

## The Global Flow of Visual Culture 9

Images are not only produced and consumed, they circulate within cultures and across cultural boundaries. The media landscape of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century has changed with the rise of a worldwide communications infrastructure and multinational corporations, the decline of the central power of the sovereign nation-state, and the resulting emergence of new forms of local and global cultures. Three central terms of these changes are *globalization*, *convergence*, and *synergy*. With the wiring of the world and the rapid development of wireless communications, and the rise of multinational corporations, many critics feel there is a collapse of geographic distance and national boundaries—hence a globalization of economics, technology, and culture. The convergence of previously discrete media industries and technologies allows media to be integrated into the lives of people across geographic boundaries more smoothly and effortlessly. For example, the computer has moved in three decades from being a text-only instrument to integrating sound, image, and text, and will soon incorporate television and an increased mobility of images. The ability to transmit text, image, and sound in one medium and through one network facilitates global interconnectivity. The growth of media conglomerates in the 1990s, with ownership across the realms of print media, television, radio, the music industry, and consumer products, amplifies the power of the corporation to influence cultural practices on a global scale. This creates a synergy in which programming, production, and distribution are all held together by single corporate entities that market globally. This set of conditions has prompted seemingly contradictory tendencies toward globally shared visual cultures, on the one hand, and the rise of an abundance of local discourses and hybrid media

cultures that defy categorization according to geography and nationality, on the other.

In previous chapters, we discussed the ways that images can move from one social realm, such as art, advertising, or law, to another, and acquire new meaning in that context. We emphasized how images are composed, and how viewers see them. In this chapter, we will look at the ways that media images, texts, and programs circulate in and across cultures. Our emphasis will thus shift from the individual's experience of looking and the qualities of images themselves, to the issue of how images circulate in an era of globalization—away from the materiality of the image and toward the more abstract terms of information and transmission. This chapter addresses how looking practices develop and are shared across places and among disparate peoples. It considers the politics of the global movement of images, in particular in the development of television and the *Internet*, with a focus on the place of looking and visual media in this world picture.

In addition, there is a limit to what we can say about specific viewers in the global context. In Western societies, there has been a large quantity of research conducted about looking practices and the meanings produced on the basis of particular sorts of images. Less research of this sort has been conducted on subjective experience and audience reception in regions outside the industrialized West. Discussions of the global often address how images are transmitted, but not how they are received and used. This dynamic will change as more research is done on the specific concerns and responses of non-Western audiences. For the moment, most research about global media and imaging practices tends to focus on populations and countries, not communities and localities.

The media have been important forces in the changing status of the nation-state and the move toward a global economy. Transnational and *diasporic* cultures, in which peoples are dispersed across national boundaries, are linked in part by consumption patterns and media cultures. Religious communities are increasingly forged across broad geographic areas through programming that includes radio shows, television shows, web sites, videos, books, magazines, and Internet listservers.<sup>1</sup> Popular television programs are imported and exported around the world, and in many countries television includes channels in multiple languages directed at specific ethnic groups. Television news has been globalized with Cable News Network (CNN), which distributes stories throughout the world. The Internet allows for global communications and

international access not only to millions of *World Wide Web* sites, but to radio broadcasts and print media articles. Previously discrete media industries are converging on the ground of shared and overlapping reliance on digital technologies, as in the example of Internet radio and television access. The wiring of and increased use of wireless communication in the *Third World* is predicted to result in a further collapse of distance and boundaries of nation and culture, resulting in new markets for information and goods. Media and information travel more quickly throughout the world, crossing boundaries of nation, culture, and language.

Visual culture, which generally does not observe differences in language and levels of literacy, is key in this climate of globalization. Understanding how images circulated and what role they played to support the growth of a global information economy in the late twentieth century is crucial to understanding practices of looking in the twenty-first century. Among those media through which images circulate, television and the Internet are primary examples. Television, the Internet, and the World Wide Web have been extolled for erasing national boundaries and creating cross-cultural exchange. One popular take on the Internet, represented in the writing of Net guru Howard Rheingold, is that this medium realizes McLuhan's vision of a media-based *global village*, which we discussed in Chapter 5. In this view, the Internet democratizes society and collapses distances and cultural differences, forming communities based on shared interests across geographic, national, and cultural boundaries. This increased global traffic of cultural information is looked upon by others as creating new markets. For corporations, for instance, the capacity to traverse large distances and the wiring of the Third World will create new markets for information, products, and services.<sup>2</sup>

But the globalization of media and industry has also been criticized for facilitating unchecked capitalist interests at the expense of communities. Media scholars Herbert Schiller and James Ledbetter, for example, hold that the new digital media are in fact the tools of big business. Multinational corporations increasingly acquire businesses across the media and entertainment industries, expand their markets nationally and overseas, and exploit cheap labor and new markets in Third World regions, deepening the global economic divide between the haves and the have-nots. Their argument is that the corporate expansion of the late twentieth century is not dissimilar to the political practice of *colonialism* that existed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Corporate mergers such as the creation of Disney/Capital Cities/ABC

in 1996 are particularly troubling, according to Ledbetter. This merger brought together five film production companies; four magazines; a book publishing company; a hockey team; a utility company; multiple TV channels; eight newspapers; and a radio network with 3,400 affiliates, to list just some of the company's holdings. A single corporation thus has an enormous hold on global visual culture. Resources behind this image-machine are vast: the Disney-Capital Cities liaison alone created a company with combined assets of more than \$30 billion and a market capitalization of \$50 billion. This global enterprise is capable of creating, packaging, and distributing entertainment, news and sports programming in the USA and overseas.<sup>3</sup> Entertainment analysts agree that the linking of companies in this manner has sparked dramatically heightened opportunities for market expansion—what the industry calls “synergy”—by vertically integrating production, programming, and distribution and also horizontally integrating across a geographic scope that no one entity could have reached alone.

Synergy, Ledbetter points out, is not limited to media and entertainment entities alone. Two of the big three-and-a-half US networks are owned by military contractors and the makers of nuclear power plants at home and abroad, ensuring that news and hence public debate about nuclear power will be controlled from within the industry itself. Schiller makes the case that the global expansion of corporations hardly translates into access to media production and information for Third World countries. What corporations are seeking is cheap labor, natural resources, and new audiences or consumers for their services and goods. However, the term “globalization” is not only applicable to this increased conglomeration of corporate interests on an international scale, but also to the movement of cultural products across cultural boundaries. We will turn now to the history of how television has functioned as a local, national, and global medium.

### **Television flow: from the local to the global**

In Chapter 5, we discussed how television was developed in the USA, Britain, and throughout the world through different models of sponsorship—as both public and commercial television. Television has been a central tool in constructing concepts of the local and the national. In some of its manifestations, television has been the site of narrowcasting to local and community audiences, particularly in cable. In

many of its contexts, television has been a fundamental aspect in the creation of national audiences. However, television is also central to the increased globalization of media, and has emerged by the early twenty-first century as a global medium. By marketing commercial programs overseas, networks sell practices of looking and ways of using media images to a global public along with programs themselves. With the globalization of markets, the US model of commercial television has made its way around the world, where indigenous programming produced through national services contends with US imports. The US system is often maligned abroad because it was so completely driven by corporate interests. However, at the same time, the high production values of US television programs appeal to audiences in other countries. This is in part because many countries did not have the capital invested in television equipment and facilities to make shows that were as slick as those produced in the USA and because US producers aggressively marketed their programming, just as industries marketed their products, in other countries. The US networks could offer their programs quite cheaply to the overseas market and still make a significant profit. *I Love Lucy*, *Kojak*, *Dynasty*, and *Dallas* are just a few of the series that have had global audiences through syndicated runs overseas. For example, the global circulation of the children's television series *Rugrats* can be followed on the web site <<http://saginaw.simplenet.com/ontv.htm>>, where viewers can click on any of the more than thirty countries where the show was broadcast to get information about when and which episodes aired.

Third World countries were, and still are, an important market for US television programs. The term “Third World” was coined in the post–World War II period, during the years of decolonization. Western political theorists, after World War II, divided the world into two camps: East and West, with two major superpowers, the USA and the USSR. The countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it was presumed, would have to join sides with one or the other of these “worlds.” However, these countries decided to band together and establish themselves as a “Third World” rather than taking sides with Eastern or Western superpowers. With the decline of the Cold War, the shifting status of the autonomous nation-state, and the wiring of many Third World countries for global media and information systems in the 1990s, the concept of a Third World is losing currency, but continues to hold important historical meaning.

Television emerged in Third World countries not because of local popular or market demands, but because of smart global marketing plans on the part of mostly American and European industrial interests.<sup>4</sup> Some of the earliest Third World television markets were established by US corporations and, later, by US-European multinationals. In the 1940s soap operas were brought to Latin American audiences by US soap manufacturers such as Colgate-Palmolive and Lever Brothers. Called telenovelas, this form has become even more important to Latin American audiences. Telenovelas, 100-hour movies shown in one-hour segments, form a booming multi-million dollar industry with worldwide distribution. A typical telenovela is shown five or six days a week in the evening, and has about 75 to 150 chapters over the course of three to six months. Unlike American soap operas which go on forever (or until they are canceled), Latin American telenovelas roll to definite climatic endings.

The attempt to secure markets in Latin America was never completely successful for these founding corporations. The local junior partners who set up local stations in these countries were quick to capitalize on US expertise and squeeze out the foreign competition, and some countries set up quotas to limit the amount of import television air time. A similar pattern followed in some areas of Africa. In the Middle East and North Africa, the introduction of television was the subject of debate about the compatibility (or lack thereof) between television and religious values. American practices of looking were not compatible with those of less secular nations, where religious bans on the worship of idols and the representation of sexuality posed problems for the dissemination of imported television programs.

However, as these countries began to set up their own national programming and people acquired TV sets, it was discovered that program transmission did not obey the laws of national boundaries. Television historian Dietrich Berwanger points out that, for example, American programs aimed at US citizens working in oil companies in the Middle East would spill over into living rooms throughout the Gulf states. This spillover replicated itself in just about every region where the USA had troops stationed (such as the Philippines and South Korea). This situation inspired US companies to actively develop viewer markets in these areas. Similarly, India began broadcasting in Bangladesh, to the consternation of Bangladesh authorities, who then implemented their own national industry to respond to the penetration of the national imaginary by Indian propaganda. By the mid-1970s, every country of the Third World with a population over 10 million had introduced TV (with the exception of South Africa, which straggled behind because it was trying to develop separate programming for whites and blacks—ultimately a doomed idea).

The prospect of imported programming raised the question of national sovereignty. What would become of national practices of looking, national image cultures, and national identity in the face of these trends toward imported programming and transnational image circulation? Who would be empowered to regulate the global circulation of images? Technical and non-technical international groups like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and UNESCO became increasingly involved in oversight. Television thus participated in the seemingly contradictory trends of localism and globalism. It has spread amidst a climate where claims to national sovereignty, expressed in the rise of national programming and regulations, came up against the fluidity with which global media including television, marketing, and the Web ignored the laws of borders. National identities and “local” ways of looking were readily tied to corporate marketing strategies that pushed global brands and global ways of looking through narrowcast marketing to specific populations. For example, the global brand Coca-Cola is marketed through local strategies that make identification with the brand an aspect of an emergent national identity in Papua New Guinea.<sup>5</sup> It can be said that the national and the global are in constant, fluid tension. While the increased globalization of media venues may erode the centrality of national programming, it is also the case that media like television still function to affirm national ideologies and to give people a sense of participating in a national audience. Concepts of the nation, what it means to be an American or British or French

citizen, for instance, are often an integral part of programming that traverses national boundaries.

### **The critique of cultural imperialism**

There are several frameworks that we can use to understand the circulation of images around the world. One framework is the concept of *cultural imperialism*. Cultural imperialism refers to how an *ideology*, a politics, or a way of life is exported into other territories through the export of cultural products. Communications theorists including Armand Mattelart and Herbert Schiller argue that television is a means through which world powers like the USA and the USSR invade the cultural and ideological space of a country with images and messages, in place of an all-out military invasion. Television images and messages permeate the minds of the country's people with ideas about the value of US products, ideologies, and politics. In this view, television is able to cross boundaries and literally invade cultures in ways that bodies cannot. Television would get people around the globe to make global markets for US products, and promote global acceptance of US political values.

An extreme example that illustrates this point is the US government's Cold War era practice of transmitting a radio broadcast, called the Voice of America, into the frequency range of communist Cuba. In 1985, the Reagan administration instituted Radio Marti, a similar venture, and in 1990 Congress put \$7.5 million toward TV Marti. These media venues were intended to provide the message of democracy to Cuba. After coming to power in 1959, Fidel Castro made Cuban television a national (as opposed to private) industry and used the medium as a tool for the establishment of a new social order. Castro spoke for hours on television every evening, announcing new policies and even staging trials of captured infiltrators from the USA and opponents of the new regime.<sup>6</sup> Many saw the radio and television propaganda broadcasts of Radio and TV Marti as necessary interventions in Castro's own media *propaganda*. Others saw this form of media intervention as an act of cultural imperialism rather than an attempt to make democratic choices available to a population held captive by Castro's media rule. We might see this as a war carried out at the level of looking and transmission practices. TV Marti, according to some critics, violated the spirit, if not the word, of the 1982 International Telecommunications Convention that determined that a country's air space, like its

land, was a part of its domestic property and these boundaries must not be violated. TV Marti raised important questions about the right of a nation to protect the “space” of media transmissions, and to control the circulation of images in their seemingly immaterial state as they are transmitted over the airwaves. The debates over TV Marti have much to tell us about the limits of media globalization in a world in which information is quickly becoming the most fluid and transmissible of global commodities, and many speak of unchecked information flow as a democratic ideal.

The case of TV Marti vividly demonstrates that cultural products (images, sound, information) move across national boundaries with increased ease, primarily from cultural powers like the USA outward. Other analyses have shown that so-called innocent products of popular culture can have much more complex meanings when they travel across cultural boundaries. Communication scholar Armand Mattelart and cultural critic Ariel Dorfman wrote a scathing analysis of the role played by the seemingly innocuous figure of Donald Duck in promulgating American imperialism in Latin America, *How to Read Donald Duck*. They argue that Donald Duck and various other “innocent” Disney characters and stories presumably aimed at child audiences in fact were targeted also at adult viewers and that the narratives of these cartoons modeled for their Third World viewers a relationship of dutiful respect for and submission to US paternal authority. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse covertly “sell” to South Americans the belief that the United States is a place whose values and cultural practices should be emulated, and whose economic presence should be welcomed. Mattelart and Dorfman point out that Disney along with the US government worked to promote “good neighborliness” in South America just as US corporations were beginning to seek new markets for products and exploit the natural products and cheap labor available in South America. These authors share much with the thinkers of the *Frankfurt School* and their concepts of the domination of the culture industry which we discussed in Chapter 5. They believe that in a *postcolonial* world where overt measures of domination were no longer feasible, the innocuous visual images of Donald Duck and his cartoon cohorts were ideal venues for charming unwitting Latin American audiences into submission and conformity, making their adoption of US ideology palatable and even pleasurable. The image of Donald Duck, for Mattelart and Dorfman, is an insidious icon of US benevolent paternalism.

Likewise, it has been suggested that logos of products with global markets—the Coca-Cola trademark logo, for example, and the image of the

red Coke can itself—symbolize the global dominance of the multinational corporations that produce these goods. As texts, these images (as graphic logos and advertisements) carry widely shared meanings easily read across cultures, classes, and vastly distant geographic spaces. But, they also contribute to the forging of local and emerging national identities through advertisements geared toward specific cultures. The growth of multinationals and the related emergence of a global information system to carry advertisements and other information results in homogenization—a collapse of borders and distances, and of differences of taste, language, and meaning. But they also result in the emergence of specific cultural and national identities under the sign of the brand, rather than under the sign of an empire. In some contexts, such as mainland China prior to the 1980s, the symbol of Coke carried the meaning of cultural imperialism, symbolizing the spread of US capitalism around the world. In late twentieth and early twenty-first century China, however, cultural imports such as McDonald's have become a status symbol rather than one of cultural imperialism. Rather than signifying cheap fast food, McDonald's in major Chinese cities is now a place where young people who want to associate themselves with the symbols of emerging capitalism like to congregate and spend time.<sup>7</sup> In a globalizing world, images and logos can take on transcultural meanings. Andy Warhol's pop-art take on Campbell soup cans, which we discussed in Chapter 6, conveys this sense of the product as symbolizing mass production and bland American universality—Campbell's soup, like McDonald's and Coke, his works suggests, is everywhere.

### **Markets of the Third World**

While the idea of the global has taken on a particular value at this turn of the century, when corporations want to market themselves as having a global reach and transnational power, it can also be said the local has emerged as a marketable concept. Many advertisements attach the meaning of local regions to their products to give them a folksy connotation and mediate their image as distant conglomerates. This marketing of the local in relation to the global can be seen in the rise of the Body Shop, a successful multinational chain retailer of body-care goods and beauty products. The Body Shop refers to itself as a “multi-local” corporation, and promotes itself in the language of the *global village*. The global village is a concept, discussed in Chapter 5, that emerged in the 1960s through the work



of Marshall McLuhan and in the context of global media expansion. It refers to the concept that the media extend our reach across political and geographic boundaries, bringing the world together—shrinking it, as it were. The Body Shop specializes in selling products produced in specific Third World locales to consumers throughout the world. It emphasizes education and awareness of other cultures through the consumption of products that were made by “others.” The company does not directly advertise but produces brochures and educational materials that let the consumer know that it supports women and underprivileged workers in the Third World in the manufacture of their products. In this case, educational brochures about the environment and animal rights, a “community trade” policy, and even an international human rights award given by the company stand in for product advertisements in promoting the company. The Body Shop paradoxically was able to emerge as a successful multinational corporation by trading on its image of sensitivity to local politics and environmental concerns.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the Third World emerged as a viable market image in the 1980s, so it remained a strong market for the selling of US media images. Programs, production facilities, and ideologies were not the only things exported to the Third World. In almost all cases, television sets had to be imported. These imports constituted a major market for Japanese, American, and European corporations that had saturated their markets at home. In a given Third World household, the TV set is likely to be the most expensive family purchase, and in many places it exists in the absence of a refrigerator or even a bicycle. In the Amazon region of Brazil battery-powered TV sets are found in river homes without refrigeration or electricity, and neighbors gather to watch the latest American series import.

Why is television so important to these developing countries that limited funds would be invested in the medium rather than in health or other areas of the economy? What are the meanings that are produced by this circulation of programming? Most of the approaches to analyzing global television stress the negative impact of cultural imperialism through media and information technologies. Whereas critics like Mattelart identify programming content as the conveyor of imperialist messages, communications specialists like Harold Innis stress the imperialistic potential of media export in itself, regardless of the messages transmitted. Frankfurt School criticism by and large gave short shrift to Third World media, focusing instead on US and European contexts and American industry dominance. But their theories laid the ground for theorists,

like Schiller, who stress the negative impact of media images, messages, and flows.

### **Alternative circulations: hybrid and diasporic images**

In this global media environment, the different relationships of production and consumption are caught up in power relations in complex ways. Yet, this global circulation of cultural products such as television, and other forms of popular culture and news, clearly does not remain only within the model of cultural imperialism. Many contemporary theorists have analyzed the global movement of people and commodities as indicative of the ways that the model of Third and First World divisions no longer make sense, if they ever did. The movement of people and images around the world in the early twenty-first century is increasingly complex, with significant numbers of immigrants and refugees, a growth of *diasporic* communities (in which people are living in numbers away from their homelands), and postcolonial cultural contexts. *Hybridity* is a term used in the sciences to refer to plants or animals originating from different species or a person of mixed origins. It has been appropriated by cultural theorists to describe the mixing of peoples and of cultures in the era of globalization. With the geographic dispersal of peoples, the breakdown of nation-states, and the hybridization of cultures, media images are infused with a mix of conventions and meanings that derive from these various origins. Given these conditions, the idea of a First World that is neatly distinct from a Third World no longer makes sense. Moreover, First World conditions and peoples can be found within the Third World, just as Third World conditions and peoples can be found within the First World.

One model for rethinking the distinctions between cultures undergoing globalization has been suggested by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai.<sup>9</sup> He uses the suffix “-scapes,” derived from the geographical metaphor of landscapes, to provide a framework for thinking about particular sorts of global flows. Ethnoscapes are groups of people who move across borders in roles such as refugees, tourists, exiles, and guest workers. The term “mediascapes” captures the movement of media and cultural products throughout the world. Technoscapes frames the complex technological industries that circulate information and services. Financescapes describe the flows of global capital. Ideoscapes represent the ideologies that circulate with these cultural

products, capital, and movements of populations. Analyzing global flow according to “scapes” allows for a critique of the different power relations within these cultural and economic movements and exchanges of products, people, and capital. It also provides an alternative to the traditional model of one-way cultural flow, allowing us to see the complex directions and scope of an image’s or text’s global circulation beyond the implied unidirectional reach of, say, broadcasting, or imperial rule.

It is important to keep in mind that critics who use the term “cultural imperialism” do not always take into account the complex movements of an image or media text’s flow, or the specific practices used by viewers to mediate and appropriate imported cultural products and images. As we have discussed in previous chapters, viewers do not receive media texts as producers intend them to be seen, or at face value. Viewers make meanings based in part on the context in which they experience images. Meanings are also shaped by experiences and knowledges brought to the circumstances of viewing. Viewers may appropriate what they see to make new meanings, meanings that may be not just different from but even oppositional to the ideologies intended or received in these texts’ original contexts. While the dominance of cultural producers in creating and disseminating messages to varying markets of consumers is evident, it is also the case that cultural difference may allow for a broad range of responses to images that come from other cultures.

Visual and cultural anthropologists have done the most toward providing accounts of how specific Third World cultures produce and use technologies and images imported from the industrialized West. Visual anthropologists long have been among the most innovative critics and scholars in the move to both study and facilitate the agency of Third World subjects in the production and circulation of images and media texts, rather than to market media to them or study them as consumers. Since the 1950s, some visual anthropologists have emphasized the need for active collaboration and sharing of power between media producers and the subjects of their productions. French anthropologist Jean Rouch produced a series of films in the 1950s in which he tried to get Western audiences to see the world through the eyes of the African people he filmed, inviting these subjects to participate with him in the scripting process and training them in film production. In the USA, anthropologists Sol Worth and John Adair taught members of a Navajo community in Pine Springs, Arizona to use film equipment in what became known as the Navajo Film Project in 1966. They allowed members of the community to develop their own

techniques and conventions of filming, composition, and editing, rather than training them in standard cinematic techniques, and then showed these films as a way of seeing through Navajo eyes, rather than seeing the Navajo through Western eyes.<sup>10</sup> One film, *Intrepid Shadows*, by Al Clah, garnered attention for its unique approach to imaging, in which Clah explores images as a means of reconciling the tensions between Navajo beliefs and Western religion.

More recent efforts include the work of anthropologists including Vincente Carelli and Terence Turner in Brazil and Eric Michaels and Faye Ginsburg with the aboriginal population of Australia, who launched various studies that supported the use of video by indigenous peoples as a means of empowering local communities and facilitating their unique practices of image-making and looking. Indigenous groups in Australia and Brazil have thus used television to document their culture and preserve memories and local knowledge. *Video in the Villages* (*Espirito da TV, Festa da Moca, Pemp*) is one example of work with and by indigenous groups for outside audiences. The project is part of the Centro de Trabalho Indigenista, a non-governmental organization. It began in the 1980s and receives funding from a variety of sources including US foundations and Brazilian non-governmental organizations. These videos are only a small part of the project's function; the organization provides technical assistance to indigenous organizations who want to use video, and archives tapes.

*The Navajo Film  
Themselves, 1966*

Al Clah, *Intrepid  
Shadows, 1966*

Vincent Carelli, *Spirit of TV*, 1990

The project, which was directed by Vincent Carelli, a Brazilian video producer, consists of three short and one long documentaries. The first, *Espirito da TV*, is an essay about the way the Waiapi, a small and recently contacted Tupi-speaking group in far northern Brazil, have used television to document their own cultural practices. They have used video to discover the existence of other Tupi-speaking groups they had not known about, and to receive the experience of other indigenous groups that have confronted common problems such as land rights. The third, titled *Pemp*, documents the recent history of the Gaviao tribe in the eastern Amazon. In the 1960s, the Gaviao were widely considered so decimated by contact with the West that their continued survival as a group was impossible. The video demonstrates through interviews, oral histories, and scenes of people at work, that the group has not only survived but has developed some approaches to living on the interface with Brazilian culture, both through its resistance of development projects (mining, a hydroelectric dam) and through participation in commerce.

Accounts from fieldworkers such as Carelli, Turner, Michaels, and Ginsburg all provide strong evidence of alternative uses and meanings of media among specific local populations, against the forces of cultural imperialism. These projects collectively suggest a much less universal and fatalistic picture of media globalization than a focus on advertising and corporate practices would suggest. In other words, there is room for autonomy and resistance to the forces of media globalization.

There are many non-anthropological examples of programming in the contemporary global media environment that demonstrate the power of cultural products to reaffirm ethnic and local values over the homogenizing forces of global media networks. In 1982, the Inuit people of the Northern Canadian

Arctic founded a television broadcasting network based on their satellite experiments, which had been in existence since the 1970s. The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation was established to link Inuit communities dispersed across the continent, and to offer indigenous programming produced and broadcast in the Inuit language, Inuktitut, and representing their own cultural values. The IBC, with its Inuit superhero, Super Shamou, and its own popular and educational programming and images, presents a powerful alternative to mainstream Canadian television and popular media images already consumed by Inuit children. The example of the IBC suggests that indigenous and autonomous practices of looking can not only survive in an era of globalization; they can thrive by using global technologies wisely. As the IBC web site explains, their use of media technology not only links peoples who are geographically dispersed, it also helps to both preserve and reinstate cultural traditions and language practices that had been lost. The IBC is, indeed, a model for using global media technologies to support cultural and political autonomy in the face of globalization. They write:

What kinds of programs do we produce?

<i>Television series</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Kippinguijautiit	Inuktitut	Arts/Entertainment
Qanuq Isumavit?	Inuktitut	Live phone-in
Qimaivvik	Inuktitut	Cultural
Qaggiq	Inuktitut	Current Affairs/News
Takuginai	Inuktitut	Children
Takuginai	English	Children
Qaujisaut	Inuktitut	Youth

IBC produces programming that is internationally recognized as one of the most successful communication models for developing nations. Inuit communities are separated by huge distances in Nunavut, a region that makes up one-third of Canada’s land mass. The only way in or out of communities is by plane or ski mobile. IBC programming travels by satellite via Television Northern Canada. The vast distances between communities makes electronic communication of vital importance to the development of Inuit management of the

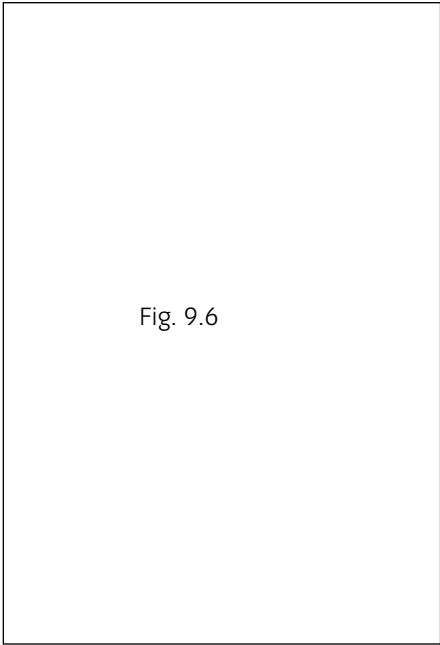


Fig. 9.6

IBC's Super Shamou

North. By 1999, Nunavut will have its own government, and Inuktitut will be the official language of the Territory.

The IBC model is an important exception to the rule of global media imperialism in the age of cable. But even cable holds the possibility for supporting alternative and local cultural interests. Whereas in the earlier narrowcast model distance and geography defined the limits of programming, in the cable television era (in particular since the 1980s), “community” television can mean programming for a “local” population that is dispersed around the globe. This means that diasporic communities throughout the world, that is, ethnic communities living apart from their homeland, often constitute the audiences of narrowcast programming. For diasporic and exiled peoples, television programming aired across national boundaries and narrowcast to their own communities can be a vital lifeline. “Local” programming across the geographic expanses of a diaspora provides what for some viewers may be a virtual “home.” Ethnic programming may link viewers to a community whose geographic origin is no longer accessible—say, because viewers live in exile, because they cannot afford to go home, or because the homeland no longer exists (has been destroyed or overtaken through political upheaval). For

example, Iranian exiles living in Southern California and other parts of the USA form the audience for Persian-language television produced by fellow exiled Iranians. This cable programming focuses on Iranian media genres, culture, history, and values. Media scholar Hamid Naficy has written that US-based Iranian television is a new sort of “local” or community-based television production. In its specificity and self-limiting range, it challenges the broadcast model. This kind of cross-cultural programming works in opposition to the model of cultural imperialism to a degree, in that global connectivity supports the maintenance of virtual local cultures in the absence of an actual (geographic) base. Telemundo and Univision similarly offer programming in Spanish with cultural issues and formats meant to appeal to geographically and even culturally broad groups of people (in Spain, the USA, and Latin America, for example). Language, and sometimes religious and cultural values, yet not regional origins or proximity, are what makes this group unified. But the programming is nonetheless “localized” or narrowcast in its maintenance of a virtual community. Networks like Telemundo demonstrate the viable market that “the local” has become for global media and information corporations.

### **The internet: global village or multinational corporate marketplace?**

While television provides perhaps the first example of global media, new technologies are now redefining the concept of globalization. Throughout history, the development of new technologies from the era of print onward has been greeted with both optimism and fear. In general, these responses represent technology as either a panacea for social problems or as a threat to the social fabric. The development of the telegraph in the nineteenth century was believed to be a means of achieving world harmony through global communication, as if the technology’s capacity to transmit messages quickly would unify the world. The development of television spawned a different set of debates about the ill effects of the mass medium, its negative effect on children, its addictive qualities, and its potential to foster juvenile delinquency. New technologies often are seen as a threat to traditional class and gender relations, as detrimental to the family, and as highly destructive to existing communities.

Many of the utopian and dystopian narratives about new technologies are

echoed in contemporary debates about the Internet. Concerns about the Internet circulated in the late 1990s in media stories about loneliness and depression among users. At the same time, the Internet has been extolled as a forum for self-help and self-health, a means of establishing virtual social community, and a means for improving business productivity, curing social inequities and technology-access limitations, providing more leisure time, and promoting world peace. The Internet is a worldwide network linking smaller networks of computers. It was begun with research in the 1960s and 1970s and by the 1990s it linked users across millions of computers around the world who log on from schools (designated by the .edu address suffix), research centers (.edu or .mil), government agencies (.gov), nonprofit organizations (.org), and commercial entities (.com). While many critics see the Internet as a new, more democratic mode of communication, others see it as a form through which corporations are taking control of public dialog and global markets. One utopian view of the Internet, promoted by the US government, is that it is a global information superhighway that provides access to knowledge and power to all individuals with access to this global network. This view results in proclamations that schools should provide every schoolchild with a computer, and with the implication that technology access is essential for the most basic achievements in life. Whereas television provides a one-way broadcast flow of information to the passively receptive masses, the Internet, belief has it, allows information about the world to be produced and to circulate more freely among users who interactively post and circulate information, write their own messages, and communicate with each other. Lines of communication are multidirectional and the medium is interactive, hence the experience is more fundamentally democratic than the experience we have with television. Everyone is a potential producer on the World Wide Web, the argument goes, hence the power relations between the culture industry and its audiences will be transformed. This is a very similar argument to that of guerrilla television in the 1970s. As we discussed in Chapter 5, many video activists felt that the very act of putting a camera in someone's hands would change the power structure of media. Some critics of Internet rhetoric caution that this new information infrastructure is really only going to allow freedom of expression within the limits set by those corporations who are rapidly taking over control of Internet "space." How the Internet will develop—whether it will be a global public forum or a global marketplace—is a crucial topic of debate, and parallels in many ways the debates about radio in the 1920s or television in the late 1940s.

The Internet has a strong reputation for its facilitation of interpersonal communication through text-based e-mail. This issue interests us with regard to practices of looking insofar as it suggests deep personal relationships can form on the basis of written exchanges, without experiences of sight and touch. The text-based virtual community model deserves some discussion because it has been such an important aspect of late twentieth-century social life in the industrialized West. We have probably all heard testimony about the Internet as a “world” or a “community” where people make new friends around the world, or where couples have fallen in love thousands of miles apart without ever having laid eyes—or hands—on one another. Many frequent users of the Internet present it as a life-changing integral aspect of their well-being. One of the most well-known proponents of this view is Howard Rheingold, who has written about his experience as one of the original participants in the WELL, an early Internet community. Rheingold’s account, echoed anecdotally in hundreds of press accounts of lay Internet experience, emphasized the strength of interpersonal and community bonds forged in the virtual communities that occupied the more social corners of the Internet.

For people who are unable to communicate in real life (or, in Net parlance, IRL), the Net can provide a vital connection to the outside world. For example, a person with a disability that makes him or her home-bound may find the Net a useful means of linking into public debate and a social life. The Net can be a vital source of emotional contact and even a place for education and work activities for home-bound people. It also gives home-bound people access to discussions with other people who share similar disabilities. For example, people with cystic fibrosis, who are sometimes home-bound, can log onto the CF discussion list and share their innermost feelings with people with CF from around the world. To have this kind of meeting “IRL” might be financially and perhaps even physically prohibitive for most of the people involved in these sorts of on-line communities. These forums also allow participants to diminish the potential for the experience of discrimination or stigma on the basis of their disability, if it involves visually obvious indicators. For example, a person with a facial anomaly can go on-line with the confidence that he or she will not be subject to discrimination on the basis of appearance. A different logic applies with respect to communication between Deaf and non-Deaf interlocutors on-line. The mainstreaming of the telephone effectively marginalized the Deaf insofar as the technology relied on precisely the senses and communication medium they did not have access to, eliminating the visibility of

the body and the looking practices so essential to sign language. The Internet allows for exchanges that downplay the importance of speech and hearing by relying on text. However, according to French philosopher Paul Virilio, there is a serious social problem afoot when able-bodied people assume a home-bound existence to conduct their social life on-line and through media. He is skeptical about the potential for full social and political action in the realm of the virtually disabled citizen who chooses to communicate electronically over real-life engagement.

These accounts illustrate the importance of the presence and absence of visuality and the visibility of the body especially in the Internet's textual worlds. The Internet has been characterized as a potentially dangerous medium through which people can pretend to be what or who they are not because they are not "seen," acting out on-line in ways that are deceptive and harmful. This ability is due to the potential for erasing one's physical, visible body and creating a textual or iconic body in its place. One famous story that circulates about the Internet is about a male psychiatrist who, once mistaken for a woman in an on-line communication, actively assumed the on-line personae of a seriously disabled woman.<sup>11</sup> Through this identity, he garnered the trust and personal confidences of women in an on-line discussion group—participants who, upon learning his true identity, reported feeling "raped." Stories about men seducing impressionable female youth by presenting themselves in deceptively appealing descriptions and then setting up secret meetings IRL abound in cautionary news stories and stories of arrests. These stories served as the dramatic imagery for some of the advertisements of the late 1990s supporting commercially available Net censorship programs. Public debates about the unregulated Internet's threat to children have proliferated in public media in the USA at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first.

For some analysts of the Internet, it is precisely the way in which the Internet facilitates role-playing and the possibility of playing with multiple identities in the absence of a visible and material body that makes it a unique and promising forum of human interaction and social change. For example, cultural theorist and psychologist Sherry Turkle has argued that the shifting of roles and identity on the Internet is indicative of the ways in which many people experience identity as a set of roles that can be mixed, matched, and imaginatively transformed. Internet role-playing thus allows people to create

parallel or alternative personae that can facilitate their negotiation and transformation of identity in real life. According to Turkle, much Internet role-playing is testimony to the ways in which our selves are multiple, fragmentary, and complex, in contrast to the traditional *Enlightenment* notion of self as a unified entity.

How did the Net become such a rich world of social interaction and personal enhancement? The history of the Internet shows us that these were definitely not the uses it was intended for in its early years. The Internet was originally designed as a communications system using *packet switching* that would not break down in the event of a nuclear war. It started out as a military defense system, built under the name of ARPANET in the 1970s. The Net was built as a decentralized system to ensure that communications would keep going if parts of the system were destroyed. This model of decentralized communications provided a structure for new kinds of human interaction. The mythology of the Internet's rise includes stories about these government researchers conducting military network research using the system to engage in on-line dialog about science fiction and wine, and finally setting up networks to support such unauthorized and personal topics. By the mid-1980s, nonmilitary networks had already sprung up to provide venues for people to converse in open forums about matters of culture and pleasure far from the original concern of national defense.

One early on-line model that demonstrates the Internet's potential for democratic exchange is Usenet. Started in 1979 by two grad students at Duke University, its founders thought the system would be used to raise discussions about computer operating systems and networks. Instead, Usenet evolved into the anarchic body of newsgroups as far from academic interests as alt.sex or alt.drugs. A world-wide public conferencing network, Usenet made it possible for computer users around the world to have public discussions, raise questions or problems so they could get help, or send e-mail to one another. Usenet was the prototype for the use of the Internet as a public space of communications, open to everyone, not just to academics and military personnel. In this sense, we can see the Internet as fulfilling many of the concepts of the public sphere that we discussed in Chapter 5. But critics of this liberal utopianism are quick to point out that many countries—most notoriously China—have instituted strict Internet censorship and control, making the idea of the global village seem nothing more than a liberal fantasy.

## **The world wide web as private and public sphere**

It is precisely because of its decentralized technology, which has allowed it to be a truly international medium with a global reach, that the Internet is extremely difficult to regulate. The rise of the Internet has thus been accompanied by a rhetoric of freedom of information, and the desire to see the Internet as a new information “frontier” without restrictions of use and flow (in the writings of the Electronic Freedom Foundation, for example). Arguments about the Internet as free-speech global frontier traversed by pioneering console cowboys hinge on the fact that it is a vast, rapidly growing and changing entity and is thus extremely difficult to regulate. Attempts to regulate the content of the Internet and the World Wide Web have been thwarted not only by the First Amendment right to free speech but also by the fact that some of the material in question is on foreign web sites and hence not subject to other national laws. For proponents of Internet free speech and the idea of the Internet as an “electronic frontier,” these obstacles to regulation are precisely what make this medium a unique new form of communication and expression.

The point we want to emphasize here is that the Internet’s apparent “freedom” during this period was strikingly dependent on the simple format of text. This nonvisual means of communication took off during the same years that images and visual media were becoming more and more prevalent in other areas of life in which technology was key. Medicine, science, and the entertainment industry all saw tremendous growth in imaging technologies and experienced the introduction of new ways of looking during the same period that the Internet took off so dramatically. It was the introduction of *hypertext* and the area of the Internet known as the World Wide Web in the late 1980s that would bring together the Internet and the various technologies in play in these other areas of life.

The Internet was introduced when computer communications technology was principally text-based; the Internet was not visual because the technology to make it so was not available. The development of computer imaging, multimedia, and hypertext made possible the emergence of the Web as a commercial entity in the early 1990s. The Web is a region of the Internet linking vast quantities of information stored in files of computers around the world. Until recently, all files used one common language (HTML, or hypertext mark-up language). This graphics-rich, hypermedia interface allows access to files containing sound,

images, text, and graphics. With the explosion of activity on the World Wide Web in the late 1990s, the Internet became a truly visual and aural medium.

The ethos of universality and the idea of a web-like structure that would make all information universally available are widely regarded as having originated with computer pioneer Vannevar Bush, who wrote of a “memex,” a conceptual machine that could store vast amounts of information in “trails” or links of related text and illustrations. This trail could then be stored and used for future reference. This concept inspired computer pioneer Ted Nelson to develop the modern version of hypertext in 1960. Hypertext is a system that links pictures, text, audio, and other data, often in a decentralized structure. Hyperlinks, or simply links, are the “hot” words or icons that generate the connection when the user clicks on them. Nelson believed that the future of humanity was to be found at the interactive computer screen, a concept that was only a vision of the future in 1960. He presciently believed that the new writing and movies will be interactive and interlinked. Indeed, by 2000 one could download movies to one’s computer hard-drive. But Nelson’s projections were bold ideas for his era. Having followed Nelson’s ideas, Tim Berners-Lee developed the World Wide Web as it currently exists in 1989, through CERN (subsequently called the European Laboratory for Particle Physics). The Web system was motivated in part by the rise of media-based information as a fundamental part of scientific knowledge, and by the fact that scientists working on CERN projects were dispersed all over the globe. CERN needed a communications system that could support text and high-quality image, and could transmit multi-directionally and globally. The WWW system that Berners-Lee designed quickly gained great popularity among Internet users.

It should come as no great surprise that the biggest Web enthusiasts were those companies with goods and services that could be advertised widely and practically for free on the new audiovisual arena of the Internet. As we noted in Chapter 4, the World Wide Web became popular specifically because of its emphasis on visual images and its emergence at the same time that consumer-grade computers began to support graphical user interface software, making it possible to both generate and display images and icons. Not only was the visual appeal important in making computers less intimidating to a wide range of users, it also dramatically changed the role of the Internet. It was now possible to have one’s own personal Web page, replete with images to which e-mail correspondents could refer. It is possible to e-mail images as file attachments. The nonvisual culture of the Internet was thus relatively short-lived. In

the corporate world e-commerce became a booming growth area and a central force behind the growth of the Web. It is now imperative for companies to have web sites, and the moniker of “.com” circulates as a signifier of being plugged in to the technology. In this ad, an equivalence is created between the infant and small companies that are “newborn,” as a way of humanizing technology. The “dot com” sign is thus used to signify new technology. The e-commerce of dot com companies is dependent upon the image-based and hyperlink context of the Web, and could not have emerged in the same way or as quickly in the text-based realms of the Internet. Commercial web sites thus use images to capture consumer attention, display goods, and function as stand-ins for store aisles and “shopping carts.”

The fact that the World Wide Web has quickly become a primary venue for business should not overshadow the fact that it has also opened up new possibilities for personal expression and political activity. Increasingly, people use web sites to create personal home pages, in which they talk about their interests, pursue practices of fan cultures and other *subcultures*, disseminate health information, and a whole host of activities that constitute personal forms of publication. Hence, more so than the text-based arenas of the Internet, the Web has facilitated a broad range of expressive activities that can be seen as new kinds of publications, ones that are cheap to make when one has

access to the software, and which have potential global audiences. It can thus be said that the Internet and the World Wide Web have dramatically changed the power relations between producers and consumers in the mass media. Previously, in a system like television, only a select few had the capacity to create images that could be transmitted world-wide. Now, a web site potentially can have an audience across the world.

This aspect of the Web has had an important impact on the dissemination of information by political groups, and on the connections maintained among communities spread throughout the world. Many political groups have used the Web effectively to build support for their causes—to give information about their struggles, to raise funds, and to create broader communities. One of the most well known is the Zapatistas, a political movement in Mexico that is centered in the region of Chiapas, Mexico. Supporters of the Zapatistas have effectively disseminated information from the rebels to a world-wide group of supporters. This has involved both high-tech and low-tech networks, in which, for instance, messages are hand-carried to those with access to computers. The dissemination of a broad set of texts on the Zapatistas through a variety of networks on the Web, through e-mail, and on-line discussion, helps to build broad Mexican and international support for the Chiapas resistance. The Web is an important medium through which members of this political movement can present information on an equal footing with the media messages of the Mexican government that they are opposing. The Web, because it is decentralized and requires relatively minimal production and broadcast technologies, provides access to visual production and display in ways that television never has. The Zapatistas have little recourse, for example, to the means to mount a television news campaign on equal footing with that mounted against them by the state-controlled Mexican television.

The Web, like cable television, can also facilitate political connection between people who are separated from their homelands, by providing an illusion of a “place” where that people resides. The term “web site” encourages users to think of a physical place, although such a place exists only within virtual space. For people who have been exiled from their homelands for political reasons, this idea of a web site as a place is very meaningful. Pradeep Jeganathan has written about the sites that have emerged in the struggles of the Tamil movement in Sri Lanka.<sup>12</sup> The Tamil nation, called *Tamileelam*, which is held by its proponents to exist in certain provinces of Sri Lanka, is not recognized by the government of Sri Lanka. Under political duress, many Tamils

migrated out from Sri Lanka in the 1980s to places throughout India, Europe, Canada, and Australia. The web sites that sprang up to unite these Tamil populations form a virtual place in which this “nation” can exist. The location of the Tamil nation at eelam.com is somewhere in cyberspace, not in the desired location in Sri Lanka. This cyberspace address is a symbolic site where this diasporic community maintains and generates unity in the absence of a real geographical home. In its existence on the Web, according to Jeganathan, where it is equidistant from all places in the world, eelam.com allows for the possibility of that geographic place to be reclaimed. The difference between this virtual world and that offered in narrowcast cable programming is that information can be communicated much more quickly and fluidly. The site allows for active participation of site participants, who author messages as well as view and read materials that can be posted and changed regularly.

### **The challenge of the internet to privacy, censorship, and free speech**

The sites of the World Wide Web are thus “places” where people participate in a very diverse set of activities and practices in a global network. The explosion of commerce in the visual medium of the Web has created a context in which the regulation of the circulation of images on a global basis has been challenged dramatically. By comparison, most countries remain able to regulate in some fashion the television programming that is imported to their television systems. The World Wide Web is a highly global entity, making it hard if not impossible to regulate the images that are exchanged on it. One area of the Web in which issues of regulation, access, and rights is played out with great force is on-line pornography. Like every other industry, the pornography industry discovered the benefits of Web marketing early on in the Web’s existence. Although the Web increased marketing prospects by exploding the geographic market base for pornography companies, it also raised problems having to do with surveillance. No sooner did these sites appear on the Web than watchdog groups and concerned citizens began to petition the government to shut them down, or provide means of regulating access to them. The stated fear was that innocent children might stumble across (or look for) pornographic sites during unsupervised Web surfing. In the mid-1990s, the media carried stories about children “caught looking” and children in dangerous encounters with pornographers soliciting

photographs and real-life meetings. Web surveillance of some kind became overwhelmingly the demand and the expectation of watchdog groups.

Because in the United States the First Amendment protects freedom of speech, and does not allow restrictions deemed to protect children to keep information from adults at the same time, there have been no attempts to restrict the Internet that have survived legally. This shifted the focus of concern about the Internet to the level of the users and their capacity to restrict their own access to Web sites. In response, a series of US companies began to release software aimed at blocking access to these sites. Internet filter programs with such names as SurfWatch, NetNanny, Cyberpatrol, and Cybersitter allow users to limit access to different kinds of web sites, and usually maintain databases of sites that are potentially not for children and known explicit or obscene Web sites. Some of these programs allow parents to keep track of all the sites their children visit and to alert parents when their children have accessed new sites. Finally, the US government stepped up its surveillance and control measures and began to close down sites deemed a threat to the public. One of the most publicized attempts to remove a web site in the late 1990s did not involve pornography but an anti-abortion group that kept a hit-list of medical personnel that had included the name of a Buffalo, New York, physician who was gunned down in his home. All of these attempts to restrict the Web are counter to the ideology of freedom of information that has been central to its proponents.

It is also the case that the demand for image (and text) surveillance and control had the sometimes unintended effect of restricting other kinds of content on the Web. For instance, a significant amount of material available on the Web serves medical and educational purposes, and may incorporate graphic anatomical imagery that is not restricted to intended viewers. These images of bodies are not intended as pornography, yet can easily be misconstrued by relatively crude censorship programs as pornographic images. Some programs have been deliberately designed to prevent access to any site that deals with issues of gay life. These kinds of conflicts indicate the way in which context is particularly important to the specific meaning of images and words. As we have discussed in other chapters, *semiotics* demonstrates that context contributes in a major way to the meaning of images. The Web compounds this issue by rendering context more complex. Anyone can access much of what is “out there” on the Web, and Web-based material can be imported into any context with the right hardware and software. What happens, then, when

image context becomes as uncontrolled and arbitrary as it can on the Web? It raises, in addition, the question of image copyright and authorship.

The images on the Web are digital images, which means they are encoded so that they can be easily moved and downloaded. As we discussed in Chapter 4, this dramatically changes the relationship of producers and users. Anyone with access to the Web through a computer can thus have at their disposal a wide range of images that they can manipulate, rework, place in new contexts, and make their “own.” As we stated before, the idea of the Internet as a domain in which everyone is a “publisher” has dramatically changed notions of authorship and copyright, in particular in a global framework. Computer graphics reproduction and simulation capabilities make the possibility of exact replication of digital images in a context such as the Web. This poses a very powerful threat to the traditional tenets of copyright law, which hold that an author or artist have the sole right to commercially gain from the use of their work and the capacity to restrict its use. Digital reproduction in the context of the Web is even more of a threat to the idea of the valued artistic original, since it can be done without even physically touching the original, given the availability of works on-line. This could prompt a crisis for those who work in various areas of visual culture. Increasingly, individual and companies that own the copyright to images have secured broad rights to their digital versions. New companies, such as the Bill Gates-owned Corbis, have acquired vast digital image banks in order to profit from the demand for reproductions—a demand that grows in an increasingly media-based society. In this new media context, those without access will become increasingly marginalized in a world where media is currency and being on-line is equated with being publicly active.

### **The place of the visual in the new millennium**

It is impossible to talk about new computer media as a purely visual set of forms—forms primarily about looking. We live in an era of media convergence. To speak of images apart from sound, dimensional form, and other modes of representation is to overlook the crucial fact that media convergence is key to the Web’s appeal as a global communications system. The idea of convergence has always been implied in the notion of a global village with its image of connecting people across geographic distances. It is the hope of many communication and technology theorists that

this convergence will collapse distances and democratize knowledge. Key to this is the idea that image, text, sound, and objects also converge in the social production of meaning, and can no longer be studied in isolation. Yet at the same time, the global exchange of media in the early twenty-first century demonstrates to us the complex power relations that are always a part of the production and circulation of images. The desire to situate oneself within the local and the national is always in tension with an embrace of the global, and the movement of cultural products and visual images throughout the world is always about the production of different kinds of cultural meanings.

In this book, we have examined many of the changes that have taken place in the world of visual images throughout history, and focused in particular on the ways that image technologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have impacted the kinds of images that are produced, how they are consumed and understood, and how they circulate in and across cultures. This complex history shows us how difficult it might be to predict the future of images in the twenty-first century. While convergence is the focus of the industry, it is also the case that people have important ritualistic relationships and distinct *phenomenological* experiences with different media that may make them resistant to media convergence. Clearly, the shift toward digital images will continue to impact social notions of photographic truth and the visual aspects of legal and scientific evidence. Yet, at the same time, that may also prompt a renewed interest in the traditional photograph as a cultural artifact. While their technological status may change, the fundamental cultural and social roles of images will remain. If one thing is certain, it is that visual images will inevitably play a central role in the culture of the twenty-first century.

## Notes

1. See Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage (eds.), *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
2. See Frances Cairncross, *The Death of Distance: How the Communication Revolution Will Change Our Lives* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).
3. See the Disney web site account of 1996 merger with Capital Cities/ABC, <<http://disney.go.com/investors/annual/capcitie.html>>.
4. Dietrich Berwanger, "The Third World," in *Television: An International History*, edited by Anthony Smith (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 188–200.
5. See Robert Foster, "The Commercial Construction of 'New Nations,'" *Journal of Material Culture*, 4 (3) (1998), 262–82.
6. On this issue, see Michael Tracey, "Non-Fiction Television," in *Television: An International History*, edited by Anthony Smith (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 78.

7. Y. Yan, "McDonald's in Beijing: The Localization of Americana," in *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, edited by James L. Watson (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 39–76.
8. This analysis of the Body Shop draws on Caren Kaplan, "A World Without Boundaries: The Body Shop's Trans/National Geographics," *Social Text*, 13 (2) (Summer 1995), 45–66.
9. Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, ●●), 27–47.
10. Sol Worth and John Adair, *Through Navajo Eyes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972).
11. See Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1995), 65–81.
12. Pradeep Jeganathan, "Eelam.com: Place, Nation, and Imagi-Nation in Cyberspace," *Public Culture*, 10 (3) (1998), 515–28.

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