

the conflation of popular culture with mass culture, "either as threat or solution." Finally, the perspective which most closely approximates that of the authors invests popular culture with an emancipatory and utopian optimism where the practices of subaltern groups are interpreted as "resources for imagining an alternative future society." Rowe and Schelling recognize that these perspectives are all flawed; the first is nostalgic, the second is pessimistic and the third is idealized.

Rowe and Schelling point out that, as an object of study, popular culture has been taken up within the disciplinary frameworks of folklore and mass culture. Folklore has a particular political resonance in Latin America "because of the crucial fact that its referent - the cultures thought of as folkloric - can be as much part of the present as of the past." Thus, folklore has been mobilized to the cause of fledgling nation states in an attempt to incorporate rural populations, either as a bank of "authenticity" or as "a way of referring to contemporary cultures which articulate alternatives to existing power structures."

Of course, Latin America should not be considered a homogenous entity, and, accordingly, the meanings ascribed to folklore have varied between countries and historical contexts. For example, the merging of the European tradition of carnival with the African roots of samba in Brazil incorporated racial difference into the nation, while in Mexico the effort to validate the artisanal products of the peasant population as national symbols was an attempt to incorporate the rural populations into the nation. On the other hand, a genuine attempt to "articulate alternatives" can be seen in the Nicaraguan literacy campaign where folklore - in the form of popular wisdom and poetry - became the material for social change. And, in Chile, the emergence of *arpilleras* - patchwork images made by women in the *poblaciones* around Santiago - has transformed an innocuous social practice into a powerful political tool.

While folklore can be seen to ground the popular into a particular set of lived practices which make up a whole way of life, mass culture appears as a set of technologies which conduct ideological messages to passive recipients. State Rowe and Schelling: "If the idea of folklore gives popular culture an ontological solidity, that of mass culture appears to

empty it of any content." A powerful research tradition which held sway during the 1970s in the study of Latin American communication processes - best known in the anglophone world through the work of Armand Mattelart and others - tended to adopt this view of mass culture, inflecting it with the analysis of cultural imperialism. Recent work, most notably that of Martín-Barbero and García Canclini, has attempted to recuperate the role of mass culture to a position of historical and political relevance in Latin America.

Rowe and Schelling point out that, for Martín-Barbero, the media are "vehicles or mediations of particular moments of the 'massification' of society, and not its source." In Latin America, the "secularization of popular memory is only partial," and thus, "the majority of television viewers in Latin America at the beginning of the 1990s... continue to participate in symbolic systems which combine pre-capitalist and capitalist worlds." Most importantly, and this is what distinguishes the current generation of communication researchers from those who came before, these viewers are seen to make their contribution at the point of reception. The media are not understood as "mere conveyors of messages but meeting-points of often contradictory ways of remembering and interpreting." The move from the media to the mediations humanizes the technological apparatus of the media by bringing social, cultural and historical contexts into the discussion.

Despite his useful insights, Martín-Barbero neglects a careful analysis of power relationships and thus opens himself up 'in the last instance' to charges of romantic cultural pluralism. García Canclini, on the other hand, combines the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Antonio Gramsci to investigate both the forms of power inscribed into symbolic processes and the impact of the capitalist market on popular cultural practices. Rowe and Schelling mention García Canclini's theory of "a market for symbolic goods" in a consumer society where the popular "becomes defined by the unequal access of the subaltern classes to this market." Through a process of "reconversion," or the "refashioning of cultural signs," the popular practices of the subaltern groups resist "being wholly absorbed into the dominant power structures." Among other examples, Rowe and Schelling report on the ceremony of "parading the commu-

nity-based radio station in a Brazilian shanty town as though it were a saint in a religious procession."

The Latin American context helps to problematize key concepts of Gramsci. For one, the authors argue, there is his "diminished relevance to situations of violence." Furthermore, as Jose Joaquin Brunner argues in his critique of García Canclini, "Gramsci's formulations, which belong to a different historical moment, are not necessarily appropriate to an age of simulation and hybridization." Finally, Latin America has not had to wait for the translation of Gramsci to start theorizing, or practicing, the popular. Figures such as José Martí, who led the movement to Cuban independence in 1895, and José Carlos Mariátegui, who struggled for an indigenous socialism for Peru in the 1920s, have long since set the terms for a serious engagement with popular culture. Revolutionary governments, such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, have recognized that their project was dependent on being firmly "rooted in the experience and language of the people."

Despite its aforementioned limitations, *Memory and Modernity* provides a rich resource for the history of Latin American popular cultural practices. Rowe and Schelling conclude their study with two important terms in contemporary Latin American cultural theory: hybridization - "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices" - and deterritorialization - "the release of cultural signs from fixed locations in time and space." Thus, for example, pre-capitalist practices can coexist with modern ones and rural practices can undergird urban ones. These fluid concepts suggest a cultural politics which is evolving and which can provide a resource for collective memory, both as a way of keeping cultural traditions alive and as a site for political mobilization.

Michael Hoehsmann is a student at The Ontario Institute For Studies in Education

Beyond Boundaries

BY W.F. Santiago Valles

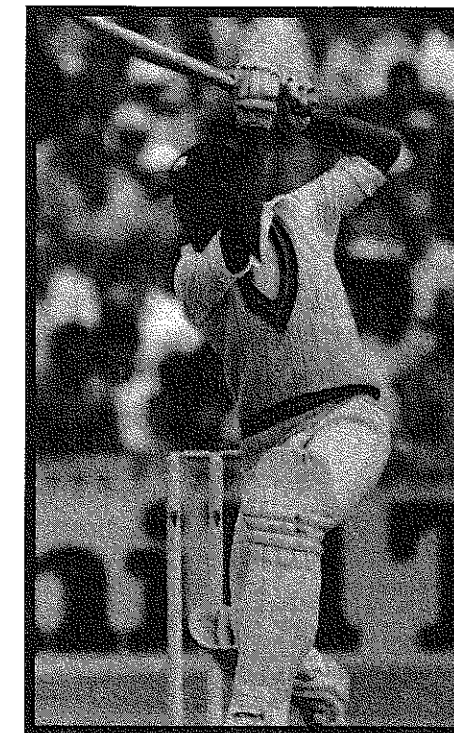
The C.L.R. James Reader, ed., Anna Grimshaw Oxford, U.K: Blackwell, 1992

If cultural studies addresses the relation between cultural industries and the organization of daily life, the forms through which meaning is negotiated, the historical understanding of the popular sectors and their cultural practices with an integrated overview of the social processes of communication, then it would be safe to say that C.L.R. James is a pioneer in the field within a Latin American perspective that is critical of European and North American influences. In *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), James writes that if you begin from what people do in their daily life, it is possible to understand their goals and values, their consciousness of obstacles and their strategies to overcome them.

During the last ten years, social debate in Latin America has turned on the character of our social formations, on the problems of culture and politics, on the applicability of the concept of hegemony, on the possibilities that limited economic growth might be enough to postpone an anti-capitalist revolution, and on the possible expansion of democracy beyond the limitations of the existing order. For James, as for others since, notably Agustin Cueva (author of *La Teoría Marxista* (1987) and *América Latina, En la Frontera de los Anos Noventa* (1989)), the separation of economic and cultural domination denies the problematic of imperialism and how the daily lives of people in the periphery are organized by state terror. The advice from progressive intellectuals in the North for gradual reforms in the South is based on this denial, as is the notion that social reforms in the North here are due to their own efforts instead of being the consequence of exploitation in the South.

Since the 1930s, C.L.R. James had been researching and writing about the place of social processes of communication in the organization of daily life within industrial capitalism, and about the relationship between European civilization and the new world. His interest in the relations between working people and dominant society had been pursued

through sports, labour relations, film, jazz, comic strips, the stories of marginalized women, soap operas on radio, West-Indian self-government, and detective stories. According to Anna Grimshaw, the editor of this anthology, these "case studies" were specific instances of a larger project on the relations between the creative possibilities of individuals and societies organized by relations of industrial capitalism. In his travels from the colonies to the metropolis, James studied how mass culture combines elements of the popular and dominant cultures, the social relations which make this process meaningful, as well as the historical evolution of the place of the audience.



Grimshaw refers to James' life work as the study of democracy in world history, as the search for an integrated experience of the relation between the parts of human existence made possible through an understanding of culture. In order to achieve this he had to make a clean break with metropolitan conceptions and look for clues in the daily practices of the popular sectors in the colonies. In James' own words, "to establish his own identity, Caliban, after three centuries, must himself pioneer into regions Caesar never knew" to discover the ways in which the working people in the West Indies made their own road as they travelled it.

This process began in the 1930s with the research for *Black Jacobins*, James' best known book. The history of Latin America's first war of national liberation in Haiti (1792-1803) is that of a Black people making revolution without an organized party. This study not only questioned European cultural leadership in the pursuit of self-government in the colonies, it also questioned the need for a trained vanguard given the evidence of a triumphant social movement within industrial capitalism. More than twenty years later when James began writing *American Civilization* he had moved from the canon to the daily life of the working people - the emerging social protagonist - for source material with which to integrate social history, dominant art forms and popular culture. James' interpretation of the Haitian revolution and the emerging protagonism of the collective subject was confirmed by the independence struggles after 1945. As Grimshaw states in her preface, James also believed the West Indies were in a privileged position to contribute to the liberation of the colonial world. For over two hundred and fifty years the region has experienced the spontaneous opposition of working people to the capitalist organization of their daily lives, and the symbols of those struggles had been adopted by European and North American students in the late sixties. The creative integration of social experience by working people in the new world confirmed James' notion that European civilization had lost the cultural initiative. For the student of cultural studies the inclusion in *The C.L.R. James Reader* of the theatrical script version of *Black Jacobins*, the section from *American Civilization* in which the work of Whitman and Melville is compared, and the section from *Beyond a Boundary* on the definition of art should be more than enough, but this anthology includes many other pieces that recommend it as worthwhile reading.

James' study of the Haitian revolution helped him understand that there is a liberation tradition in Latin America that does not depend on European leadership, and that understanding the way human experience has been integrated (in the region) to create something new is accessible through the study of cultural practices. With the study of the relation between mass culture and popular art forms in the U.S., James was expanding the scope of the vision used to address the conflict



between the formal support of democratic freedoms and state repression (both under Stalinism and McCarthyism). In a letter to Constance Webb (included in this collection) James insists that by giving the working people access to great art the cultural industries are making the contrast with their exploitation in production only more dramatic. The experience of reaching out for dominant knowledge could encourage a social movement that would reach out for everything in defense of the general interest.

This protagonism of the social subject in the new world was characteristic of industrial capitalism according to James. In another of the essays included in this anthology - "Preface to Criticism" - the author outlines a method of analysis whose evolution will be manifested in *Beyond a Boundary*. In both cases, the role of the audience, working people with a central role in history, is underscored. As the performance is symbolic of a larger social conflict, it gives the audience a better understanding of reality by increasing its awareness of the relations between the parts of the whole. The event is the interaction among the performers and the audience - whether it is a film, drama, dance or sport competition. In *Beyond a Boundary* James discusses the role of the newspaper in connecting world issues with daily life, in forging the natural popular that Jesús Martín-Barbero would write about twenty-five years later. Another ingredient in the process of nation building is the continuity of the cultural practices that carried our people through slavery, which James discusses in relation to the writing of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Ntozake Shange.

Like Julio Antonio Mella and José Carlos Mariátegui before him, James insisted that an economic crisis was also a period of cultural reorganization. Unlike Marcus Garvey, James thought that the popular sectors could find their own way in such a situation. Long before Antonio Gramsci, José Martí had written about the need to reappropriate the national popular in Latin America without falling prey to populism. This is the tradition to which Mella, Mariátegui, and James contributed with their understanding of culture and the popular. In more recent times, Anibal Quijano, Francisco Weffort, Octavio Ianni, and Walter Rodney have taken up the task.

In articles such as "Popular Art and the Cultural Tradition" included in this selection, James identifies the mass audience as an urban characteristic of monopoly capitalism, whose logic also organizes the cultural industries (particularly film). Since mass culture conditions the way that people make sense of their history, James thought that cultural criticism also had to connect with mass audiences, which, while divided by economic crisis and therefore denied access to decisive experiences, nonetheless kept filling the movie houses because films presented a contrast with their daily life. This is the integrated approach to the study of social processes of communication as social relations that Carlos Monsiváis and Jesús Martín-Barbero have continued and complemented.

According to Grimshaw, James had a method which started by rejecting the colonized middle class which was busy imitating their British masters. Through direct observation and conversation with the popular sectors, James collected detailed information about how they connected world history and everyday life. He then wrote to create a synthesis from these memories, a synthesis that locates the relation between the popular audience and cultural tradition in the context of social conflict. The discussion of his method can be found in the "Preface to Criticism" which is also in this volume. Whether the pretext was *Moby Dick* or cricket, the purpose of the research was to place the evolution of human goals and values in a historical context, in order to make sense of collective, conscious, organized action which succeeded because the leadership knew when to follow the working people.

In the late forties when James was discussing the relation between mass culture and working people to integrate creative work and social history, the construction of a method of cultural criticism which seeks to inform social intervention becomes apparent. As James identifies the links among daily life, mass culture and art, the creative role of the audience as economic and cultural protagonist becomes progressively clearer. Once again James proceeds by identifying the tradition that organizes the discussion and the conditions that raise the question about the relation between the individual and democracy; then he analyses why there is no suitable answer for the majority

within the existing relations of force. This is what he was writing about during the McCarthy period as he faced deportation, while others were denouncing their colleagues and principles to protect a tawdry career.

As a person of color from the West Indies, socialized outside the rigors of the British Empire, I have often turned to the writings of James and Walter Rodney in order to make sense of my Canadian experience. Their work has identified the difference between negotiable conditions of cultural consumption and non-negotiable conditions of production which deny the possibility of multiple interpretation is by the new social protagonists.

For those of us raised in the islands of the West Indies, adapting to the environment with ease and humour is a necessity. This was particularly the case under formal colonialism when the colonized lived on two worlds, especially the petit bourgeois elements involved in "cultural affairs." For the latter, everyday life was directed towards the pursuit of imperial standards. In one way or another they were the local collaborators of the colonial bureaucrats. With the new order of the unified imperial North the writers and commentators of mass culture are still an important issue in cultural studies. The publication of James' work gives us a point of reference and comparison with which to evaluate the current fashion of analyzing the lives of the uprooted.

C.L.R. James did well in the North, in spite of breaking the rules, and much of what he wrote about the cricketer Constantine in *Beyond a Boundary* could also be applied to him: "Without a nation, a national hero can expect little more than applause; a region that can not keep its best children at home does not deserve to have them." In these difficult times for Latin America, and especially for the Caribbean, the precise vision which informed James answers to our most pressing questions in a tradition which challenges the practice of the present generations.

Santiago Valles is a graduate student in the Department of Communication at Simon Fraser University.

The Same Old Tradition

BY Alan O'Connor

John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Everyone (or, at least, all readers of this magazine) would maintain that cultural imperialism is a bad thing. Intellectuals and media audiences (not exclusive categories) generally agree that countries with powerful media industries should not impose their products on Third World and traditional societies. John Tomlinson's main argument about the subject is that the protest against cultural imperialism is usually made by intellectuals and elites who, in the Third World as elsewhere, claim to speak for the ordinary person. The epigraph for his book is a remark by Gilles Deleuze to Michel Foucault: "You were the first to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others." The over-all effect of the book is to leave the field to the organic intellectuals of the transnational media corporations who find no indignity in taking far-reaching decisions for others.

In 1989 Central Television in Birmingham, England sent out a Christmas card with a photograph of an aboriginal family watching television in a remote part of Australia. It is evening and the family sits outside, their faces lit up by the luminous screen. Tomlinson begins his book by remarking that many readers will interpret the photo as evidence of the imposition of Western culture on a remote aboriginal community. The text on the Christmas card suggests this, but also notes that the community has set up its own broadcasting organization—the Walpiri Media Association—"to try to defend its unique culture from western culture." Tomlinson begins and ends his book with this image because he wants to argue that something rather different is happening and it is not media imperialism. He uses the photograph as a way of catching out readers in their assumption that this aboriginal family is watching advertisements or some foreign television series. Readers are forced to question their assumptions because in this photograph the family actually might be watching its



own community-produced programming.

The strategy here is exactly that of cable television companies who defend their monopoly control over the selection and distribution of video signals by pointing out that they do have a channel for local or public access programming. Tomlinson says nothing about the resources, the legal situation and the programming of the Walpiri Media Association. He does not compare its resources with those of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The reason for this is apparently that although he had easy access to the photograph which was distributed in England by Central Television, he did not have access to Eric Michaels' monograph on the Walpiri Media Association. *For a Cultural Future* is published by Art & Text in Melbourne and is not widely distributed.

In his introduction, Tomlinson acknowledges the irony of writing a book on media imperialism from England and publishing it in one of the world's hegemonic languages. He deals with this by invoking Blaise Pascal's advice to a young nobleman about his position of privilege. The advice was to remember that in his dealings with others that he was a nobleman only by accident of birth. This astonishing turn of argument may divert the reader's attention from a serious practical limitation of this book. Tomlinson has written a book on cultural imperialism which draws only on materials published in the English language. The book is based on a very selective range of published sources.

Tomlinson turns his attention to writers on media imperialism such as Herbert Schiller and Armand Mattelart.

He makes two moves against their generalizing argument that U.S. media dominate the world. The first argument is to separate the realm of the economic from that of the cultural. Tomlinson bows before the evidence of political economy research. Transnational corporations, especially those based in the USA, by and large dominate the world in the production and distribution of mass media. However, he insists that this economic domination tells us nothing about its cultural domination. It is somewhat astonishing to find such an insistence on culture as being autonomous from economics. Such a claim was made in Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" essay. It has been widely criticized, by Raymond Williams among others, as hopelessly inadequate to the multiple ways in which culture and economy are intertwined in consumer societies in design, fashion, advertising, marketing and the operation of the media industries themselves. As a result of the limitations in Althusser's essays, cultural studies turned its attention to Gramsci and to studies of the institution of meaning, value and power.

Tomlinson's second argument against Schiller and Mattelart is the now-familiar one that the audience is active in interpreting and resisting the meanings embedded in the media product. Here Tomlinson draws on research into the "active audience" by Morley, Ang, Katz and Liebes. The widespread circulation among liberal intellectuals of a very small number of studies of audience reception of mass media deserves some serious scrutiny. What is it about these studies that has attracted such attention? Pierre Bourdieu has researched the use of art and culture in

