

and degradation and to condemning the media as most directly responsible. Some commentators remain anchored to a paradigm of divisions and exclusions which does not correspond at all to the movement of integration and differentiation which our modernized societies are living in great part thanks to the impulses of the marketplace. This movement - as Garcia-Canclini explains - "resituates art and folklore, or academic knowledge and industrialized culture under relatively similar conditions. The work of the artist and the artisan draws closer when each one of them experiences that the specific

sociology: the reorganization of hegemonies in a time when the State can no longer command or mobilize the cultural field. The State is limited to defending its autonomy, guaranteeing the freedom of its actors and ensuring opportunities of access to diverse social groups, while the marketplace assumes the role of coordinating the cultural field and ensuring that it remains dynamic. At the same time, cultural experiences have ceased to correspond exclusively and linearly to the sites and practices of ethnic, race and social class groupings, as neither modernity nor tradition delimits exclusive social or aesthetic boundaries. While there is a traditionalism of the lettered elites which has nothing to do with that of the popular sectors, there is a modernism in which the greater part of the upper and middle classes "get together" with the majority of the popular classes, brought together by the tastes molded by the cultural industries.

The integration and reorganization of differences play a part in the reconstitution of social relations. But while in the countries at the center the postmodern eulogy of difference is leading to a growing scepticism about any type of community, according to N. Lechner the ascension of diversity and heterogeneity to social value in our countries will only be possible if it is articulated with a collective order, one that is linked to some notion or form of community. This is at the basis of our challenge and on the horizon of our work: the research and teaching of communication, in which the advancement of knowledge of the social translates not only into a renovation of problems and methods but also into projects which can link the development of communication to the strengthening and growth of forms of urban coexistence.

symbolic order in which they are nurtured is redefined by the logic of the marketplace. Less and less are they able to withdraw from modern information and iconography, or from the disenchantment with their self-centered worlds and the re-enchantment which is offered by the spectacle of the media."

There is a third border zone to explore jointly by communication and

Further Readings.

- J.J. Brunner, *El espejo trizado*. Santiago, Flacso, 1988.
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 G. Colmenares, *Las convenciones contra la cultura*. Bogota: Tercer Mundo, 1987.
 N. Garcia Canclini, *Culturas híbridas*. Mexico: Grijalbo, 1991.
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 G. Maramba, *Razon, etica y politica*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1989.
 A. Salazar, *No nacimos pa'semilla*. Bogota: Cinep, 1990.
 R. Schwarz, "Nacional por sustraccion," *Punto de Vista* 28, 1986.
 A. Silva, *maginarios urbanos*. Bogota: Tercer Mundo (forthcoming).

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Post-Marxist Post-Modern Cultural Populism From Birmingham to Bogota?

BY Nick Witheford

Jesús Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture & Hegemony: From Media to Mediation*. Translated by Elizabeth Fox. London: Sage Publications, 1992.

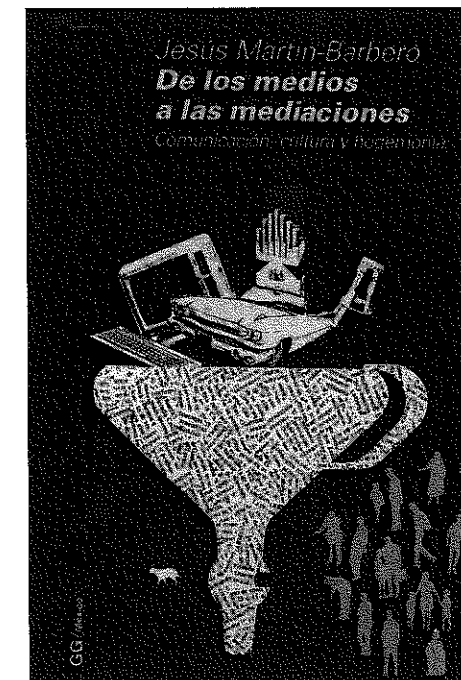
The translation of this work by one of Latin America's leading communication theorists has a twofold importance, for it not only opens a richly informed perspective on the relation of media and social movements in the South, but it also makes a provocative contribution to controversies current within cultural studies in the North.

According to Martín-Barbero, Latin America's crises of the 70s and 80s—including the rise and fall of military dictatorships, triumphs and defeats for revolutionary socialism, and the appearance of new forms of popular mobilization—have compelled its left intellectuals to rethink the role of mass communications in social change. Focus has shifted "from media to mediations." Theories of "media manipulation" which saw the controllers of the mass media unilaterally imposing ideological domination on passive audiences "without the slightest indication of seduction or resistance" now seem inadequate. In their place is emerging a more complex sense of "mediations," stressing the "articulation between practices of communication and social movements," and the possibilities for resistance and reappropriation in the reception of media messages.

To grasp these processes Martín-Barbero develops a theory of the interaction between "popular" and "mass" culture. The concept of "the popular" is, he argues, one misunderstood by both left and right—too swiftly absorbed by Marxists into reductive schemas of class, and by conservatives into the image of the vulgar masses. What is needed now is a rediscovery of "the people" in the sense better understood by 19th century Romanticism and anarchism—as the subordinate, potentially insurgent sector of society whose boundaries exceed those of the proletariat and embrace a multiplicity

of cultural experiences.

In the case of Latin America, with its tortuous colonial and post-colonial history, this means recognizing "the popular" as constituted by *mestizajes*—mixtures, compounding native, peasant and urban identities in a series of densely layered, historically dynamic hybridizations. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, capitalist modernization has attempted the "massification" of these *mestizajes*, violently assimilating them to a model of progressive rationalism in the name first of the nation state and then of the global market. In this project the mass media has been allocated a major role as an instrument of enculturation.



However—and this is Martín-Barbero's crucial point—massification cannot wholly succeed in the destruction of popular cultures, for "There is no imposition from above which does not imply, in some form, an incorporation of what comes from below." Mass culture aims to win consent for development by "covering over differences and reconciling tastes." But this is possible historically only to the extent that it simultaneously "deforms and activates" the content of pre-existing knowledges and traditions. The mass media is caught up in an intricate interplay of submission and resistance, opposition and complicity, because "Contrary to the predictions of social implosion and depoliticization, the masses still 'contain'—in the double sense of control and

conserve within—the people." There is thus a sense in which "subversion is imbedded in integration."

Martín-Barbero stresses that in affirming the resilience of the popular he is not seeking a nostalgic rescue of 'authentic' archaisms, but rather tracking a living process in which popular memory interacts with communicative innovation to generate "new combinations and syntheses . . . that reveal not just the racial mixture that we come from but the interweaving of modernity and the residues of various cultural periods, the mixtures of social structures and sentiments." With examples ranging through Mexican cinema, Argentinean radio, black music in Brazil and Chilean journalism he shows how the subordinate classes 'take' the products of the culture industry and "resemanticize" them in the context of their own neighborhoods and struggles. The media is in turn obliged to acknowledge the demands issuing from below, creating "a popular that appeals to us from the mass." Thus, for example, Martín-Barbero insists that Latin America's famous form of soap opera, the telenovela, is no mere instrument of capitalist indoctrination, but rather articulates an idiom of passion and moralism which lies outside the bounds of modernizing rationalism, thereby "allowing the people as a mass to recognize themselves as the authors of their own history" and providing a language for "the popular forms of hope."

By this point, readers familiar with British and North American cultural studies may themselves experience a certain sense of recognition. For Martín-Barbero's work, issuing from the University of Cali, near Bogota, Colombia, has surprising affinities with the line of thought that has burgeoned in the wake of Stuart Hall and the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies. This is no accident. Eruditely internationalist, Martín-Barbero parallels many of the theoretical moves which have shaped the revived interest in popular culture in the North. Thus the Frankfurt school's pessimism is punctured with the help of the perkier Benjamin; Gramsci is invoked in his familiar guise as the theoretician of rule by consent, rather than coercion; there is an acknowledged debt to the work of Williams and



Hoggart. The net result of this global theoretical *mestizaje* is firmly to situate Martín-Barbero's work within a larger school of leftist thought characterized by an insistence on the constitutive—rather than merely 'superstructural'—role of culture in reproducing social reality, a preference for semiosis over economics, an emphasis on audiences' 'resistant' readings of media, and a view of hegemonic struggle pitting, not class against class, but, as Hall puts it, "the popular forces against the power bloc."

As Hall and his colleagues reacted against the idea of people as "cultural dupes," endlessly defrauded by an omnipotent capitalist cultural industry, so Martín-Barbero's work takes issue with radical analyses representing the inhabitants of South as hapless victims of the multinational corporations' media bombardment. If the classic instance of such cultural "dependency theory" was Dorfman and Mattelart's critique of Donald Duck as an agent of imperialism, a counter-example for Martín-Barbero's perspective might be the 'Superbarrio' figure, lifted from the pages of Superman comics by the inhabitants of Mexico City's slums as a symbol of their fight for livable neighborhoods.

But despite broad similarities to Anglo-Saxon cultural studies, Martín-Barbero's post-colonial perspective yields distinctive theoretical insights from which we in the North should learn. Here one might single out his emphasis on collective "memory" as a vital element in the construction of oppositional identity. A catastrophic history of exterminations and disappearances has clearly made the remembering of peoples, places and communities erased by official terror crucial to Latin America's liberation movements. Charged with this background, Martín-Barbero's concept of "popular memory" assumes a particular depth and urgency. This is accentuated by the prominent place his concept of popular *mestizajes* gives to the struggle for cultural survival waged by indigenous and rural communities. Understanding continuities with the pre-capitalist and pre-colonial past as living resources for resistance, rather than mere anachronistic hangovers, Martín-Barbero foregrounds issues that are central for ethnic minorities, aboriginal peoples and immigrant communities, but which are only beginning to be moved from the margins of academic attention in Canada.

In doing so he also by implication raises the profound complicity of so many strands of 'Northern' popular culture in a colonial history of genocide, slavery and racism.

Elsewhere, however, Martín-Barbero displays blindspots common throughout the discourse of 'cultural studies.' Justifiably determined to shake free of monolithic, Eurocentric visions of the industrial working class as the sole agent of social change, he adopts a highly pluralistic concept of "the people" as a source of effervescent heterogeneity welling up against an homogenization imposed from above. But equating diversity with subversion displaces attention from vertical subordination to horizontal variety. This is apparent in Martín-Barbero's treatment of gender, where the relatively benign discussions of machismo and of the domestic sphere scarcely take account of feminist critique. Moreover, in rejecting the "mythos of the proletariat" he also discards any precise analysis of changing class composition, thereby throwing the baby out with the bath water. His reaction against Marx thus veers toward a characteristically postmodernist depoliticization—very evident in recent Anglo-American cultural studies—whereby the celebration of difference eclipses systematically structured inequality.

Equally problematic is the de-emphasis of media production that accompanies Martín-Barbero's theory of "mediation." Attention to the strategies of reception is a real advance over assumptions that the ideological valency of messages can be simply 'read off' from the structures of media ownership. However, fascination with 'audience resistance'—now ubiquitous throughout cultural studies—slides easily toward denial of any specificity or determining power to the moment of production. At the extreme, this reinstates an ultra-subjectivised doctrine of 'consumer sovereignty.' Affirming the symbolic reappropriation of cultural products, Martín-Barbero downplays the importance of materially appropriating the means of cultural production. But retreat from issues of ownership and control risks circumscribing the left's cultural activity within an essentially reactive space, endlessly salvaging telenovelas and game shows, rather than fighting for the enlarged access to media resources which might permit the emergence of something new.

These issues ultimately bear on

the politics of cultural studies. While Martín-Barbero constantly suggests the potential for connecting popular culture with political mobilization, his concrete examples of such projects are rather skimpy. But the general direction of his thought is clear. For Martín-Barbero, the "rediscovery of the popular" is linked to a political reevaluation by the Latin American left, which, he believes, has resulted in a rejection of the armed, anti-parliamentary, class-based struggles of the 70s in favour of an approach rooted in the democratization and cultivation of civil society. It is thus part of a move away from the "politics of total transformation" toward a more pragmatic line.

Now, the assessment of strategies for the Latin American left is a matter for activists enduring the dangers of Bogota, Rio and Havana, not for academics safe in Vancouver. But insofar as Martín-Barbero's work may be enlisted to corroborate political realignments in the very different context of the North, comment is in order. This is especially so because of its affinity with that of another Latin American theorist, Ernesto Laclau, whose concepts of popular-democratic struggle have been so influential here in shaping 'post-Marxist' positions. A necessary challenge to ossified dogmatism, post-Marxism has also often simply rationalized a watering-down of radical commitments rendered unfashionable by a decade of neoconservatism. In the field of 'cultural studies' such dilutions are particularly ill-timed: for it is precisely within 'popular' cultural traditions that the threads of desire for totally transformative social change—change which would 'turn the world upside down'—have often run deepest and been stubbornly preserved during the most reactionary eras. Cultural studies' critical edge may depend on retaining its affiliation to these disturbingly unpragmatic, apocalyptic, frankly revolutionary energies. With so many leftist verities vanishing into air, we are surely engaged in making what Martín-Barbero, in one of his most telling metaphors, terms a "nocturnal map"; but working in the dark as we are, we can perhaps appreciate the many illuminations his work offers, while not agreeing with every aspect of his cartography.

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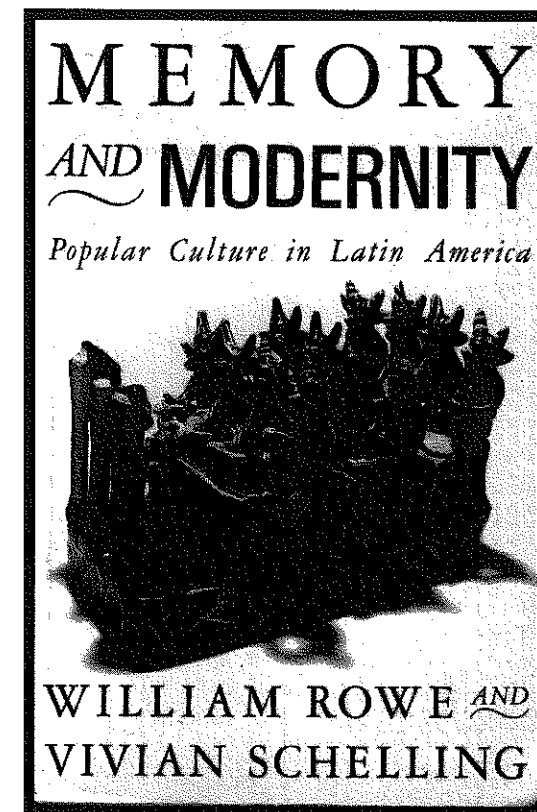
Resources for Memory

BY Michael Hoechsmann

William Rowe & Vivian Schelling, *Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America*. London: Verso, 1992.

A new generation of Latin American researchers is finding a powerful "optimism of the will" amongst the people of Latin America. *Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America* by William Rowe and Vivian Schelling marks the first major attempt to outline this emerging body of research and scholarship to an anglophone audience. The title of the book alludes to the two primary paths of this research: first, the excavation of the substratum of collective memory as it is embedded in popular cultural practices, the roots of which in some cases extend as far back as pre-conquest times; and, second, the exploration of how modernity in a Latin American context is lived and adapted through popular cultural practices, the "mediations" - to borrow a term from Jesús Martín-Barbero - by which people make sense of their worlds with mass media and commodity products.

Memory and Modernity not only frames the terms of reference for this new arena of debate, but it also offers a comprehensive journey through the terrain of Latin American popular culture, both historically and geographically. Ranging over a wide variety of popular cultural practices, Rowe and Schelling discuss soccer, samba, salsa, rock music, popular theater, community radio, comic books, soap operas, oral poetry and poetic duels, and religious syncretism, to mention only a sampling of topics covered. This entertaining, yet sometimes dizzying, collection of anecdotes provides the backdrop for the important theoretical insights developed by Rowe and Schelling from their own analysis and that of others, most notably Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini and Carlos Monsiváis.



Memory and Modernity is divided into four chapters, a theoretical introduction and a short conclusion. Unfortunately, the book is poorly integrated, and hence the quality is uneven.

While the introduction sparkles with promise, the rather long-winded and rambling Chapters 1 and 2 slow things down to a crawl and force the reader to do the writing, so to speak. This is a disappointment, because the material is extremely rich and suggestive, a testimony to much careful research. Chapters 3 and 4 are much more successfully integrated, simultaneously developing theoretical insights and historical anecdotes, and the conclusion briefly reframes some of the central questions posed in the introduction. Whether the publisher or the writers are at fault, *Memory and Modernity* has the feel of a very promising advanced draft of a manuscript that was rushed to market. Given that its publication pre-empts the imminent release of English translations of works by Martín-Barbero and García Canclini, this is more than a little bit problematic.

Rowe and Schelling contextualize their analysis in the global processes of late-twentieth-century capitalism where an eclectic array of cultural goods from a

wide variety of cultural environments "seems to offer an unbroken horizon." Two countervailing tendencies arise from this situation. First, is the tendency to "cultural homogenization" which, in its worst case scenario, results in "cultural death," and, second, is the possibility of dismantling "old forms of marginalization and domination and making new forms of democratization and cultural multiplicity imaginable." Rowe and Schelling maintain the tension between these opposing tendencies, warning that with the growing concern in the 1990s about the "globalization of the media" and "the defense of cultural multiplicity," it is important to resist "apocalyptic pessimism" about the former and "attempts to preserve 'purity'" in regards to the latter.

For an anglophone audience, the context of Latin America offers an opportunity to reconsider popular culture from another historical and geographical vantage point. Rowe and Schelling point out that the history of the relationship between modernity, nationhood and the mass media in the USA is often "taken as a model" for similar experiences elsewhere. To the contrary, the authors point out, "the different historical moments at which the culture industry becomes established give rise to crucial differences." Thus, for example, in the case of Brazil, "modernity arrived with the television rather than with the Enlightenment." The historical difference that marks Latin America "is the force of popular culture," where modernity has not entailed "the elimination of pre-modern traditions and memories but has arisen through them, transforming them in the process."

Rowe and Schelling distinguish between three principal interpretive narratives which have been used to circumscribe the role of popular culture. First, is the Romantic version of popular culture as "an authentic rural culture under threat from industrialization and the modern culture industry." Second, is

