Or you can get the essentials of the argument in Chapter One, and read the main claims that are reinforced in the Conclusion.

Put at its simplest, Tunstall's argument in *The Media Were American* is that the global influence of US media in the world peaked in the mid-twentieth century, and is now in decline. In making this argument, Tunstall rejects many of the claims made about cultural globalization, instead proposing that it is still the case that:

> Most people around the world prefer to be entertained by people who look the same, talk the same, joke the same, behave the same, play the same games, and have the same beliefs (and worldview) as themselves. They also overwhelmingly prefer their own national news, politics, weather, and football and other sports. (p.xiv)

The argument is not that US media has become insignificant, or that media content is not globally circulated. In fact, Tunstall estimates that the non-US world audience devotes roughly 10% of its media consumption time to US media product. The point is that this has to be read alongside national media content accounting for about 80% of media consumption, with the balance constituting content from other comparable geo-linguistic regions (e.g. Hong Kong film and TV in the Chinese diaspora, Spanish- and Portuguese-language content in Latin America, UK media in English-speaking countries, such as Australia). He proposes that there are five levels of media: the global; the regional (Europe, East Asia, the Arab world, etc.); the national; the national regional (regions within nations); and the local.

Of these five levels, however, the national remains the largest. In fact, 'remains' may not be the right world, as the claim is that in the largest countries, media is becoming more national, even as access to Internet and satellite technology grows. Tunstall points out that 11 nations account for 60% of the world's population, and of these, two are largely self-sufficient (China and India), two are big exporters (United States and Japan), and three are both significant exporters and importers of media (Russia, Brazil and Mexico). Four of these countries are large net media content importers (Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria), but putting Nigeria in this category reminds us that Nigerian cinema ('Nollywood') is one of the fastest growing film industries in the world.

It is worth noting who is not in this list. No European countries are there, for instance. Much of the debate about US dominance of global media has been driven from within the Euro-American corridor; Tunstall encourages the reader to think about these questions globally. His argument is that media globalization and cultural nationalism have an interesting symbiotic relationship:

> The more global the economy becomes, the more national politicians will continue to use their cultural and educational powers … These national politicians will still want the national media to defend, to reflect, and to promote the nation-state, the national culture, the national history. (p.451)

Media globalization is by no means synonymous with cultural imperialism and the homogenization of cultures. In fact, it is a recurring reminder of the case for attending to the national culture and the role played by media institutions within it.

It is interesting that it is Jeremy Tunstall making this argument, as he produced one of the seminal works of global media studies, *The Media are American*, in the 1970s. There the argument was that the national content of media was not the salient factor; it was the extent to which an 'American model' of media had come to be the *de facto* global standard that others emulated. As Tunstall observes, 'the United States in the mid-twentieth century had a near monopoly of formats for cheap-to-produce popular television programming – such as game shows and soap operas' (p.11). The US was also the dominant player in international news, Hollywood films dominated world screens, and American leadership in related industries, such as advertising, could not be doubted.

So what happened? One point was that other countries learned how to emulate the formats first developed in the US, and then to get better at them. Brazil, Mexico and Australia are international leaders in serial dramas, while big players in game shows and reality TV are as likely to be from Britain or the Netherlands as the United States. Television sales in China in the late 1970s may have been driven by the trial of Madame Mao and the Gang of Four, but Chinese TV audiences can now watch local variants of *Sex and the City*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and *Survivor* alongside patriotic re-enactments of the Long March and the Anti-Japanese War. Learning from America has, paradoxically, proved to be an effective means of safeguarding national media culture.

The other problem, for Tunstall, was a loss of credibility for the United States in world affairs that has also impacted upon its media. TV viewers in the Arab world may have flocked to get satellite dishes in the early 1990s to watch CNN's coverage of the First Gulf War in 1991, but by the 2000s they would be watching pan-Arab satellite channels, such as Al-Jazeera, not only because of greater cultural familiarity,

but also because of the damaging loss of credibility for US media in so readily accepting the rationales of the Bush Administration for sending troops back to Iraq. More people in the US are now watching the BBC News and reading the *Guardian* online for similar reasons. Such trends are reversible, and the big US media giants certainly have the resources to address them, but this would involve redressing old habits of cultural insularity that, paradoxically, globalization has perhaps allowed to intensify.

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Counterknowledge: how we surrendered to conspiracy theories, quack medicine, bogus science and fake history, by Damian Thompson, London, Atlantic Books, 2008, x + 196 pp., ISBN 978 1 84354 6764

Thompson defines the subject matter of this book, 'counterknowledge', as

> misinformation packaged to look like fact-packaged so effectively, indeed, that the twenty-first century is facing a pandemic of credulous thinking. Ideas that, in their original raw form, flourished only on the fringes of society are now being taken seriously by educated people in the West, and are circulating with bewildering speed in the developing world. (pp.1–2)

Are these completely new phenomena?

It is useful to recall a somewhat similar book (Burnham, 1987), *How Superstition Won and Science Lost: Popularizing Science and Health in the United States*. Burnham's central argument was that, by the 1980s, there was 'cognitive dissonance' between scientific knowledge *per se* (as in the history of science) and popularised science, involving people's understandings of science and health. In earlier times (the nineteenth and early twentieth century), scientists had won numerous battles against superstition and mysticism: but by the late twentieth century a new cultural conflict had arisen in which 'a functional equivalent to superstition' had taken hold. This process occurred not only in the natural sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry and biology), but also in health, medicine and psychology.

Burnham argued that each scientific discipline went through the following four historical stages: diffusion, when scientific knowledge was not subject to condensation and simplification; popularisation, a time when scientists shared their vision of applying the scientific method; dilution, when popularisation passed from the scientists to 'science educators' and journalists; and finally trivialisation, when scientific knowledge became 'facts' or snippets of news, with an emphasis on authority figures.

By the 1970s, with the media's relentless emphasis on entertainment, sensationalism thrived: 'Reformers, especially environmental reformers, pointed out that they could not do any good unless they attracted media attention … which they did by playing up emotional content' (Burnham, 1987, p.235). Sensational emotionalism became standard fare for journalists, particularly those on TV.