

Book Reviews

***Imagining the Global: Transnational Media and Popular Culture Beyond East and West* by Fabienne Darling-Wolf. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018, vii + 192 pp, ISBN 978-0-472-12079-6 (e-book).**

While globalization allows interconnectedness, this book argues that “the global” itself is an imagination, either set by producers of cultural media products or created by consumers themselves. While discussions on globalization are usually centered on the relationship between the West and the Rest, the author offers a transnational approach on the triadization of the United States, France, and Japan – three most powerful global cultural producers – and the dynamics of cultural texts connecting them.

The book is divided based on case studies of globalized cultural products and their global/national/local negotiation. The first chapter, “Un-American Idols: How the global/national/local intersect,” talks about reality tv programs that allow national/local broadcasting media organizations to put some local twists to their episodes while maintaining their respective global format. This hybridity is further discussed through the example of Star Academy, a singing competition aired from 2001-2008 in France. Through stage and narrative productions, Star Academy tried to showcase the influence of French culture in “the global” to its domestic audience. The show was later selectively marketed to and adopted by about fifty cultural environments, mostly francophone, but this chapter does not include the presentation/adaptation of Star Academy in any of those environments.

The second one is about how international news has been used to create an overall discourse that “our country is better than them,” hence being titled “Holier-than-

thou: Representing the “Other” and vindicating ourselves in international news.” The focus is on three events, the Hurricane Katrina in the U.S., the 2005 civil unrest in France, and the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, as covered by The New York Times, Le Monde, and Yomiuri Shimbun. These three media organizations, writes Darling-Wolf, zoom in their respective domestic event to stories on individual stories or community initiatives, but portray the other two’s as their national system failure, which the press seemed to fail to identify “at home.”

In the third chapter, “Talking about *non-no*: (Re)fashioning race and gender in global magazines,” Darling-Wolf turns to Japan to investigate the negotiation between global dynamics of race and gender with a local context through the hybridity in Japanese fashion magazine targeting female readers, *non-no*. Through interviews with female Japanese, this chapter sought to understand why foreign faces, especially white female models, seem to fit into the hybrid mix of Japanese popular culture. It is also noted that the *non-no* is less fluid compared to *Men’s non-no* regarding the construction of race and gender, as the latter often use the imagery of androgynous models (including J-Pop idols) on its spreads. This portrayal of gender and race, says the author, was a part of the process of imagining “the global” in Japan and the possible consequences of such imagination on the female readers’ daily lives, *e.g.*, fashion choices or beauty standard.

Next, the book applies the transnational/translocal approach in examining hip-hop as global phenomenon as well as topic of scholarly debates. In the “Disjuncture and difference from the *banlieue* to the *ganba*: Embracing hip-hop as a global genre” chapter, hip-hop is understood as a cultural movement representing subaltern voices. The scholarly debates tend to only see hip-hop as African/Latin American, which this

book perceives problematic in discussions to comprehend hip-hop as a global genre, knowing that it has strong bases in France (in the form of French rap) and Japan (known as J-hip-hop). Through studying the lyrics of French rap songs and conversing with J-hip-hoppers, this chapter provides an insight into the non-U.S. hip-hoppers' imagination of being part of the global movement while bringing the local concerns into the mix. How the J-hip-hop portrays the global-local mix through its lyrics is yet to know.

The last cultural product discussed here is Japanese anime (animation) and manga (comic books), in the chapter titled as "What West is it? Anime and manga according to *Candy* and *Goldorak*." Anime and manga are frequently positioned as the representatives of Japanese culture, despite some of the text are not about Japan. For instance, *Candy* (original title: *Candy Candy*) is about an American girl, while *Goldorak* (original title: UFO Robot Grendizer) is about robots, which indicate how West is imagined and likely romanticized in mangas and animes. It is also identified that manga was not initially placed as part of the U.S. consumers' imagination of the global – owing it to the segmented marketing. This is different from French consumers who regularly watched animes on television growing up and attributed their cultural identity to these shows, *i.e.*, Goldorak generation is often used to refer to those grew up in late 1970s and early 1980s.

Later in this book, Darling-Wolf proposes a new term: glocamalgamation (most likely a combination of globalization, localization, and amalgamation) to understand the imagination of the global in different localities by blurring the boundaries of cultural representation. Whether the term will take off or not, it cannot be denied that this book has offered a rather fresh academical approach, *i.e.*, transnational/translocal, to discussions about cultural production and consumption

and their global/national/local intersection, despite how it may also complicate the imagination of "the global", "U.S. as the West", and challenge the long-standing binary of "the West and the East/rest."

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