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Departure Lounge Note

Convulsions, continuities and campaigns

The cult of the global

Globalization is a word and concept that has entered everyday and academic discourse with remarkable speed since the 1980s. As Malcolm Waters (2001: 2) has noted, ‘the word “global” is over 400 years old’, but it only began to be used processually as ‘globalization’ rather than adjectivally in the 1960s (mostly in economics) and only then in limited circles. It is remarkable that as recently as February 1994 ‘the catalogue of the US Library of Congress contained only 34 publications with the term [globalization] or one of its derivatives in the title. By February 2000 this number had risen to 284. None of these was published before 1987’ (Waters 2001). When in March 2011 I checked the Library of Congress’ Online Catalogue for the title keyword ‘globalization’ alone (i.e. without derivatives), there were 5,200. This assessment only took place in the literary sphere, but globalization and its derivatives is now in every domain where humans communicate with each other – an exact-wording Google search for ‘globalization’ on the same day produced almost 28 million results. It is not particularly original to observe that the idea of the global has proliferated as an exemplification of itself, flowing across increasingly permeable boundaries and eroding differences – here conceptual and discursive – in all the spaces that it enters. But, inevitably, with all this pervasiveness comes both the elaboration and loss of meaning. If interrogating, deconstructing and reconstructing globalization have become something of an industry among academe and the ‘punditariat’, its buzzword status has also meant that it can be invoked, with wild imprecision, in virtually any discursive context – including the virtual. Globalization is prone to be used in a manner that forecloses debate in specific conversational settings, cutting off opportunities for action in the name of mysterious forces that render them futile as always, everywhere to be overridden by mere mention of the global. Or in a banal, totalizing way to describe a common state of affairs that ignores or underplays contextual variations and countervailing pressures. When coupled with media and sport – which have their own processual usages as ‘mediatization’ and ‘sportification’ – the tendency towards crude globalism is exacerbated.

The incontestable growth and development of the media apparatus around the world, and its inevitable impact on what it mediates, create a misleading conflation of communicative technological capability, textual circulation and audience interpretation. This is especially the case when the experience of Western media sport and of its media sport analysis – the *milieu* of this

author – is extrapolated to every corner of the earth (Rowe and Gilmour 2008). Sport, as one of the most prominent and popular forms of media content, is implicated in this depiction of a world at one with itself, especially when the size of the global media audience is emphasized during mega sports events. In this book I have highlighted the importance of the global media sport nexus but not, it is hoped, in a totalizing way that exaggerates its cohesion and completeness. The plural emphasis on flows is a recognition of its dynamism, on forms its complexity and on futures its uncertainty. In this chapter's title I have added three other elements in the global media sports cultural complex: the continuities that draw into sharper relief what has changed and is currently undergoing change; the convulsions that signal rapid, sometimes dramatic shifts in the familiar or even the traditional; and the campaigns that give political focus to the sociocultural issues at stake in this domain. The aim is to avoid (however inadequately) two contrasting forms of intellectual banality – the over-extension of 'mega trends' that produces theoretical intelligibility but empirical implausibility or the over-emphasis on particularity that duly recognizes empirical complexity at the expense of any prospect of plausible theoretical explanation. In the following (mercifully) brief concluding passages to this book it is intended to draw out these questions a little further and to propose some useful pathways for research and scholarship on global media sport that will do justice to it as a field of pleasure, sociality and cultural politics.

It is important to acknowledge that globalization is not the only or even the primary force in contemporary society and culture, but it is integral to it. As John Tomlinson (1999) argues in his influential book *Globalization and Culture*, all manner of extravagant, transformative claims are made on behalf of globalization, but at the heart of it are the modes of 'connectivity' that disturb various received notions of territory and identity. The difficulty, though, is to ascertain whether globalization is an effect of the outcome of a process or of a series of intersecting processes or in some overarching way causal or determinative. This is the problem that leads John Urry (2003: 96) to resist 'defining "globalization" as a single, clear and unambiguous entity', a position which (he notes that he) shares with Bob Jessop (2000: 339) in interpreting it as 'the complex resultant of many different processes rather than as a distinctive process in its own right'. Jessop mentions sport as one of a series of 'functional subsystems' that are both globally interdependent and distinctive:

Globalization has both structural and strategic moments. Structurally, it involves the processes whereby increasing global interdependence is created among actions, organizations and institutions within (but not necessarily across) different functional subsystems (economy, law, politics, education, science, sport etc.). These processes occur on various spatial scales, operate differently in each functional subsystem, involve complex and tangled causal hierarchies rather than a simple, unilinear, bottom-up or top-down movement, and often display an eccentric 'nesting' of the different scales of social organization. This implies in turn, of course, that globalization is liable to uneven development in spatio-temporal terms. Nonetheless, globalization can be said to increase insofar as the co-variation of relevant activities is spatially more extensive and/or occurs more rapidly. (Jessop 2000: 339–40)

Here, Jessop invokes the processes of ‘time-space distantiation’ (Giddens 1981: 90; spelt as ‘distanciation’) that chronologically and spatially ‘stretches’ societies and ‘time-space compression’ that, via the capitalist motor of history, speeds them up and appears to ‘shrink’ space ‘to a “global village” of telecommunications’ (Harvey 1989: 240). As can be discerned from earlier discussions in this book, the global mega media sport event manifests as a perfect – if by nature untypical – instance of these processes at work. But such spectacular instances of globally mediated sport do not explain in themselves how different processes are ‘organized within certain emergent, irreversible global outcomes that move backwards and forwards between the more localized and more global levels’ (Urry 2003: 96). For Urry, the global might be seen in performative terms, as something that is necessarily elusive and constantly made and remade through signification, rather than available to be grasped independently of its own construction. As was hinted above regarding the comparatively late and restricted circulation of globalization as word and concept until the past decade, trying to come to terms with globalization requires a critically reflexive and flexible intellectual engagement with an analytical object that is both external and internal to the analyst. Interrogating globalization is part search for the macrovariables that produce ‘irreversible global outcomes’, part sceptical challenge to the very terms and tools that create a global ‘mirage’ that seems to disappear in the haze at the precise moment when it seems close at hand. The secrets of the global, including its relationship to media and sport, can never be unlocked, therefore, by seductively mechanical models of ‘over-determination’ in any – even the last – instance. In an earlier work (Miller *et al.* 2001: 4) I and colleagues treated globalization as part of

five simultaneous, uneven, interconnected processes which characterize the present moment in sport: Globalization, Governmentalization, Americanization, Televisualization, and Commodification (GGATaC). They are in turn governed by a New International Division of Cultural Labour (NICL). Hence the paradox ... that the processes nominated by GGATaC operate in both complementary and contradictory ways. It is not appropriate to view globalization as always already a homogenizing force ... Yet many components of globalization are common across sites, leading to the acceptance of certain governing rules, media norms, and economic tendencies. (Miller *et al.* 2001: 4)

Living and operating with paradox, contradiction and complexity may be a little frustrating, but they are essential elements of a tenable analytical approach to global media sport. To take a conspicuous example, it is often claimed that the coming of globalization means the end of nation states as we have known them (Beck 2000), although many theorists regard predictions of their demise as premature (e.g. Held 1991). As I argued in Chapter 2, the rise of the nation state, media and sport was more or less coterminous in modernity, and so it is impossible to consider globalization and the nation–media–sport triad in isolation from each other. Although the nation state as legal entity and the nation as sociocultural formation are not identical, their relationship remains pivotal – for example, as discussed, with regard to media regulation (although weakened in the digital age) and international sport event hosting. The ripple

effect of the decline of nations in media sport would be profound indeed but, as I have registered at various points in this book, international sport competition and global sports television have both been deeply dependent on the prominence and integrity of nations as sources of the necessary affect and identity that invest many of the most prominent sports contests (even those, like Grand Slam tennis tournaments, that are between individual competitors, not national representatives) with meaning-laden competitive tension. Nations are not only integral to the governance and organization of major sport, then, but they also organize them in visual and aural presentational terms that are essential to the dynamic spectacle of media sport. It is difficult to imagine any international tournament or contest in team sports without players bearing national insignia and spectators draped in national colours and voicing support in nationally significant ways. Major sports contests contained within nations are no less opportunities for national display – as, for example, in the patriotic flag waving evident in every Super Bowl and especially in times of conflict and war (Falcous and Silk 2005). It is for such reasons that I have been sceptical about propositions that globalization is bringing about the demise of the sporting nation. Hence, at a time when, perhaps, the globalization literary industry was at its most effervescent, I produced an article (Rowe 2003) that was both auto-critique and scholarly field provocation. It is useful in this closing chapter to revisit the questions that animated ‘Sport and the Repudiation of the Global’ and the dialogue that it stimulated with leading sport scholars David Andrews and George Ritzer (2007), whose ‘The Grobal in the Sporting Glocal’ was a friendly but critical response to it.

Global, local, glocal and grobal

In brief, I raised in the article the question of ‘whether sport, despite appearances and, especially, the spectacular instances of global mega media sports events like the Olympics and the football World Cup (not forgetting the more routine forms of mediatized sport circulated around the globe), may be constitutively unsuited to carriage of the project of globalization in its fullest sense’ (Rowe 2003: 281). In suggesting this possibility I sought to go beyond the orthodoxy of cultural nationalist resistance and ‘glocal’ adaptations under an unevenly achieved globalization, indicating ‘more radically, that the social institution of sport is so deeply dependent on the production of difference that it repudiates the possibility of comprehensive globalization while seeming to foreshadow its inevitable establishment’ (Rowe 2003: 281–2). The particular form of globalization at issue here is cultural, although a modified argument might have been made for other forms, political, technological, economic and so on. In very brief summary, my conclusion is that national culture is so central to the sporting formation that globalization, interpreted as the process via which ‘the relationship between sport and *national* identity is self-evidently unravelling to reveal an increasingly global sporting culture’ (Bairner 2001), is incapable of what is so often claimed for it – the progressive dismantlement of nations

under the sign of the global and, in the final analysis, the erasure of distinctive local cultures, including those surrounding sport. If this is a challenge to the harder edge of globalization as homogenization, rather than to more qualified and cautious perspectives, it is precisely because the rhetorical uses of the concept of globalization, not least within prevailing discourses of the coming of global sport, as Bairner (2001: 6) puts it, are as frequently posited by both optimistic and pessimistic commentators (among which I would count myself in some recorded and unrecorded utterances) as ‘inevitable and all-consuming’. Bairner (2001: 176) concludes his book with approving reference to Maguire’s (1994, 1999) application of the ‘diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties’ formulation (off which Chapter 2 ‘riffed’), without wishing

to deny the extent to which global capitalism has affected the ways in which sport is played, administered, packaged, and watched throughout the world. This has clearly compressed the distance between the sporting nations of the world both physically and metaphorically. Indeed, as far as the most popular sports are concerned we can actually recognize the emergence and consolidation of a global sporting political economy involving the sale of merchandise, sponsorship, labor migration, and so on. (Bairner 2001: 176)

For Bairner, sport and globalization are ‘accomplices’ in preserving national identity in the face of ‘supranationalist tendencies’, bringing national identities to the fore at the very moment that sport is at its most global – the Olympics and the World Cup. But there are still uncertainties about the ways in which the global and the local can be theorized in relational terms. In their response to my article Andrews and Ritzer (2007: 136) argue that

[it] falsely polarizes globalization and localization in a manner that implicitly privileges, perhaps even romanticizes, the local ...

Rather than articulating the global and the local as polarities upon the globalization continuum (an approach which virtually necessitates the privileging of one pole over the other), it is important to view the ‘complementary and interpenetrative’ relations linking homogenization and heterogenization, universalism and particularism, sameness and difference, and the global and the local; the global being complicit in the ‘creation and incorporation’ of the local, and *vice versa*. (Robertson 1995)

Instead of positing the global against the local, Andrews and Ritzer (2007: 137) prefer to use one established neologism (the *glocal/globalization*) alongside another of Ritzer’s (the *grobal/globalization*):

assumption that virtually no ‘areas and phenomena throughout the world are unaffected by globalization’ (Ritzer 2004: xiii). This implies the declining, or even disappearing, relevance of the local and the need to reconceptualise virtually everything we think of as local as *glocal*. Rather than viewing the core tension as existing being between the global and the local, and certainly as evidenced within the sporting realm, our contention is that the *local* has been so effected [sic] by the *global*, that it has become, at all intents and purposes, *glocal* (Ritzer 2004: xiii, xi). Thus, the processual and empirical continuum through which we conceptualize

globalization is bounded by *grobalization* ('the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas') and *glocalization* ('the interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas'): the *grobal* and the *glocal*. (Ritzer 2006: 337–8)

In providing concrete examples of this dual model, they then offer 'four suggestive sporting scenarios' that display 'the necessary, but never guaranteed, interpenetrative relationship between the grobal and the glocal' (Andrews and Ritzer 2007: 137): 'indigenous incorporation', 'corporate re-constitution', 'universal differentiation' and 'dichotomous agency'. Thus, Andrews and Ritzer present what they see as a hard-headed analysis that emphasizes conventional notions of political, economic and cultural imperialism under late modernism attached to the project of globalization at the expense of more 'decentred' postmodern-influenced romanticizations of the peripheral that, for them, amount to an unfortunate drift towards the aforementioned 'globaloney'.

This debate has brought to the surface important matters that require continuous, critically reflexive analysis. Andrews and Ritzer are quite right to critique residual romanticization of the local, not only because it cannot be assumed that sociocultural structures and practices in relatively insulated environments are inherently superior (Miller *et al.* 2001) but also, as has been shown throughout this book, it is increasingly difficult to establish the boundaries of the local that is being romanticized. That homogenization and heterogenization are forces in constant interplay means that, as represented by the concept of glocalization, '[c]ulturally, as well as socially, economically and politically, the contemporary world can be characterized as involving dialectics of sameness and difference' (Inglis and Hughson 2003: 224). These dialectics are played out in diverse ways in wide-ranging debates surrounding cosmopolitanism, mobilities, hybridity, 'liquid modernity' and so on (Bauman 2000; Creswell 2006; Harindranath 2006; Urry 2007), although several contributions to it counsel caution that the spatial and ideational horizons of much of the world's population are empirically much more restricted than many theorists allow (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2004; Turner and Khonder 2010). In seeking to understand this cultural complexity in sport, it is also, as Andrews and Ritzer argue, important not to downplay the 'transnational strategizing' (Andrews and Ritzer 2007: 141) of News Corp, Nike, FIFA or the IOC by which they are 'able to seamlessly operate within the language of the sporting glocal, simultaneously, in multiple locations' (Andrews and Ritzer 2007: 145). Each of the sporting scenarios they present 'exhibit – in varying ways and to varying intensities – the necessary, but never guaranteed, interpenetrative nature of the relationship between the sporting grobal and the sporting glocal' (Andrews and Ritzer 2007: 148). Thus, by both 'problematizing the very possibility of the local within conditions of intensive and extensive globalization (leading to the concept of the glocal), and simultaneously reinscribing the importance of the global (through the concept of the grobal)' their schema, they contend, 'represents a more useful and insightful model for examining the contemporary sporting popular' (Andrews and Ritzer 2007: 148–9).

While, as should be obvious from the previous comments, the global-glocal schema of Andrews and Ritzer has much to commend it, it is in my view limited by its implicit assumption of the 'triumph' of the global. Thus, it tends to attach the global exclusively to the 'imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations and the like' and associates the glocal with either the strategic adaptation of (mostly Western, capitalist) products, practices and so on to local environments or the strategic negotiation and modification of them by local actors. As I have argued in this book, these are crucial factors, but it is an almost exclusively action-response model that takes little apparent account of those factors that are in various respects chaotic, blind, non-linear, unpredictable, unconscious and unintended (Urry 2003). The analytical account that I have offered of the global media sports cultural complex conceives it as profoundly influenced not only by the major organizations motivated by capital, governmental authority and ideological power but also by much more diffuse, informal and elusive pleasures, identities and collective meanings. Andrews and Ritzer's schema gives primacy to the former which, having destroyed 'to all intents and purposes' the possibility of the local, would seem only to need to agree to favourable terms with it. This is because, despite their *caveat* that the interpenetration of the relationship between the sporting global and sporting glocal is 'never guaranteed', it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise within their model given its rather etiolated conception of the local component of the glocal.

The sceptical-rationalist approach of Andrews and Ritzer has analytical virtue, but it ironically echoes the stern admonitions of false consciousness delivered by some Marxists to adherents of disapproved forms of popular culture (Rowe 1995). Their criticism, for example, of the campaign against News Corp by the South Sydney Rabbitohs in gaining reinstatement to Australia's National Rugby League ('What on the surface appears to be a "glocal alternative" may in fact have become an example of the globalization of cultural processes and practices that exudes the *nothingness* associated with globality', Rowe 1995: 147) and of anti-Glazer (the club's American owners) Manchester United fans (for having 'fallen foul of fetishizing the sporting glocal, by not acknowledging the global relations complicit in the structure and experience of contemporary sport forms', Rowe 1995: 148) is not only a little harsh on those concerned but also tends towards the tautological in arguing that globality and nothingness will get them in the end. There is no doubt that such localist movements do display a certain narrowness of vision, parochialism and naivety, but characteristics of this kind are not only common aspects of mobilizing rhetorics but also of sport fandom itself. So it could be argued that if all sporting affiliation, activism and fandom were to be held so strictly to account, then almost any sport-related affect would be found wanting. Because sports culture is so suffused with myths of belonging and identity, it is rather improbable that they can be avoided in popular campaigning around sport – indeed, they invest popular politics with a rhetorical power that would surely be absent in baldly 'acknowledging the global relations complicit in the structure and experience of contemporary sport forms'.

South Sydney's reinstatement to the National Rugby League (NRL) and subsequent retention was, in fact, achieved despite the High Court of Australia ultimately finding in favour of News Limited (News Corp's Australian subsidiary) on appeal (Davies 2003). The 'grobal' was, no doubt, registered with its subsequent ownership by Australian–New Zealand Hollywood actor Russell Crowe, a long-term fan and Sydney resident, and in the continuing involvement of News Corp in the NRL (both as broadcaster and, until its planned exit in 2011, as co-owner). However, the campaign was successful in its own terms and the club still retains a strongly local (especially indigenous Australian) character without, of course, ever being able to return to a 'pure' localism given, among other changes, the urban gentrification of parts of its locale. In the case of Manchester United, as was discussed in Chapter 2, it is at the time of writing still owned by the Glazers, with the highly localist breakaway semi-professional club FC United of Manchester continuing to play in a much lower league. If, as has been proposed, a member-based ownership for Manchester United transpires, it would be less grobal while inevitably remaining substantially so as part of the deeply commercial EPL. In other words, the stern test of the local set by Andrews and Ritzer for all those who invoke the local in professional sport is certain to be failed (as, no doubt, was my own test for sport's 'carriage of the project of globalization in its fullest sense', Rowe 2003: 281). But, as argued throughout this book, the age of pre-modernist folk sport is irrevocably lost, while, following Williams (1977), still being present in residual cultural form as part of contemporary sport's constitutive mythological structure. The dual neologisms of sporting grobal/glocal would seem best to apply to the specific contact zone where transnational organizations and national/local organizations meet (e.g. club takeovers, international broadcast rights contracts or new branches and competitions of overseas sports in non-originary territories), with the global and the local remaining as ideal typical constructions that embrace, more comprehensively and loosely, the flows, forms and futures evident across the whole global media sports cultural complex.

I have explored and elaborated on this debate over the global, local, glocal and grobal in sport in some detail in order to demonstrate that the field of global media sport retains its intellectual vitality and broad, deep relevance across society and culture. My provocation concerning sport's repudiation of the global, in eliciting Andrews and Ritzer's critique of 'a concern for narrower and more specific elements such as the actor, the local and even the glocal' (Andrews and Ritzer 2007: 149), reveals how this field of inquiry can advance through vigorous but constructive debate. It would be hoped that other researchers and scholars in this field can take it further, not least by those outside the Anglo-sphere, in critically analysing global/local forces in sport and the range of histories, political economic processes and sociocultural dynamics that produce global media sport in both its standardized and distinctive forms. This discussion has also suggested ways in which interventions might be made in the global cultural politics of media sport.

A cultural politics of global media sport

In this book it is hoped that rich possibilities have been glimpsed concerning not only ways of researching global media sport but also of translating that critical knowledge into some beneficial impact on the object of analysis and its sociocultural milieu. The concept that I have foregrounded in this respect has been cultural citizenship in contending that, as sport has globalized, its social, cultural and political importance in both national and transnational contexts has been enhanced. Gerard Delanty (2002: 64) connects cultural citizenship succinctly to 'common experiences, learning processes and discourses of empowerment. The power to name, create meaning, construct personal biographies and narratives by gaining control over the flow of information, goods and cultural processes is an important dimension of citizenship as an active process'. Apart from some 'control over the flow' of culture, it is also important not to be bypassed and marginalized by flows controlled by others. In this regard, mediated sport relates directly to the politics of inclusion and exclusion that condition the rights of 'global citizens' to participate, where they so choose, in significant sports events and rituals that signify active membership in communal life. Some brief indicative examples can be mentioned here in proposing areas where the cultural politics of sport can be usefully practised.

One key area that I have emphasized has been free access to televised sport of demonstrable cultural significance. As we have seen, within nations it has been necessary for citizens to mobilize to prevent the siphoning of key national sports events onto exclusive subscription platforms, while the same vigilance is necessary with regard to global media sport events. Communication and media technology innovations have, furthermore, caused disturbances in relationships between sports organizations, media companies, telecommunications corporations, viewers and sport fans, and it is necessary for current laws and regulations in media sport to keep up with these changes in order to preserve and, as necessary, extend the rights of cultural citizenship pertaining to them. Decisions on funding priorities of governments in sport are open to informed, vigorous debate, as is sport's role in international development aid. In cases where the importation of slickly marketed sports brands has marginalized local sports, where there is exploitation of a local and foreign sports labour force and corrupt conduct by sports organizations and personnel, there are many opportunities to exert pressure for appropriate action from national and supranational authorities. The global commercial exploitation of sport has, it has been noted, sometimes led to the relative disempowerment of sports fans and their consequent organization and cooperation to prevent or reverse alienation from their own cultural experience, including assuming greater ownership and control of the clubs that they support. Grass-roots, voluntary fan and other non-government organizations can also be effective, with the assistance of government, media and sports bodies, to counter prejudice and discrimination within sport in such vital areas as racism, sexism and homophobia. In particular, preventing the use of sport as a vehicle for fomenting conflict is an important task for fan groups as, more proactively, is the use of sport as an agent of peace and intercultural dialogue in zones of conflict (Sugden 2010).

Because of the frequent failure of the sport and general news media to discharge their ‘fourth-estate’ watchdog role in the sphere of sport and society, there is a simultaneous need for demanding mainstream media users and inquisitive citizen journalists. It is also important to scrutinize, and intervene in, regimes of representation in media sport, not least those involving the routine stereotyping that disparages and degrades athletes and fans alike (Birrell and McDonald 2000). In their collection on sports media and identity, Hundley and Billings (2010) use:

concrete examples from mediasport to further the contention that the portrayal of identity – whether it involves gender, sexuality, nationality, race, disability, or fan affiliation, is a part of a grand negotiation between those who enact, produce, consume and institutionalize sport and the mechanisms that rise from it ... The way in which mediasport is represented and consumed can speak volumes about whom and what a society strives to be; the negotiation of identity plays an integral role in this process as well. (Billings and Hundley 2010: 12–13)

This is an area that I have touched on only lightly in this book, not as a judgement of its importance but of focus – that is, by emphasizing the flows, forms and futures of global media sport I have concentrated on its (mobile) scaffolding rather than its detailed interior design in each of its zones and sites. The intention has been to help create an analytical structure for authors and readers to apply their own stress tests, searching out weaknesses, challenging assumptions and conclusions, exposing inconsistencies and filling in gaps. There are many subjects that have not been given the kind of detailed attention that they demand. For example, there has been much greater emphasis on men’s than women’s sport (or at least male-dominated sport) and on men rather than women *in* sport (the concerns of such work as Creedon 1994; Hargreaves 1994; Messner 2002; Pfister and Hartmann-Tews 2003; Scraton and Flintoff 2002). Also, the primary focus has been on sports (even those that have been highly modified, such as Twenty20 cricket) that are fairly traditional, orthodox and established professional sports, rather than those, such as so-called lifestyle or extreme sports, that are a developing – and by no means negligible – feature of the media sports cultural complex (see, for example, Kusz 2007; Rinehart and Sydnor 2003; Robinson 2008; Wheaton 2004). The mitigating argument advanced in countering this reasonable charge is that this analysis has largely followed where the power in global media sport historically, currently and for the foreseeable future lies. A compendious work would do more in this area – but this is not a compendium, and as author I would – not too self-servingly, it is hoped – point to an *oeuvre* that engages in greater scope and depth with the critical reading of media sport texts and interrogation of their ideologies of dominance.

The subject of global media sport is so large, diverse and mutable, and the task so daunting, as to call into being a critical global media sport scholarship that at present resembles (in a laboured genuflection to the poetry of Yeats) a slouching rough beast whose hour has come at last. By this I mean that a highly promising aspect of the maturation of this research field is the fuller participation of those from the spaces once known as the periphery whose

media sport contexts have been talked *about*, largely in ignorant extrapolation, by those at its imperial intellectual core. To pluck one example among myriad potential ones, Sumei Wang (2009: 370) argues that

the case of baseball in Taiwan illustrates a complicated interpenetration of colonialism, class, ethnicity, and nationalism. The meaning of baseball in Taiwan is therefore unique. Baseball in Taiwan is a good example in showing that some practices introduced from abroad are actively sought out and welcomed, indeed loved by members of the host population and are culturally enriching. All global flows do not fit into the category of oppressive imperialist imposition, in which the host culture figures as passive recipient or victim. A globalised world is not necessarily a homogenizing world or a world where all existing orders are being replaced. In fact, people often appropriate and domesticate foreign imports to fit their needs.

The story of baseball in Taiwan demonstrates how a foreign sport can take on different meanings when it circulates into different places. The spreading popularity of baseball does not represent a circulation of a fixed message from its country of origin, the United States, to the rest areas, such as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. New meanings and experiences of baseball are created along with local traditions and social structures. (Sumei Wang 2009: 370)

My lay and scholarly knowledge of Taiwanese baseball is slight to the point of negligible; yet Wang's knowledge of its historical, political and sociocultural dimensions, when coupled with a flexible theory of globalization (honed in Lancaster via Taipei), is an effective illustration of how critical work in this area can illuminate not only the 'functional subsystem' of sport (as Jessop describes it above) but also its place and role within both individual societies and the world at large. This globalization of global media sport research is crucial to a field dominated by Western, mostly white scholars and their concerns (McDonald 2010; Rowe and Gilmour 2008). All researchers and scholars in this field, though, irrespective of their orientation and origin, can be confident that their subject will continue, voluntarily or by default, to feature in the lives of many (if not most) of the people of the earth. They will also have discovered that, as with a live mediated sport event, the object of their gaze is changing in front and beneath them, and it is ill advised to look away for too long.