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COMMUNICATION, CULTURE AND HEGEMONY

From the Media to Mediations

J. Martín-Barbero

Translated by

Elizabeth Fox and Robert A. White

With an Introduction by

Philip Schlesinger

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Contents

About the Author vii
Introduction by Philip Schlesinger viii

Introduction to the Spanish Edition 1

Part I The People and the Masses in Culture: The Highlights of the Debate 5

1 The Affirmation and Negation of the People as Subjects 6
- The mythic conception of the people: Romanticism versus the Enlightenment 6
- People and class: From anarchism to Marxism 13

2 Neither People nor Classes: Mass Society 23
- Politics discovers the masses 24
- The psychology of the crowd 26
- The metaphysics of the mass person 30
- Anti-theory: Mass-mediation as culture 33

3 The Culture Industry: Capitalism and Legitimacy 39
- Benjamin versus Adorno, or 'the real debate' 40
- From criticism to crisis 53

4 Rediscovering the People: Culture as the Sphere of Action of Hegemony 62
- The people in the 'other' history 63
- Culture, hegemony and daily life 73

Part II The Historical Matrices of Mass Mediation 85

5 The Long Process of Enculturation 86
- The nation-state and the conditions of hegemony 86
- The political culture of popular resistance 92

6 From Folklore to Popular Culture 99
- A literature which is between the oral and the written 99
- An iconography for plebeian use 108
- Melodrama: The great popular entertainment 112

7 From the Masses to Mass 120
The inversion of meaning and the meaning of inversion 120
Narrative memory and the culture industry 122
Continuity and ruptures in the era of the media 139

Part III Modernization and Mass Mediation in Latin America 149
8 The Processes: From Nationalisms to Transnationals 150
A difference that is more than underdevelopment 150
The discontinuity between the state and the nation 152
Massification, social movements and populism 156
The mass media in the formation of national cultures 163
Developmentalism and transnationalization 178

9 The Methods: From Media to Mediations 187
Critique of the dualistic logic and a proposal of a focus on the *mestizajes* that make us what we are 187
Communication from the perspective of culture 203
A nocturnal map to explore a new field 211
The popular that appeals to us from the mass 228

Notes 241
Bibliography 246
Index 261

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Introduction

Philip Schlesinger

Readers in the Anglophone world should find engagement with Jesús Martín-Barbero's book a rewarding and thought-provoking experience. Within these covers the reader will find a work of theoretical synthesis which at the same time offers a wide-ranging review of much little-known Latin American work on communication and culture. I would be surprised if it does not stir up a substantial critical response and come to be judged as a major contribution to cultural and media studies.

To those well versed in contemporary European cultural analysis, many of the touchstones will be familiar. There are multiple points of orientation, too, for those who come with a sense of the historical development of debates in modern social and political theory. Furthermore, none who has attended to the evolution of media theory in the past two productive decades will feel lost in the pages that follow.

Why, then, given so many well-trodden paths, does one feel the sense of something new, of a distinctive sensibility at work? The answer, I think, in part lies in the original style of thought with which Martín-Barbero combines his theoretical concerns and arguments to dispute several orthodoxies. It may go against the grain of current fashion to discern an authorial voice, but I do hear one in the pages that follow, as I have in person. However, there is also something more, which derives from the way in which his thinking is conditioned by working in the dynamic and creative Latin American intellectual field.

Undeniably, current work on culture and the media in Latin America is characterized by a working over of a distinctive set of themes and problems. Indeed, the central, animating preoccupation for much recent writing is precisely the attempt to develop a properly *Latin American* approach to the problems of communication and culture on that continent. Like any other field of research, the investigation of culture and the media in Latin America has had its own distinct stages of development and has been subject to the broader movements, whether sociopolitical,

economic or intellectual, that lie behind the emergence of new problematics.

At the centre of the recent history of Latin America media research has been a struggle against intellectual dependency. In the period immediately after the Second World War, North American theoretical models and procedures held sway, with work on content analysis, audiences, effects, and journalistic professionalism following the familiar pathways of positivism. The ruling assumptions in mainstream social science at the time were crassly diffusionist: the 'modern' (capitalist) societies of the West provided a universal model for the 'traditional' to follow. In that unilinear optic, mass communication had its part to play in acting as a 'modernizing' force and also, in the form of newspaper circulation and the number of radio and television receivers, as a crude index of development. The mechanistic and ethnocentric assumptions of such thinking have long since ceased to satisfy even their original exponents.

However, the UNESCO-sponsored work in the 1960s and 1970s, which first initiated serious research on mass communication in Latin America, was based on such imported models. Dissatisfaction with the prevailing conceptual frameworks led to a variety of critical reactions. This time models were imported from Europe. By the 1970s a number of quite distinctive approaches had developed, which will not be unfamiliar to Europeans. For instance, a strong semiotic current was associated with the Argentinian scholar, Eliseo Verón, and his collaborators, whereas a Marxist political economic analysis was being elaborated by Armand Mattelart, then in Chile, and others such as Héctor Schmucler, another Argentinian. Debates throughout Latin America about the relative merits of studying signifying practices as against the political economic preconditions of media structures paralleled contemporary discussion in Europe.

However, debates about communication policy, popular culture, democratization, ideology and so forth, are one thing when conducted in the liberal-democratic climate of Europe or North America. They are something else again when taking place under the dictatorial cloud that covered eight out of ten countries of the southern cone by 1977. Where national security doctrines reign, perceptions of ruler and ruled are unclouded by any niceties about the defence of the public sphere and the duties of the fourth estate. The United States' support for the military dictatorships brought about a new and very pointed interest in the relations between transnational political power and the mass media. Repression resulted in the temporary migration of many researchers from South America to the friendlier climate of Mexico.

Such a widespread experience could only reinforce a concern with dependency, whether upon imported capital, technology, professional practices or ideas. Hence, by the early 1970s, the first moves had already begun in redefining the proper interests of an autonomously conceived Latin American research agenda. This desire was reinforced by the growing movement during the 1970s amongst countries of the 'Third World', in debates coordinated by UNESCO, to redress imbalances in the flow of information by creating a New World Information and Communication Order, aspirations which were most fully codified by the MacBride Report in 1980.

Concern about transnational control of communication has taken on a new lease of life since the 1980s with the further evolution of telecommunications and audiovisual technologies. One response has been a growing interest in the development of national communication policies, which has become one of the most researched questions in Latin America. In fact, the notion of a coherent set of policies adapted to national needs as opposed to the workings of the international market also derives from a UNESCO initiative of the mid-1970s.

One prominent strand of Latin American work has taken the factors conditioning the evolution of policy as its main preoccupation. Such work is often informed by nationalistic and statist assumptions, political-economic in cast, and infused with a rationalistic conception of policy-formation, conceived as an antidote to the chaotic and dependent nature of decision-making by national governments that do not control their own destinies. The invasion and reshaping of national cultural space by transnational capital, and the imposed imperatives of private, class interests over a common, public good are the key problems addressed. The denunciation of 'media imperialism' has been an important part of the political rhetoric of the 1970s and 1980s.

However, the 'media imperialism' thesis – at least in those versions that assume the unmediated transmission of ideology from metropolitan centre to peripheral receiver – has come under increasing pressure in recent years, with mounting evidence of its theoretical and empirical inadequacies. One result of a growing scepticism has been an attempt to investigate the actual conditions of reception and consumption of cultural products in the context of popular cultures. One of the most prominent voices in this, the camp of popular cultural studies, is that of Jesús Martín-Barbero. For him, 'the nation' represents not a rational instance of decision-making but rather a field of rich contradictions, where cultural identity is under continual negotiation.

The new turn in research and analysis represented by Martín-Barbero (and by others such as Néstor García Canclini) began to take off in the early 1980s and prescribes that we analyse how popular media articulate with the texture of everyday life. Published in the middle of the 1980s, Martín-Barbero's book stands as an outstanding example of a redirection in thinking shared by a significant current of academic writers. Indeed, to switch genres, those familiar with the extraordinary fiction-writing currently emerging from Latin America will find congruent literary expressions in works such as Mario Vargas Llosa's *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* and Manuel Puig's *Heartbreak Tango*.

In Europe and the United States (in parallel, but for reasons of a different kind) there has also been a convergent movement of research in recent years under the labels of 'reception analysis' and 'the ethnography of the audience'. Like the work of those active in Latin America, the recent spate of audience studies has offered a line of inquiry into how media are variously interpreted by those who consume them. Thus, by virtue of a critique of established positions within his own continent's frame of reference, Martín-Barbero's book works its way towards intellectual ground very familiar to those in the Anglophone world. There are many students of the field, therefore, who will easily recognize exactly what he is saying, and why.

The popular culturalist analysis of the multifold character of everyday life has become increasingly important in Latin American research since the 1980s. It has an underlying political message, for it addresses neglected modes of participation in everyday life and sets out to find forms of action that offer entry points into the dominant culture and power structure, by subverting it if necessary, and by appropriating it to other uses. What therefore emerges is a strong sense of the ambiguities and contradictions of cultural practices, one quite averse to seeing them as under the uncontested control of a system of domination, or indeed, as at all totally rationalizable by policy-making apparatuses. In short, the analysis departs from notions of the vitality of popular culture and of resistance to hegemonic forces which have much in common with the tradition of cultural studies in Britain developed by Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. Indeed, occasional references to the work of Williams and Hoggart do appear, although so far as European writing is concerned one would judge the work of Walter Benjamin, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci to have exerted the strongest influences on Martín-Barbero's thinking.

Martín-Barbero's book is in three parts, each of which tackles a different, but related set of issues. Whereas Part III is most fully and obviously centred upon Latin America, and is the heart of the work, Parts I and II offer an indispensable point of entry into understanding how European and North American research and writing have been refocused under the impact of a distinctive set of concerns. As a preliminary step in developing his perspective, the author has first addressed an impressive variety of theories in critical vein.

At root, what Martín-Barbero contends is that we should shift attention from forms of analysis concerned with the ownership and control of media structures and with messages conceived as hegemonic ideology to modes of reception in the context of wider social relations. This is not the place to enter into the detail of his arguments or interpretations, nor, indeed, to take issue with some implications of bending the stick this far. It seems most useful simply to summarize the main thrust of the argument and then to invite the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

Martín-Barbero is concerned to rescue the category of 'the people' from elite theorists (whether conservative or Marxist) who identify the popular with 'the masses'. Popular culture, under contemporary conditions experienced as mass culture, he maintains, is not to be dismissed as an *absence* of culture. Moreover, against the grain of leftist class-reductionism (now under heavy assault everywhere) he also sets out to resist the assimilation of popular culture to that of the class struggle. And at the same time, too, he wishes to set aside all kinds of contemporary romantic anthropology, arguing that the popular is not the primitive.

In essence, the import of his theoretical critique is that Latin Americans need care when importing frameworks of analysis and conceptual paradigms. These may – and do – have profound effects upon the perception of cultural processes and how these relate to the apparatuses of communication.

Of particular importance is Martín-Barbero's approach to the transnationalization of culture: past orthodoxy, he argues, has tended to see this as entailing cultural homogenization. On the contrary, he maintains, one cannot even take 'the nation' itself for granted. In fact, new problems of identity are now appearing at the level of the nation-state, a level of social organization that tends to deny the differences of ethnic groups, classes, religions, regions and cultures. Hence, the key questions do not really begin to be addressed by considering formal national politics and policy-making but only when we start to consider the workings of popular culture in its multifold manifestations. However, this problem now has to be conceptualized in an increasingly complex way in which notions

of communication go well beyond a concern with the media alone. He proposes that 'mediation' become a central category for this kind of analysis. The concept of mediation entails looking at how culture is negotiated and becomes an object of transactions in a variety of contexts. How to begin such an analysis is conveyed by the numerous vivid examples in the book, which range across the cinema, the popular press, radio, television, the circus, musical performance, and much else besides.

What, therefore, emerges strongly from Martín-Barbero's account is a sense of how the historical formation of national culture involves multifold transactions, and is always provisional. Modernity in Latin America has brought about what he calls 'massification' via the workings of national populist politics and the emergence of mass communication.

But mass communication is far from uniform in its impact. Whereas, for instance, he suggests, television may constitute a single public, neither the press nor radio do. Moreover, television, he maintains, has largely failed to offer a point of self-recognition for the urban masses, unlike the indigenous cinema. But the failure is not complete, for television is the vehicle for distributing *telenovelas* which are *the* Latin American televisual genre, and which play a major role in popular culture by offering images and themes that evoke powerful forms of identification.

By starting from the standpoint of consumption, then, we are compelled to recognize the syncretic nature of popular cultural practices (whether music, feasts, theatre, dialects or artistic forms) and the ways in which these contribute both to the preservation of cultural identities and their adaptation to the demands of the present. At the core of the argument is the notion that processes of popular cultural mediation contain the capacity to resist and transform dominant cultures in ways undreamed of by simple theories of domination.

There are many themes in the work of Martín-Barbero that will strike a chord with those currently interested in the general question of how various kinds and levels of collective identity are developed and sustained and the role which media may play in these processes. Indeed, one way of interpreting his study is precisely as a discourse upon the constitution of identities and the struggles that this entails. In concluding, therefore, it seems appropriate to draw out further some of these implications, as the closing years of the 1980s have made collective identity an inescapable theme, one which is with increasing rapidity moving to centre stage of work in the human sciences.

Let us take but one pertinent example. In recent years, those of

us who live in Europe have been particularly subject to the elaboration of various official grand designs for collective living. Increasingly, one is bound to wonder which – if any – of these can be successfully realized. Indeed, if like Martín-Barbero we apply a perspective that stresses the role of 'mediations', we cannot but be made aware of the potential sources of resistance and transformation that present obstacles to the smooth realization of such half-imagined futures.

For instance, the proposed achievement of a Single European Market within the European Economic Community by 1993 has been thrown into sharp relief by the discontinuities between polity, economy and culture in Western Europe. (Moreover, now the turbulent changes in the 'Other Europe' of the erstwhile East have made the problem even more complex.) Whereas economic integration has proceeded at one pace, the political superstructure used to manage the EEC's future is increasingly being shown to be inadequate, not least in terms of its so-called 'democratic deficit' and in the fields of foreign and defence policy. Even more glaring is the disjuncture between economic integration and the level of culture. Not surprisingly, then, there is currently competition in political and bureaucratic circles to fashion and define a new collective identity suitable for an increasingly integrated EEC social space. In this struggle, there have been sharp differences between those who imagine a 'European Village' to be the desirable and necessary future and those who defensively wish to preserve existing national identities against the encroachments of Brussels.

As we progress further into the 1990s, the Eurocrats' grand designs have been made much more complex by the emergence of German unification and its uncertain impact on the wider European order, by the implosion of the Soviet Union, and by the bloody collapse of Yugoslavia. These, together with numerous other developments, have put the undecided scope of the new European order firmly on the agenda. The uneven progress towards democratization and economic viability in the countries of the former Eastern bloc remains a major preoccupation.

And this is precisely where the question of resistance comes in. Running counter to the Euro-sloganeering first launched in the later 1980s has been the resurgent force of nationalism. The Soviet Union's collapse into a fissiparous grouping of successor states and the intense value attached to the national principle in East–Central Europe (with its troubled, imbricated histories) have been paralleled by various neo-nationalist tendencies in the West. Nor is the question simply one restricted to the European continent. As shifts occur in the relative power of the major capitalist states, one cannot

fail to notice how hostile projections of collective identity have begun to appear, reciprocally, in the United States and Japan.

All of which is to say that making sense of challenges to existing patterns of identity, from both above and below, and also horizontally, together with the possible transformations that might ensue, will need all our analytical skill and ingenuity. As one presently engaged in such work, I have learned much of value from the thinking of Jesús Martín-Barbero, who with both imagination and flair has tackled kindred issues in a very different context.

Introduction to the Spanish Edition

What you have before you bears the marks of a long journey. I came from the field of philosophy, and moved along the paths of linguistic studies until finally I met up with communication. Coming down from the Heideggerian contemplation of being, I now found myself in the slum shacks of man, built of clay and reeds but nevertheless with a radio and television set. Ever since, I have worked in this field of mass mediation, this environment of cultural production, with its rituals of consumption, and its love of new technological gadgets. Increasingly, I have become immersed in the world of performance made possible by the media, a world with its special codes of montage, perception and recognition of identities.

During much of this time, I was especially interested in how the mass media manipulates us with a discourse that somehow brings the public to accept its fraudulent claims. My research was, above all, concerned with how ideology pervades messages and imposes on this process of communication the logic of domination. Thus, I diverted my journey through sociolinguistics and semiotics to find the tools for an ideological analysis of texts and cultural practices. I left evidence of my journeys, not concealing my debts, in a book entitled *Comunicación Masiva: Discurso y Poder* (*Mass Communication: Discourse and Power*).

That was ten years ago. Already, at that time, some of us were beginning to have doubts about a conception of the media process which left room for nothing but the stratagems of domination, a process defined simply as a few powerful message senders controlling passive receivers without the slightest indication of seduction or resistance. Did these messages not reveal some internal conflicts or contradictions? Were there not some struggles at the origins of these messages?

It was precisely in those years that something shook the foundations of our sociopolitical reality – earthquakes are common things in these latitudes – and opened to clear visibility the profound gap between our method and the situation in which we live. We suddenly became aware that virtually nothing of the way people work out the meaning of their lives, the way they communicate and use the media, could fit into our predetermined schema. Put in

another way, the social and political processes of those years – authoritarian regimes in almost all of South America, continuous liberation movements in Central America, enormous migrations of the leaders of politics, the arts and social research fleeing into exile – all tended to undermine the old certainties. For the first time, many people came out of the world of academia and government planning offices and had to confront the cultural reality of these countries: the new combinations and syntheses – the *mestizajes* – that reveal not just the racial mixture that we come from but the interweaving of modernity and the residues of various cultural periods, the mixture of social structures and sentiments. We became aware of the memories and images that blend together the indigenous Indian roots with a *campesino* culture, the rural with the urban, the folkloric with popular culture, and the popular with the new mass culture.

This is how communication began to be seen more as a process of mediations than of media, a question of culture and, therefore, not just a matter of cognitions but of re-cognition. The processes of recognition were at the heart of a new methodological approach which enabled us to perceive communication from a quite different perspective, from its 'other' side, namely, reception. This revealed to us the resistances and the varied ways people appropriate media content according to manner of use.

This changing perspective, however, was not just a reaction to an earlier overemphasis on the powerful media or a passing theoretical fashion. It involved a recognition of history, a historical reappropriation of Latin American modernity as, yes, very much part of the present moment of our evolution but also as somehow out of phase with our Latin American identity. This enabled us to break out of the circle of false logic which made it appear that capitalistic homogenization is the only meaning of our contemporary modernity. For, in Latin America, cultural differences do not imply – as perhaps they do in Europe or in the United States – countercultural dissidence or antiquated relics fit only for museums but, rather, a dense variety of strong, living popular cultures which provide a space for profound conflict and unstoppable cultural dynamism. We are also recognizing in recent years that the term 'popular' does not apply just to native American or peasant cultures, but also to the thick layers of *mestizajes* or mixtures and in that deformed evolution of urban, mass culture, found in the enormous new settlements surrounding Latin American cities. In Latin America, at least, we are discovering that, contrary to the predictions of a social implosion and depoliticization, the masses still 'contain' – in the double sense of control and conserve within – the people. We cannot think of the popular as an actor relegated to the margins of the historical process creating mass society. Nor can we think of the popular as unrelated to the masses gaining visibility and active social presence through the processes of massification that constitute mass culture. We cannot continue to construct a *critique* which separates massification of culture from the political reality that generates the historical emergence of the masses. And we cannot separate this from the conflictive movement which produces in this historical process the intimate linking of the realities of mass culture and popular culture. The phenomenon of mass becomes one of the modes of existence of the popular. Note carefully that the trap lies both in confusing the popular memory with the cultural imagination – like confusing the mask and the face behind it – and in believing that there might exist a memory without a fund of cultural imagination in which to anchor this memory in the present and inspire it toward the future. The clear separation between memory and cultural imagination is as important as understanding the links which produce these cultural *mestizajes*.

This has been the challenge of this book: to change the point of view from which questions are raised, to study the processes creating mass culture without being influenced by the culturalist blackmail that inevitably transform these into a process of cultural degradation. This has meant studying these processes from the perspective of *mediations* and the protagonists of culture. In other words, we are interested in the articulation between practices of communication and social movements. This perspective has suggested the three parts of the book – the situation, the processes and the debate – and the inversion of these three parts in the order of the book. Although the Latin American situation is the logical point of departure, it is placed at the end, the process we are eventually aiming to explain. I am hoping that the sign posts that I have set up along the development of the argument in the earlier parts of the book will activate the reader's complicity in the argument and allow the reader to recognize this complicity during the journey toward our understanding of the present cultural processes in Latin America.

At the beginning, I spoke of the marks or scars left by the journey that became this book. I want to point out a few of these. In Part I it was difficult to present a philosophical and historical discussion without distancing myself from the issues and experiences I was trying to decipher. This left the unsatisfactory sensation of dallying half way between analysis and commitment. Other pages left me an uncomfortable feeling of trying to settle old accounts.

In Part II, I fear that I may be taken for an archaeologist

searching the layers of the past for those elusive authentic modes and practices of communication. In fact, what I am searching for is something radically different, not what has survived from another era, but rather those forces operating at the present time which enable certain cultural values to continue their influence and which link an anachronistic narrative with the contemporary life of the people.

In Part III, I am plagued with the doubt that by studying the forms in which the people are present in the masses, I am abandoning the criticism of social inequality cloaked by the concept of mass and making the concept an instrument of ideological integration.

These scars are perhaps the price of daring to break with a dualistic logic and recognize the different logics within mass culture. It is the price of accepting that mass culture has accommodated both the requirements of the marketplace and a cultural matrix, a *sensorium*, which nauseates the elites while at the same time it constitutes a site of appeal and recognition for the popular classes.

Many people and institutions have supported the research for this book. Among them I owe a special thanks to the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia, which gave me a research commission to set up the project and collect the necessary documentation, and several years to carry out the research. I am grateful to the communication professors and researchers of the Universidad de Lima, Peru and Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de Xochimilco, Mexico who believed the study was possible when still in outline form and invited me several times to discuss its development. I thank the Instituto Para América Latina (IPAL) for making it possible for me to visit various research centres to discuss the project and collect documentation.

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PART I

The People and the Masses in Culture: The Highlights of the Debate

> The basic concepts, which we share, quickly cease to be simply concepts and are transformed into problems; they are not analytic problems, but historical movements which today have still not reached their term.
>
> Raymond Williams

A study of the history of social processes must include an investigation of the history of the conceptual categories we use for this analysis. We need to be aware of why we have given certain 'names' to the processes. Slowly but irreversibly we have learned that speech is not a passive instrument in the study of social processes, economic structures and political conflicts. Some categories are so loaded with opacity and ambiguity that only by placing them in their historical contexts can we understand what we are actually talking about beyond what we *believe* we are talking about. Part I attempts to rediscover, or better, to *un*-cover, the social movements of gestation underlying some of the basic concepts of this book. Concretely, we wish to examine more deeply the web of meanings and references that constitute the fuller connotation of these concepts.

Placing the terms of a debate in historical context is a way to approach the conflicts and struggles running through most discourses and objects. Our reading is, thus, transversal and holistic. Rather than following the coherence of each theory in itself, we explore the underlying social movements that have defined their position in the debate.

1

The Affirmation and Negation of the People as Subjects

The debate we will review here originated in two broad movements. One set in motion a somewhat contradictory myth of the people as the protagonists of political processes (the Enlightenment) and of culture (the Romantic Movement). The other movement combined politics and culture, creating the modern concept of the popular and popular culture (anarchists), or denied the validity of popular culture in so far as the conception of proletariat superseded the notion and social reality of the popular (Marxism).

The mythic conception of the people: Romanticism versus the Enlightenment

Historically, Romanticism was a reaction but not necessarily reactionary. It was a reaction against and a flight from the uncertainties and brutal contradictions of early capitalist society. It was a lucid and critical reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment and its legitimation of the 'new horrors'. Nevertheless, one cannot understand the meaning of the popular in culture which emerged in the Romantic Movement except in relation to the meaning acquired by the conception of the people as protagonists in political processes in the theories of the Enlightenment.

From the beginning of the Reformation and explicitly in the *Discorsi* of Machiavelli, a new legitimation of political power began to evolve around the figure of the people. In the writings of Erasmus, Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de Las Casas, this conception of political legitimacy was also linked to the pioneering defence of certain rights and popular values which, in the course of time, came to be called anti-colonial.

Through this discourse, however, runs a fundamental ambiguity. Machiavelli reached the conclusion that good laws come from the crowds, and he was convinced that the people, although ignorant, could recognize the truth.[1] At the same time, Machiavelli considered the populace the most insidious and permanent threat to political institutions. Hobbes, accepting this concept of the multitude's constant threat of civil disorder and the temptation to

totalitarianism that this disorder provokes, made it the centre of his reflections on the modern state. Without doubt, Hobbes' conclusions were the cornerstone on which the thinkers of the Enlightenment constructed their political philosophy.

The notion of the people as legitimizers of civil government and generators of a new sovereignty corresponded with a radically negative idea of the populace in the area of culture. For the Enlightenment the notion of the popular synthesized all that they wanted to abolish – superstition, ignorance, turbulence – all that they wanted to sweep away with 'reason'. This contradiction originated in the ambiguous place assigned to the people in politics. For the Enlightenment, 'the people', more than a social actor or the subject of a historical movement, stood for the creation of a universally common social experience that was the necessary condition for a true society. For it is through the social contract 'that the populace becomes truly a *people* . . ., the true foundation of a society'.[2]

The people are considered to be the founders of a democracy not as the collective population but as a category that provides the necessary endorsement for the birth of the modern state (Mairet, 1978). According to Rousseau, modern society is not possible if it is not constituted by the 'general will', and that will is what establishes the people as a collective existence. This circular line of thinking summarizes the rationale and covers over the contradiction that inaugurates the Enlightenment tradition of political philosophy. One must oppose tyranny in the name of the people while at the same time one opposes the people in the name of reason. This formula holds the secret of how hegemony works.

For, in addition to being the common denominator which unites a society, the people constitute a series of immediate, basic needs – the very opposite of 'reason'. When it was discovered that the people are the producers of riches, the response was not just laws but philanthropy. How is it possible to be just with the people's 'human needs' without stimulating their dark passions and 'spiteful envy that disguises itself as egalitarianism'. Thus, the legitimization of social differences – abstract inclusion and concrete exclusion – was founded on the road from politics to economics.

In the same stroke, this invocation of the people legitimizes the power of the bourgeoisie to the exact degree that it articulates the people's exclusion from culture. And it is in this process that are formulated the categories of 'high culture' and 'low culture' as synonyms for 'civil culture' and 'popular culture'. At the moment of the conception of the people as political actor and as a mode of relating to the whole of society, the conception of the people was

defined in terms of a negation, with an identity that is merely a reflection, constituted not by what it is but by what it is not. It was a definition of the people by exclusion – exclusion from participation in the wealth of the nation, exclusion from political office and exclusion from equal education.

Habermas once asked why Rousseau did not call 'sovereign popular opinion' simply 'opinion'? Why did Rousseau identify opinion with '*public* opinion'? Because Rousseau's conversion of royal sovereignty to popular sovereignty did not overcome the dilemma of the Enlightenment. His transformation of the *voluntas* into *ratio* ended up by translating the general interest into the private arguments that constituted the 'real' realm of politics, the public realm of the bourgeoisie (Habermas, 1981a: 118, 133).

The relationship between the people and education – the Enlightenment's way of thinking of culture – is the exclusion which most clearly constitutes culture as distant from and external to the people. For reason can penetrate the instinctiveness and spontaneity of the popular mentality only from the outside. The natural goodness and virtues of the people that survived corruption and bad habits were useless in education. Education could flow only from those who actively possess knowledge down to the passive and empty ignorant people who would always remain strangers to knowledge except in practical matters. Voltaire stated this clearly: the government should procure for the people pleasures different from those of knowledge and more appropriate to their character.

Romanticism is accused of having deformed our conception of the Middle Ages. Modernity, however, deformed few periods with such prejudice as it did Romanticism, reducing it to a literary or musical school and to an adjective easily mistaken for the melodramatic and the sentimental. Today there is emerging another historical interpretation regarding the Romantic Movement which allows us to see much more positively the shift in thinking that Romanticism introduced in the area of politics and culture. Beyond intellectual fashions – and we know that the culture industry can even sell us fashionable ways of thinking about a historical era – the current interest in the Romantic Movement is linked to the crisis of a conception of politics as a separate institution, separated from the life of culture, transformed into a mechanical performance of duty, a space without active protagonists.

The Romantics arrived at their 'discovery' of the people by three paths which were not always convergent. One was the path of revolutionary exaltation of the people – or at least the echoes of that enthusiasm – conferring on the rabble, the common populace, a glorified image which brought together two conceptions: that of social *collectivity* which in its unity has a peculiar type of irresistible force, and, secondly, the *hero* who rises up and challenges evil. The second path was the rise of nationalism – again the exaltation of nationalism as a kind of salvation – calling forth a cultural force and a 'soul' which would give life to the new political unity. This soul found its foundations and natural origins in the people. The third path was a political and aesthetic reaction against the Enlightenment challenging the rationalistic faith and bourgeois utilitarianism that, in the name of progress, brought chaos to the present, modern age and set society adrift.

The Romantic response to the Enlightenment was an idealization of the past and the reappraisal of the primitive and the irrational. One must not forget, however, that in this rejection of the present the Romantic Movement has many links to utopian socialism with its protest against the absence of a more authentically human society. The Romantics wanted to implement what utopian socialism projected onto the future. They set their ideal society against the real one, and they juxtaposed their aspirations for a society of community and communion with the 'reality' of the bourgeois society, with all its alienation.[3]

In their aesthetic rebellion against official art and the classical principle of authority, the Romantics gave priority to sentiment and spontaneous experience as a space for the emergence of subjectivity.

With these three emphases, Romanticism has constructed a new cultural imagination in which, for the first time, the life of the people – the popular – acquires the status of culture. This was possible, however, only in the degree that the notion of culture itself was changing its meaning. A good indicator of the link between the changing conception of culture and the new access of the popular to this conception is the book published by Herder in 1778, *Volkslieder*, which presents popular poetry as authentic poetry because it comes from an 'organic community'. A few years later (1784), in his *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, Herder poses the impossibility of understanding the complexity of the evolution of humankind on the basis of a single, abstract principle such as reason. He argues for the need to accept the existence of a plurality of cultures and different modes of social life.

The changes in the notion of culture continued at that time in two directions. One tendency separated culture from the idea of civilization with a movement toward interiorization (Williams, 1977) that moved the accent from the external result to a particular style of configuring a system of life or an artistic reality. Another tendency, recognizing the plurality of cultures, suggested the need

for a new comparative mode of studying cultures. It was this new method that permitted Herder to place literary poetry and the poetry of the popular songs on an equal and comparable footing. The historical importance of the Romantic Movement – whether it be the work of Herder regarding popular songs, the brothers Grimm on fairy tales, or Arnim on popular religion – was its legitimation of popular creativity and production. The recognition of the deep cultural significance, creativity and artistry of the popular production was more significant than its certification of the authenticity or uniqueness of popular tales and poetry.

The continuing facile criticism of the Romantic notion of popular culture makes it difficult to separate the possible distortions of a particular perception rooted in a historical period from the deep overlay of obstinate rationalist prejudice. Yet, as Cirese has observed, 'The Romantic position supported the idea that another culture existed beyond official and hegemonic culture. The Romantic notion of the people, a concept today refuted, was at the time a positive instrument for widening the historical horizon and concept of humanity' (1980a: 74). Hobsbawm's reappraisal of the relations between romantics and revolutionaries, like the reappraisal that is occurring today in Latin America, follows a similar line of thought (Hobsbawm, 1962, II).

Similarly, Morande suggests that the renewal of the concept of culture has entailed a new interpretation of the meaning of nation. With the Romantics' challenge of the rationality of the Enlightenment and their emphasis on the value of the symbolic elements in human life, the question of culture became a question of the role of the people as active subjects creating a society.[4] The conception of the people as subject in society is of special relevance to the political crisis in Latin America and the new processes of democratization that are emerging. It underscores the need to 'understand the symbolic structures of the world and insure the intersubjectivity of the different possible experiences' (Lechner, 1981: 323).

We can gain a better idea of the Romantics' thought regarding popular culture through a study of their use of nouns to designate 'the people' and the semantic fields that are constituted by this choice of words. The three words – folk, *Volk* and *peuple* – seem to mean the same thing, but the treacherous slipperiness of translations makes it difficult for us catch fully the differences and contradictions of the cultural imagery they invoke.[5]

Folk and *Volk* were both used to form words denoting new sciences, *folklore* and *Volkskunde*. *Peuple*, instead of becoming a noble suffix introducing a new science, was used to introduce populism, a movement loaded with pejorative political meaning.

While *folk* was chronologically defined and *Volk* 'geologically' defined, *peuple* was sociopolitically defined. *Folklore* delimited a movement of separation and coexistence between two cultural worlds: the rural world of oral cultures, religious beliefs and naive art; and the urban world of the written word, secularism, and refined art. *Folklore* designates a dimension of time between tradition and modernization, suggesting their opposition and, at times, their union.

Volkskunde captures the relationship between two strata or levels in the 'geological' structure of society. The superficial external level is in full view. It is formed by diversity, dispersion and inauthenticity resulting from historical changes. The internal level is below, in the depths. It is formed by the unchanging and organic unity of ethnicity and race. For the Romantics, *folk* conveyed the accusing and ambiguous presence of tradition in modern life. *Volk* conveyed a sense of the roots of a lost national unity. It implies ties and traumas that have brought together and confused the cultural imagery of people–tradition and people–race. These two realms of imagery, however, distinguished between a historical idealism placing the truth of the present somewhere in the past and a nationalist racism negating history.

In contrast, the Romantics' use of *peuple* – especially as used by Hugo and Michelet – expresses the other face of established society. Peasants and urban workers make up the universe of the people, a universe of suffering and misery. Hugo observed, 'the mob is the painful beginning of the people'. The other side of society, hidden and feared by the bourgeoisie, remains a permanent threat. By pointing out the intolerability of the present, it showed the way to the future.

The juxtaposing and comparisons of these different traditions of cultural imagery enables us to understand better what the romantic conception of popular culture hides from us, and reveals why the concept of the people so easily and frequently becomes a component in the ideology of conservative policies. In the first place, the concept is mystified in the relation of people–Nation. Thought of as 'soul' or ground, the notion of the people is transformed into an entity impossible to analyse socially, supposedly without divisions and conflicts, both beneath and above any social movement. The people–Nation of the Romantics forms an 'organic community' constituted by mythical biological roots and natural ties, the quasi-sacred ties of race and geography outside of history. García Canclini (1984c: 5) summarizes well the persistence of this mystification in the political culture of populism: 'The conflicts in which national traditions were formed are forgotten or are told as legends, simple

archaic formulas of how institutions and social relations were formed, guaranteeing once and for all the essence of the nation.'

But with this mystification and ambiguous notion of culture, there is a second tendency which carries with it a particular conception of 'popular culture'. If, indeed, the Romantics rescue the idea of the people's activity in the constitution of a culture, they also wrench that popular culture out of its context in the very act of recognizing the action of the people in creating culture. The Romantics have thought that the originality of popular culture lies in its autonomy and absence of contamination and commerce with official hegemonic culture. And in refusing to accept the fact of cultural tradeoffs in a society, the Romantics have tended to deny the historical formation of popular culture and the configuration of cultural differences through the contradictory and complex social processes of domination and exclusion along with active complicity, resistance, and struggle of the popular classes.

Once a sense of history is removed from popular culture, what remains is a culture that can only look backwards, preoccupied with the national cultural traditions and the folklore collections in the archives or museums, little more than an attempt to conserve the original purity of a childlike primitive people. In the final analysis, the Romantics largely agreed with their old adversaries, the Enlightenment, that culturally speaking 'the people' are a relic of the past. For both movements, the future belonged to the abstract generalities of which the bourgeoisie are the incarnation: a *state* that absorbs all cultural differences obstructing the unified exercise of power and a *nation* without social classes or autonomous social groups, held together by the natural ties of land and language.

Thus begins 'operation anthropology' (Muñiz Sodré, 1983: 32) which, starting with Taylor, links those who study folklore with the anthropological project of cultural analysis and which transforms superstitions into cultural survival.[6] Cultural diversity has acquired scientific legitimacy only through contact with *primitive, non-European societies*. From now on, the conviction of cultural exclusiveness is broken and not only in terms of external relations – for example, the relation of the civilized and barbarians – but also within societies, between hegemonic culture and subaltern cultures. Only through the concept of primitive culture were anthropologists able to recognize as culture what they had earlier defined paternalistically as simply the common people of civilized nations (Ginzburg, 1980).

From an evolutionist concept of cultural differences, the 'primitive' of savage Africa and the 'primitive' of the underclasses of Europe stubbornly stand for what looks toward the past, a cultural

existence perhaps attractive but backward in the development of humanity. And for this reason the 'primitive' is always open and available for expropriation by those who have already won a more advanced position. Thus we see how the interest in popular culture at the beginning of the nineteenth century rationalized political censorship (de Certeau, 1974b: 55). Popular songs, stories and religious practices were idealized at the very moment when capitalist development in the form of the national state required their disappearance. And, in the second half of the nineteenth century, anthropology has its origins as a discipline that rationalizes and legitimates colonial exploitation.

People and class: From anarchism to Marxism

The idea of the people born in the Romantic Movement completely disintegrated in the course of the nineteenth century. It was absorbed by the left into the concept of social class and by the right into the concept of the masses.

From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, the transformation of the concept of the people into the concept of class occupied an important place in the debate between anarchists and Marxists. Anarchists adopted certain features of the Romantic concept in their revolutionary theory and practice while Marxists, on the other hand, split with the Romantics but picked up much of the logic of the Enlightenment. Anarchists and Marxists both broke with the culturalism of the Romantic Movement by politicizing the concept of the people.

This politicization was accomplished in two conceptual processes: the revelation that the way of life of the people is related to the division of society in social classes and, then, the rooting of that relation in a historical process of oppression of the popular classes by the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Both Marxists and anarchists have shared a concept of the popular which sees the social, structural origins of oppression as the fundamental dynamic shaping the life of the people. In contrast with the ideas of the Enlightenment, anarchists and Marxists perceive the ignorance and superstition of the people not as residues of the past but as the effects of their 'social destitution', a destitution which constitutes the shameful counterpart of 'the new society'. And in contrast with the Romantic Movement, this destitution implies that one must discover in the popular poetry and art not a mythic, timeless 'soul', but the wounds of history, the gestures of an oppressed and struggling

people, the currents of history cutting across and disturbing the deceptively tranquil river of tradition.

Apart from these points of common ground, however, the conception of the popular held by different sectors of the left splintered into different directions. The anarchists held on to the idea of the people because they found in this something which is not fully expressed in the concept of an oppressed class. The Marxists, on the other hand, rejected the theoretical use of the term, people, as ambiguous and as a mystification, replacing it with the concept of proletariat.

The incorporation of 'the popular' in the anarchist movement

The anarchist concept of 'popular' falls halfway between romantic affirmation and Marxist negation. In the movement of liberation of the popular classes, the people define their identity through a structural confrontation and struggle against the bourgeoisie, but anarchists refused to identify the people with the proletariat in the strict sense that the term has in Marxism. And the reason for this is that for those committed to liberation, the constitutive relation of the social subject of confrontation and struggle is not a determinate relation with the means of production but a relation with oppression in all of its forms. Here lies the essence of the Bakuninian proposal that one must conceive of the proletariat not as one sector or part of the society victimized by the state, but as 'the mass of the disinherited' (Reszler, 1976: 28). And in this sense, Pitt Rivers could affirm that the concept of the people became the cornerstone of anarchist politics.[7]

Thus, for the anarchists the subject of political action bears some of the characteristics attributed to the people by the romantics, but with a significant difference: the natural truth and beauty which the romantics discovered in the people are transformed now into 'natural virtues' which are its 'instinct for justice' and its faith in the revolution as the only way to recover their dignity.

There have been other ties between the liberation movement and the romantics at different levels. Undoubtedly there is a romantic component in the idealization of the people's instinctive sense of justice. The people are seen as the healthy part of society conserving intact their demand for justice and a capacity for struggle. Equally clear, however, is the break of the anarchists with the romantics. What the people have conserved is not something which looks to the past, but, on the contrary, their capacity to transform the present and construct the future.

And here we touch a crucial point of difference between anarch-

ists and Marxists: the reference to the memory of the people and, in particular, the memory of the struggles. The liberation movements think of their modes of struggle as a direct continuation of the long process of gestation of the people. Marxists, in contrast, have emphasized the radical change in the modes of struggle as a result of new modes of production. This continuity is, for anarchists, not a mere tactic, but the source of their strategy. Anarchists think of political action as an activity of articulation of whatever fronts and modes of struggle that the people bring forward. Anarchist strategy includes all subjects of oppression capable of resistance – children, the elderly, women, even those defined as criminals. These liberation movements especially prize the expression of resistance in the details of daily life as a key aspect of social transformation. It is this 'implicit and informal struggle', the everyday struggle so important to anarchists that Marxism, according to Castoriadis, has continued to ignore with a singular blindness (Castoriadis, 1979).

The anarchists have seen popular culture through the memories of the people's everyday struggles. Without doubt they viewed popular culture primarily as an instrument in the struggle – something anarchists never tried to hide – but it suggests the importance of this culture in their strategy. It is possible that in the early stages this instrumentalization of popular culture was the only way that it could be given a positive value. In those ambiguous circumstances, the liberation movements dimly but correctly perceived that if political struggle did not use popular expressions and manners, these would be used against the people by their opponents and, in the end, the people themselves would be exploited.

The interest of the anarchists in popular culture was always explicit, even if historians and sociologists of culture took a long time to recognize it. Only in recent years have studies begun to analyse the anarchists' use of verses and penny novels, the gospel texts, cartoons and the collective reading of newspapers. This research is revealing how the anarchists forged a new notion of the relation of people and culture.[8] A key aspect of this notion is a lucid perception of culture as a space not only for exploitation but also for struggle, opening up the possibility that the different forms of cultural expression and practice may be transformed into means of liberation.

This awareness took concrete shape in a political culture that not only promoted institutions for workers' education to channel their hunger for knowledge (Solá, 1978; Coob, 1981), but had a fine sensibility for transforming the pedagogical models then available (Lida, 1971). The anarchists recognized the continuity between traditional collective readings of serial novels and evenings of

popular entertainment as a space for popular expression and participation. Anarchists also made a distinction between the struggle against official religion – a radical anticlericalism – and respect for forms and figures of popular religiosity, both at the level of beliefs and of moral norms. They perceived the profound relationship between the virtues of the people and the demands of Christian piety which link the liberation described in the gospels with social liberation.

The anarchists were concerned with constructing a cultural aesthetics which was, as paradoxical as it might sound, both popular and Nietzschean. They sought a continuity between art and life incarnated in the project of struggling against all which would separate art and life (Reszler, 1974; Livak, 1981). They believed art resided not in the object itself but in the experience. And they were referring not to the very special experience of a few artistic geniuses, but that of the common person who knew how to tell a story, sing a song or carve a piece of wood. The anarchists were against the grand work of art and the museums not, as some critics have thought, because they were terrorists with an insane desire to destroy but because they were in favour of an art in context and wanted to bring their political concept of 'direct action' to the aesthetic sphere.

The anarchists took their project of reconciling art with what is best in society, the people's thirst for justice, from Proudhon and Kropotkin, but also from Tolstoy. Their aesthetic was romantic in that it called for an anti-authoritarian art based on spontaneity and imagination, but it was anti-romantic in that it did not believe in an art that only expressed individual subjectivity. What made art authentic was its capacity to express the collective voice. And, in this latter sense, the anarchist aesthetic was realist. It put daily life in contact with social conflict. It made art the visible face of experience, revealing the physical reality of poverty and destitution. Translated into plastic and graphic arts, this became an impressionism rejecting all artistic authority (Livak, 1981: 65), close to that of Seurat and Pissarro, and, in the literary field, an expressionism like that of Sue and Gorki.

The anarchists also recognized the new cultural issues raised in the relationship between art and technology, what would later become a fundamental aspect of the reflections of Benjamin. This implied, firstly, that technology would be a subject matter for artistic expression, introducing new work tools and mechanical inventions such as electric wiring and telegraphy poles and lines from the world of the factory and railroad stations. But, in a second instance,

> this emphasis went beyond the incorporation of mechanical figurative elements into art to take up more direct testimony regarding the transformation of social structures and to suggest new expressions at once social and plastic. The world of industry was the artistic participation of man not only as spectator but as social actor. The concept of beauty in the work of art was replaced with a desire for meaning (Livak, 1981: 321–2).

From this desire sprang the struggle of the popular classes against a concept of art that excluded what was considered 'popular' from culture.

In his commentary on the films of Chaplin, Barthes has an essay entitled 'The poor and the proletariat', in which he analyses the transformation of beauty into desire for meaning and the peculiarities that this transformation introduced in the anarchist aesthetic. 'Chaplin always saw the proletariat in terms of the characteristics of the poor person. This was the human force of his characters and the source of his political ambiguity.' In a genre of films whose highest expression was *Modern Times*, Chaplin presented a proletariat which was 'pre-political', a hungry, bumbling man, always beaten by the police yet endowed with a capacity for meaning with such enormous force that 'his politically questionable anarchy represented in art perhaps the most effective form of Revolution' (Barthes, 1972).

The disintegration of the popular in Marxism

In contrast to the original and ambiguous use of the idea of the people which the anarchists employed, 'orthodox'[9] Marxism denied that the idea of 'the people' had either theoretical or political validity. The Marxist analysis of the workers' movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century differed from the liberationist analysis on an important point: its belief that capitalism produced a radical, qualitative change in the struggles of the workers' movement. For Marxism, the proletariat is defined as a social class exclusively by the antagonistic contradictions which are set in motion at the level of productive relations: the confrontation of labour versus capital. It is impossible to speak of a working class outside of a relationship with capital nor can one refer to a workers' movement before the appearance of large industry. Oppression and the strategy of class struggle can be explained only in terms of economics and production. All other levels or dimensions of social reality are organized and have meaning from relations of production. All social struggle that is not centred on this relationship, that is not derived from and directed at this relationship is fraudulent, deceptive, misleading, and, ultimately, an obstacle. Theoretical

certainty and political clarity were mutually reinforcing. Marxism attempts to go beyond the limits of rationality and present itself as the march of history revealed in the class capable of realizing its course.[10]

In contrast to the multiplicity of levels of struggle and the 'political ambiguity' in the thought of the anarchists, the Marxists introduced a unity of criteria and an insistence on the clearly defined dimensions of social reality that eventually supplanted the most valuable resource of the experience of the anarchist movement: the analytic confrontation of life situations with doctrine. The rationalist component of Marxism definitively broke its ties with the residues of romanticism which the liberationists had conserved. For Marxists, these residues had prevented liberationists from conceiving of the specificity of the political realm as a separate and clearly demarcated area, precisely that area where a response to economic domination could be defined and carried out. In this context, the concept of the people could be nothing other than rhetorical and dangerous. In Hegelian terms, it had become obsolete.

What were the costs of this victory? On the most visible and external level it meant for many years that any reference to the concept of the people was reserved to the political right and its entourage. Only recently has the concept been discussed among the left. In Europe, the writings of E.P. Thompson[11] argue the historical impossibility of separating workers' struggles from 'plebeian struggles'. The history of the working class has necessarily implied the history of popular culture. Castoriadis, in *La experiencia del movimiento obrero* (1979), retains the conception of popular culture and reworks the concept of proletariat with an analysis containing much of the anarchist thought of the last century. In Latin America, the notion of the people, *el pueblo*, is regaining its significance as part of a reexamination of the populist movements and a reappraisal of the role of culture in democratic transformation.[12]

In general terms, the dimension of the concept of 'the people' which orthodox Marxism has suggested is unthinkable is that other pole of the dominant contradiction not situated at the level of productive relations. E. Laclau located this pole on the level of social formations, the antagonism of the people against those in power (Laclau, 1977). This antagonism generates a specific type of struggle, a popular-democratic struggle.

In his commentary on Laclau's text, E. de Ipola further defined the field and characteristics of the struggle. Its field of action is predominantly ideological and political, especially the challenge that constitutes people as political subjects. Its historical content is

both more concrete and more general than that of class struggle because it deals with struggles immensely varied in their historical periods and contexts. The struggle possesses a historical continuity in the 'persistence of popular traditions in contrast to the lack of continuity characterizing class structures' (de Ipola, 1982: 105).

Although popular culture has been deemed obsolete and surpassed by Marxism, it continues to play a role in some lines of Marxist thought. G. Sunkel provides a particularly lucid interpretation of what he sees as the two meanings of 'the popular' in Marxism. One line of thought stresses that among popular actors only the workers are capable of political awareness, that the only truly political conflicts are those between capital and labour and that the only sites of struggle are the factory and the labour union. Another line of thought stresses a much more heroic vision of political struggle, but one quite different from the romantics in that it leaves out the world of daily life and of subjectivity.

From this Marxist analysis has come a double operation of negation of the role of popular culture. One negation is the non-representation of the popular, that is 'the set of actors, spaces of action and conflict which are accepted socially but are not mustered by the political parties of the left' (Sunkel, 1985: 41). These actors include women, the young, the retired, the invalids and other particular groups in conflict with hegemony. The arenas of action which tend to be left out are places such as the home, family relations, social security or hospitals. A second type of popular culture which tends not to be represented is cultural tradition: symbolic practices of popular religiosity, forms of specialized knowledge that come from practical experience, folk medicine, the magical world view or poetic wisdom. Expressly excluded is the wide range of festival practices, pilgrimages, legend, and the worlds of indigenous culture.

The dimension of popular culture not simply excluded but *repressed* 'is constituted by the set of actors, spaces of action and conflict which have been condemned to subsist on the margins of society, subject to both a political and ethical rejection' (Sunkel, 1985: 43). Actors such as prostitutes, homosexuals, alcoholics, drug addicts, delinquents; spaces of action such as the reformatories, brothels, jails, the cheap nightclubs.

The negation of the popular in Marxism is not limited, however, to ignoring or ruling out the treatment of certain themes or problems. Negation puts an accent on Marxism's profound inability to consider the plurality of cultural matrices and cultural difference. Already in the writings of Marx, the popular is reduced to the

problem of precapitalist modes of production whose paradigm is the 'Asian mode of production' – a reduction that R. Bahro does not hesitate to call a problem of ethnocentricity. The whole question of the popular loses its meaning and the theoretical perspective, even when it is introduced, remains anchored in the primary evolutionism of Morgan.

Lenin made an explicit reference to the question of popular culture in his analysis of Soviet social formation. He distinguishes between a dominant bourgeois culture, some subordinate cultures – for example, the culture of the traditional peasants – and the elements of a democratic socialist culture in the proletariat. Still, an impatience to explain away cultural differences as class differences prevented Marxism from analysing the specificity of the conflicts that articulate a culture and the modes of struggle that produce a given culture. Marxism tended to ignore 'the role of socio-cultural identities as material forces in historical development' (Arguemedo, 1982: 4). Consequently, Marxism has difficulty comprehending the capacity of these cultural struggles to become the constitutive matrices of social and political actors both in the confrontations between social formations and in the interior of social formations.

In spite of all efforts, it becomes impossible for Marxism to refer all conflicts back to one contradiction and analyse them all with one logic, the logic of class struggle. This does not mean that class struggle does not penetrate and, in many instances, articulate other types of struggles. The problem lies in trying to make class struggle the 'unity of history'.

Marx never questioned that class struggle is the unity of history. In Book I of *Das Kapital*, he emphasizes that unity precisely to justify the destruction of the backward sectors of society: 'industrial capitalism established world history making each nation, each individual dependent on the entire world for the satisfaction of its needs'. But the unity imposed by capital cannot escape, finally, the tendency toward the break-up of the unity of meaning. Capitalism could destroy cultures but it could not suppress the historical truth which lies within them.

Nor does Marxism escape its restrictive logic when it attempts to conceive of 'primitive' societies of the past and alternative cultures of the present from the perspective of the single configuration of life that it has built up as the model. To an ethnologist such as P. Clastres, this 'pretension' of Marxism to dictate the truth for all social formations of history has led Marxism to 'narrow its own significance because it narrows its reflection of social reality to just one parameter' (Clastres, 1981: 170).

In his study of the treatment of the artistic production of subordinate cultures by Marxist aesthetics, Mirko Lauer identifies two operations that demonstrate an ignorance of the differences among marginal cultures: 'generalized indifference' to the specificity of marginal cultures, and 'an inability to understand these cultures in their double character of being subordinate but having a potential to be developed' (Lauer, 1982: 49).

A more general question, closely tied to the Marxist negation of the popular, is the confusion of culture with ideology. (I refer once again to orthodox Marxism that ignores or misinterprets the Gramscian concept of hegemony, using it but always within the framework of its dominant logic.) Already in the debates of the 1930s the significance and the profound effects of this confusion of culture and ideology become evident.[13] The inability to recognize and to accept the complexity and richness of culture at that particular moment became a tendency to idealize 'proletarian culture'[14] and to consider decadent the cultural production of the vanguards.

The criticism of the confusion between culture and ideology clearly demonstrates the error of privileging the negative aspects of ideology – the falsification of reality – over ideology as a world view and interpellator of subjects. It suggests the danger of conceiving the relationship of production as outside the process of constitution of meaning.[15]

All this suggests the importance of returning to the question of popular culture from the perspective of the relationship between culture and modernity. As Rezsler has shown, the thesis of the decadence of modern art reveals not only the narrowness of vulgar Marxism but also a fundamental impasse in orthodox Marxist theory. Clearly the reasoning of Jdanov is not the same as that of Lukács, but the meaning of their theses and the political effects were the same. Both condemned modern art either as an antisocial, individualist expression or as simply bourgeois; they also condemned its capacity to experiment and to question the pretensions of reality that cloaked realism. Realism was considered the taste and the mode of expression of the popular classes.

The paradox hit home: the people are evoked only to use their conservative taste and their 'good sense' against the revolution that was transforming the art world. 'The continuity that Marxism demanded with the past was a continuity with the cultural values of the bourgeois era undermined by modernist movements' (Reszler, 1976: 104). The people were consulted but only in the most populist and negatively romantic sense, to exalt simplicity and understand-

ability as criteria for a true work of art. Lukács, for example, condemned modern art for destroying the forms and mixing the genres. The similarity of the Marxist view with the apocalyptic and conservative theory of cultural decadence in mass society, which is examined in the next section, is a strange coincidence.

2

Neither People nor Classes: Mass Society

The idea of a 'mass society' is actually much older than the usual accounts given by the typical communication textbooks. With the resolute intention of making technology the necessary and sufficient condition for the new society – and hence for the new culture – most authors date the appearance of the theory of mass society somewhere between 1930 and 1940. Most histories of communication theory obstinately disregard the historical, social and political framework of a concept that, by 1930, had already been in use for almost a century. They attempt to explain the relationship between culture and the masses, but ignore the historical perspective of the social origins of the masses.

Perhaps the only way to confront the fascination for a technological explanation of communication is to see how the theory of mass society began in the nineteenth century with the disenchantment of French and English liberals during the aftermath of the French revolution in the turbulent post-Napoleonic period from the restoration to the Revolution of 1848. The concept was born out of fear of the mob and, although it evolved into a more sophisticated social pessimism, the idea never lost its sense of disgust for the violent mob. This movement was never able to distinguish a sense of deception with the romantic idealism of social 'progress' from the fear of the dangerous rabble making up the working class.[16]

A new image of the social role of the masses began to take shape around 1835. The image conserved vestiges of the 'fear of the rabble' and the aristocrats' disdain for the 'unwashed'. Capitalist industrialization had changed the lives of the lower classes enormously, far beyond what the bourgeoisie had expected. The whole structure of society changed, shaken by mass movements that appeared to endanger the 'foundations of civilization'. 'As technology became more rational and material wealth more abundant, social relations became more irrational and the culture of the people more impoverished. . . . By the middle of the nineteenth century, progressive Utopia had become an ideology. Its vision of the world contradicted the actual state of society' (Martín Serrano, 1977: 16).

Along with the attempts to impose new forms of social control on

the popular movements, there arose a right-wing intellectual movement which tried to give a meaning to what was occurring. The theory of a new relationship between the masses and society was a pivotal component of the rationalization with which the right recovered its hegemony, making the early revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie anti-revolutionary. This attempt to give a depreciative explanation of the popular movements was by no means a recourse to the old ghost of conspiracy theory. The theory of mass society had different origins and a mixed paternity of unhappy liberals, nostalgic conservatives, some disillusioned socialists and a few open reactionaries (Giner, 1976).

Politics discovers the masses

The new conception of the relationship, society/masses, finds its first sketchy organization in the thought of de Tocqueville.[17] While earlier interpretations had conceived of the mobs as situated 'outside' and as threatening society with their barbarianism, the new view which de Tocqueville introduced began to see the masses as 'inside', tearing apart the fabric of the relations of power, eroding culture and causing the disintegration of the old order from within. The transformation of the shapeless servile horde into an urban multitude was seen to be in some way linked with the processes of industrialization, but above all it was attributed to the social egalitarianism containing the seeds of the dictatorship of the majorities.

De Tocqueville looked on the emergence of the masses without any nostalgia. Indeed, he came to perceive with great clarity that their appearance is the key to the beginning of modern democracy. This is a democracy, however, that has within it the seeds of its own destruction. If democracy is a society in which the old distinctions of caste, rank and class disappear and one in which office and honours would be accessible to all, this kind of society could not but relegate the freedom of its citizens and individual liberties to a secondary level. The will of the majority would dominate everything. The most important influence in setting priorities would not be reason and virtue, but whatever happens to be liked by the majority. The norm would not be quality but quantity. Thus, the modern principle of legitimate exercise of power would end up legitimating the greatest of tyrannies. What recourse would there be, de Tocqueville asks, for the individual or group that has suffered injury? To public opinion? No, he answers, for this is shaped by the will of the majority. Not legislative bodies, for these are elected by the majority and follow it blindly. Not the chief executive for he is named by the majority and must serve as the majority's servile instrument (de Tocqueville, 1946: II).

De Tocqueville made the majority's power seem overwhelming by projecting onto it the image of an ignorant mass, without any sense of moderation, that has permanently sacrificed its freedom to equality and has subordinated everything to its own well-being. De Tocqueville painted an image of a society composed of an enormous mass of similar and equal people that are constantly turning in upon themselves, seeking petty vulgar pleasures with which to fill their souls (de Tocqueville, 1946). This rapidly forming democratic society had its clearest model in the United States – where all professions worked for money, where everything had the informal air of the family circle. And it is there that bureaucratic administration tends to invade virtually every activity of life, making all the styles of life uniform and constituting this administrative activity as the centre of everything.

This attempt to justify social pessimism made de Tocqueville's views an inextricable mix of accurate descriptive analysis of the new social contradictions and the painful disenchantment of an aristocrat. Earlier, La Boétie had embarked on the same line of thought in *De la servidumbre voluntaria*. La Boétie, writing in the sixteenth century, presented his version of cultural pessimism as a form of moral failure. He painted a depressing picture of the complicity of the people with tyranny. For de Tocqueville, the convergence of the mechanization introduced by industry and the 'democratic disease' inevitably lead to the self-degradation of society. A recent analysis suggests that de Tocqueville's prophetic vision of 'the deterioration of the quality of action and of experience of egalitarian societies' made de Tocqueville a 'utopian critic of what today is called the post-revolutionary problem' (Sennett, 1980: 107).

One must admit that de Tocqueville has raised a fundamental question regarding modernization: is it possible to separate the movement for social and political equality from cultural homogenization and standardization? The way de Tocqueville raises the question reveals the cloud of fear in the face of changes. Engels, by contrast, in his *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, analyses much of the same social phenomenon but without that fear. He sees in the massification of the conditions of life the process of homogenization of exploitation from which is possible a growing collective awareness of the injustices suffered by the working classes and the increasing capacity of the mass of labourers to generate a different society.

Thus, as lucid as de Tocqueville's analysis of the masses might be, the concept of mass which begins its wandering journey in his thought is a rationalization of the disenchantment of a bourgeoisie which sees endangered a social order organized for and by themselves. For the first time the word 'masses' is used to label a movement that threatens the foundations of society, but it is used in a way which mystifies the conflictive existence of the class which threatens that order.

The theories of John Stuart Mill in the second half of the nineteenth century continued and complemented the thought of de Tocqueville, albeit in a less belligerently political and more philosophical mode. In Mill's understanding of the social process, the idea of the masses shifts from the negative image of the multitude to the image of a vast and scattered aggregation of isolated individuals. On the one hand, civil equality permits a more organized society. On the other hand, the destruction of the fabric of hierarchical relations produces a social disintegration countered only by standardization. The mass is a 'collective mediocrity' that dominates politics and culture as governments become the organ of the instinctive tendencies of the masses.[18]

The psychology of the crowd

After the Paris Commune, the study of the relationship between the masses and society took on an openly conservative bias. For the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the masses 'were confounded' with the proletariat whose obscene presence shadowed the bourgeois domination. In 1895, the year the Lumière brothers invented the machine that would be the basis of cinema, the first mass art, Gustave Le Bon published *La Psychologie de foules*,[19] the first 'scientific' attempt to interpret the irrationality of crowds. Later, Freud used this book as a starting point for his famous essay on the psychology of the masses, 'Group psychology and the analysis of the ego'.

Le Bon begins with the affirmation that industrial civilization is impossible without crowds. The way of life of the crowd is turbulence: a behaviour in which the 'collective soul' of the masses rises to the surface.

What is a crowd? It is a psychological phenomenon in which individuals with different life styles, occupations and characters are 'given a collective soul' that makes them behave in a manner completely different from the way they would behave individually. The formation of the collective soul is possible only by 'regressing to a primitive state' where moral inhibitions disappear and affections and instincts take over. The 'psychological mass' is at the mercy of suggestion and contagion. Primitive, infantile, impulsive, irritable; the masses rise up, break laws, ignore authority and bring destruction wherever they appear.

The masses are force without control. Is that control not the task of science? The psychologist sets up the study of the susceptibility of the masses to suggestion in order to control them. The key to mass suggestion is the constitution of beliefs. The 'religious' configuration of beliefs allows scientists to detect the two explanations of mass behaviour: the myths that hold the mass together and the leader that celebrates myths and makes them legitimate.

Le Bon was not nostalgic and he had no yearning for the past. On the contrary, what worried him about the masses is that they symbolize a return to a dark past, a return to superstition. Le Bon saw this as politically regressive, a step backwards. This process has its own logic. Reduced to 'mass movements', the political movements of the lower classes become identified with irrational behaviours and are characterized as retrograde and primitive. Le Bon's 'scientific' analysis of this logic in *Psychologie de socialisme* comes to the conclusion that the socialist movement is a step backward, an enemy of civilization.

Freud built his study of the masses on the work of Le Bon, but he marked out clear differences from his source. What interested Freud in the study of Le Bon was the importance given the unconscious. Freud observed that

> for Le Bon the unconscious more especially contains the most deeply buried features of the racial mind, which as a matter of fact lies outside the scope of psychoanalysis. We do not fail to recognize, indeed, that the ego's nucleus, which comprises the 'archaic heritage' of the human soul, is unconscious; but in addition to this we distinguish the 'unconscious repressed' which arose from a portion of that heritage. This concept of the repressed is not to be found in Le Bon. (Freud, 1955: 75, footnote)

The abovementioned differences are of key importance. These observations clarify the confusion between the unconscious studied by psychoanalysis and the biological racial memory of Le Bon that later would serve as a rationalization for nazism and which led to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.

The fact that Le Bon does not describe the unconscious as shaped basically by 'the repressed', leads Freud to a second major departure from Le Bon: what happens to the crowd is perhaps not so radically different from what happens to the individual. For Freud, what surfaces in the masses is also present in the individual, 'but repressed'. This means that mass behaviour is no better and no worse than individual behaviour. With this concept, Freud exploded

the theory that upheld so much of bourgeois individualism. From then on it is clear that the conservative theory of mass society is nothing more than the reverse side of the theory that makes the individual the subject and motor of history.

A third difference between Freud and Le Bon is Le Bon's obsession with the lack of leaders in modern society. Freud demonstrated how narrow and superficial is Le Bon's concept of the figure and function of a leader and how it implies a reductionism of the social dimension. 'Le Bon traces back all the puzzling features of social phenomena to two factors: the mutual suggestion of individuals and the prestige of leaders' (Freud, 1955: 88).

At the root of Le Bon's theory of mass society is the negation of the social dimension as a space for domination and conflict, a space which enables us to deal with history without pessimisms and nostalgia. And this enables us to conceive of the behaviour of the masses not only in terms of the psychological dimension but also – a real scandal! – in their cultural dimension. Freud maintained that the masses were not simply guided by instincts but also by the production of meaning: The collective soul is capable of giving birth to spiritual creations of a high level, proof of which is found, in the first place, in the creation of language, also in popular song, folklore, etc. The debt of the philosophers and the poets to the stimulation of the masses must be recognized. Are these intellectuals really anything more than those who give the final touch to a psychic labour in which others have collaborated?

Wilhelm Reich continued the demystification of the theory of the masses. In a work written not *a posteriori* but in 1934,[20] Reich untangled the 'psychological intoxication with the masses' beginning with Le Bon and his identification of the 'collective soul' with the unconscious of race, and finding its full form in the loyalty to blood and homeland of National Socialism. Reich turned the psychological questions of Freud – such as 'What is a crowd?', 'What are the psychological changes a crowd makes on the individual?' – into sociological questions that he claimed to have posed directly to Freud in 1937. 'How is it understandable that a single Hitler or a single Djugashvili [Stalin] can control eight hundred million people? How is this possible?'[21]

In the view of Reich, the answer does not lie in the psychology of the leader, nor in the analysis of the charisma of the caudillo nor in the artifices of German capitalism. For 'there is no socioeconomic process of any historical importance that has not been anchored in the psychological structure of the masses and that has not been manifest through the behaviour of the masses'. The true problem a psychology of the masses must confront is 'the problem of the

submission of man to authority', man's degradation. 'Wherever groups of people and segments of the oppressed classes struggle for bread and liberty, some of the masses stay on the sidelines and pray or fight on the side of the oppressors in the name of liberty.'[22]

At the turn of the century, a book by Gabriel Tarde appeared which took the questions raised by Le Bon and not only gave them a different orientation but provided a foundation for the 'social psychology' with which the North American functionalism of the 1930s and 1940s would construct the first theory of communication. *L'Opinion et la foule* (1901) profoundly shifted the question of beliefs from being a question of religion to the issue of communication and the circulation of information in the press. The masses were transformed into 'the public' and their beliefs became 'public opinion'. The public is a psychological effect of the dissemination of opinion, that is, the formation of a social collectivity whose sole basis of cohesion is a mental characteristic. Thus, opinion became the only possible source of social adhesion in a society reduced to mass, to a conglomerate of isolated and dispersed individuals.

But how is such a social adhesion produced? By *suggestion*, answered Tarde, revealing his debt to Le Bon. The difference was that suggestion operated from a distance. Tarde's reflections on the relationship between mass and public provided a new concept of the mass in culture. Mass was transformed progressively from an active state – the agitated and noisy public of local fairs and village theatres – to a passive public, spectators of a culture now transformed into a spectacle to be gazed at by a silent and overwhelmed mass.[23]

This notion, reformulated by Ferdinand Tönnies in terms of the ideal types of Weber, was further developed by combining the sociology of de Tocqueville with the psychology of Le Bon (Tönnies, 1963). For Tönnies the change implied by the modern presence of the masses must be conceived of in terms of the opposition of two types of collectivities: 'community' and 'society'. Community is defined by the unity of thought and emotion, by the predominance of close and concrete human ties and by relations of solidarity, loyalty and collective identity. Society, on the other hand, is characterized by the separation between reason and sentiment, by a disjunction of ends and means, and by the predominance of manipulatory reason. In society there is an absence of identifying group relations with a consequent prevalence of individualism and brief passing social aggregations. Competition and control replace the ties that truly unite individuals. This proposal of Tönnies, which pretended to present an objective description without any evaluative judgement, nevertheless did not

manage to avoid a heavy overlay of pessimism which penetrated his method of disjunctive types. And the great majority of those who read Tönnies carried away this pessimistic view of social change.

The metaphysics of the mass person

The events of the first third of the twentieth century carried the theories of mass society to a kind of paroxysm of pessimistic despair. The First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the birth and growth of fascism brought a sense of impending disaster and exacerbated the habitual cultural pessimism of the liberal and conservative right wing. Two books, *La rebelión de las masas* by José Ortega y Gasset and *Decline of the West* by Oswald Spengler,[24] synthesized this pessimism, and they became classics soon after their publication.

Once de Tocqueville had provided the sociological basis and Le Bon and Tarde the psychology, it was only a short jump for Ortega y Gasset to provide a metaphysical foundation for these. Ortega, with a very non-metaphysical language, attempted to penetrate from the skin of the modern person to his or her interior. This meant moving beyond the simple fact of social conglomerations to dissect their soul, their mediocrity and their shallowness. We cannot avoid the crowd because – 'The multitude has suddenly become visible, installing itself in the preferential positions in society. Before, if it existed, it passed unnoticed, occupying the background of the social stage; now it has advanced to the footlights and is the principal character' (Ortega y Gasset, 1932: 13).

The external history of the masses is constituted by demographic growth and the concentrations of population that new technologies make possible. On the positive side, the average life has grown richer as the repertory of possibilities for the majority of the people improves. But the negative side is the massive concentrations of humanity, that invasion of every available space by the masses, including those spaces reserved for the creative minorities. Specialization prevents men of science and vision from attaining an 'integral culture'.

In a torturous journey that found only vulgarity and conformity, Ortega described the interior soul of mass man. It is as if the debris of Western culture had taken possession of the human heart. At the end of his journey, Ortega summed up his findings, 'the rebellion of the masses is one and the same thing with what Rathenau called "the vertical invasion of the barbarians" ' (Ortega y Gassett, 1932: 57). Ortega predicted the return of the dark ages, not as a step backwards in history, but as a future when the invasion of the

barbarians would come from below in the form of the invasion of the masses.

The time has come to remind the reader of the image presented at the beginning of this chapter – the concept of the masses unfolding from one of fear to deception and from deception to pessimism, conserving throughout the feeling of disgust. Although Ortega insisted that mass man does not pertain to any specific class and is a characteristic of all classes, his historical references are clearly to the lower classes. In that backward era of Spain at the turn of the century, the lower classes were the majority, the obscene crowd that rose up in the streets daily in protest against the thick layer of feudal politics and rigid economic institutions to invade the sacred and aristocratic realms of culture.

Ortega wrote at a time of popular uprisings which reached their richest and most tumultous moment in modern Spanish politics and culture in the 1930s. Yet, he ignored what was occurring in Spain at the time, writing a book with a foreword for the French, an epilogue for the English and with many a wink at German philosophy. Ortega referred to only one aspect of Spanish history, the complicity between the masses searching for security and the fascist state. But even on this point, Ortega's criticism focused on moral rather than political analysis. For him the state had no roots in economics and all conflict was cultural conflict.

Earlier, Ortega had defined the relationship between culture and the masses in *La deshumanización del arte*. The two characteristics which Ortega used to define culture formed part of his central argument in *La rebelión de las masas*. The first characteristic was 'integral culture' in contrast to segmented science and technology. Ortega wished to characterize culture in terms of its distinction from civilization. He proposed a theory to understand processes of modernization, separating culture from scientific and technical activities and linking it to the classical cultivation of spiritual values as well as the bourgeois morality of hard work and self-control. The second characteristic of culture was its norms; the more precise and more defined the norm, the higher the culture. This was the concept with which the art of the period was brought into focus.

What then did Ortega perceive to be the relationship of the masses with culture? Quite plainly, for him, the masses are incapable of culture – something that had been said of the common people for centuries. What redeems modern art, the monstrous art of Debussy, Cézanne and Mallarmé, is that it makes clear the radical incapacity of the masses to understand culture precisely at the moment when they believe themselves capable of everything, even culture. The best thing about modern art is that it exposed the

false cultural pretensions of the masses. The common people could never pretend to enjoy modern art. It irritated and bored them. Culturally creative modern art was the revenge of the elitist minorities in the face of social equality and cultural massification. Modern art attested to the persistent existence of classes, and Ortega saw social class as the only possibility for the survival of culture.

Modern art is unpopular essentially because it imposes itself against the pretensions and rights the masses aspired to. For the masses, modern art produced incomprehension and ennui, to which the artist responded by exacerbating his hostility and distance from the masses. The relationship between art and society finally snapped. With the break, art became dehumanized; its image faded; its genres ran together; its harmony disappeared. The gain, according to Ortega, was considerable, however. In this trial by fire, art was purified of all the sentimentality and melodrama that it had carried along with its creative functions. Debussy dehumanized music, but 'He makes it possible to listen to music without swooning and weeping.' By separating art from life, art found itself; poetry became pure metaphor; painting pure form and colour. Faced with the threat of barbarians from within, culture rediscovered its essence.

Nevertheless, the paradox would soon reach its limit as Ortega found himself defending modern art against fascism. 'Hitler, Goebbels and the spokespeople of the nazi culture attributed to the nazi personality the defensive reflex against modern art that Ortega had diagnosed so clearly' (Reszler, 1976: 72). The nazis considered modern art a form of degeneration that could only be halted by calling up the essence of true art that remained in popular tradition. Modern art was not art because it denied its ethnic roots and its relationship with national values. For Goebbels, modern art's cosmopolitanism was the clearest sign of its decomposition.

But this paradox needs further interpretation. Both the aristocratic sentiments of Ortega – for whom the value of dehumanized modern art resided in its humiliation of the pretensions of the masses by showing them their hopeless vulgarity – and the nauseating nazi populism, defending art for the sake of the authentic race, masked and mystified the historical processes of the contemporary transformation of culture and the conflictive contradictions that this culture is articulating. The value of Ortega's interpretation is his ability to make clear the opacity and political ambiguity with which our century sees culture and the inverted meaning of the popular that comes from this twisted view of culture.

Spengler, a contemporary of Ortega's, takes the metaphysical musings of the cultural degradation of Western societies a step further into a philosophy of history with his book, *Decline of the West* (vol.1, 1926; vol.2, 1928). According to Spengler, cultures are the interior of the organic structure of history and, like organisms, cultures are born, grow and die. For the West, the democracy of the masses marks a fatal turning point in this cycle, the beginning of its death. Culture is the soul of History (spelled with capitals), the spirit which orients from within and pushes history toward its destiny, while civilizations are merely the superficial and changing exterior. When culture degenerates, all of civilization falls apart, loses meaning and becomes simply the exploitation of dead and inorganic forms.

For Spengler, democracy and technology are the two clearest signs of the death of Western culture. Democracy in its modern form kills true freedom. Witness the standardization of the newspaper that crushes the richness and variety of ideas possible in books. Like rhetoric in the ancient world, the newspaper directs everybody's thought along the same path. Ironically, the newspaper has been both the best defence of modern civilization but also the perfect expression of the death of culture.

Technology, the other sign of death of culture, wreaks havoc by breaking up and atomizing science. By destroying the unity of knowledge, technology destroys the capacity for learning and science to give direction to history. All that remains is submission to numbers, money and politics. Thus, Spengler's conception of history, incapable of recognizing the new contradictions, commits suicide, screaming that it is history that has come to its end.

Ortega did not fall into the suicidal pessimism and organicism of Spengler, but both Ortega and Spengler, by flirting with pseudo-fatalism, were able to hit upon, with surprising clarity, the social transformations that were emerging from contemporary realities. It is possible to apply to both of them Adorno's observation that 'it is much easier for the right wing philosophers to see through ideologies for the simple reason that they have no interest in the truths that these ideologies harbour in deceptively false form' (1973).

Anti-theory: Mass-mediation as culture

The great theoreticians of mass society from de Tocqueville to Ortega were men of the old continent. We must remember, however, that the inaugural text of this thought was *Democracy in America*, and it was in North America that the forms of the new society became clearest. The axis of hegemony turned after the Second World War, and, with it, reflection on the meaning of mass

society changed substantially. So substantial was the change that one must refer to it as a kind of Copernican revolution. While the philosophers of the old world tended to see mass society as a process of degeneration and slow death, the negation of all that stood for culture, the North American thinkers of the 1940s and 1950s were quick to see mass culture as the affirmation of real democracy.

The syndrome of world leadership, which North Americans assumed after the war, was based, according to Herbert Schiller, (Schiller, 1969: 1) on 'the fusion of economic strength and information control', at the same time, 'identifying the American presence with freedom – freedom of trade, freedom of speech and freedom of enterprise' (1969: 3). When was there ever more freedom in the world? The dire prophecies of de Tocqueville and the apocalyptic philosophers crumbled in the face of the equality and freedom presented by the United States. To create a new historical myth, it was necessary to bring into play all the economic power and all the optimism of a country which had defeated fascism. All of the faith in democracy of that people was needed in order to make the transformations of cultural meaning – a kind of investment of capital – which enabled the social scientists of the United States to identify the culture produced in the mass media, a culture of the masses, as the *authentic* culture of the people.

Daniel Bell was the first to outline the key ideas in this new thinking with his book, *The End of Ideology*, a title which immediately suggests the inversion of meaning. The new society is not even conceivable except in terms of a new type of revolution, the revolution of 'the consumer society', eliminating the old industrial revolution operating in the realm of production. Neither those nostalgic for the old order, for whom mass democracy represents the end of their privileges, nor the revolutionaries, still setting their sights on the dynamic of production and class struggle, truly understand what is happening. They do not understand that contemporary social change has its roots not primarily in the area of politics but in that of culture. Not a culture understood in the old aristocratic terms of high culture but as 'the codes of conduct of a group or of a people'.

The entire process of socialization is changing as a result of a change in the place where life styles are formed. 'Today the site for the mediation of life styles is found in mass communication' (Bell et al., 1969: 16). The family and the school, the old realms of ideological formation, are no longer the places of socialization. 'The mentors of behaviour are films, television and advertising.' They begin by changing fashion and end by provoking 'a metamorphosis of the deepest moral aspects' (Bell et al., 1969: 17).

This implies that authentic social critique has changed its locus. It is no longer political criticism but cultural criticism that is capable of an analysis 'beyond' social class. The real social problems are found in the cultural differences which are indicators of the organization and circulation of the new wealth, namely, the variety of cultural experiences. Critics of mass society from both the left and the right are missing the point when they continue to set up cultural oppositions in terms of the old aristocratic/populist framework which seeks a base of authenticity in either a superior culture or in the popular culture of the past. Both positions are outmoded by a new cultural reality of a mass culture that is at the same time, 'the culture of everybody and the culture of diverse groups'.[25]

Edward Shils would go one step further. With the coming of mass society we do not only have the 'incorporation of the majority of the population into that society' – a fact that even the enemies of mass society recognize – but we have also the revitalization of the individual. 'Mass society has promoted and intensified individualism, an availability for new experiences, the flowering of a variety of sensations and emotions, an opening toward other people. . . . [all of which] frees the moral and intellectual capacities of the individual' (Shils, in Bell et al., 1969: 158).

Mass no longer means anonymous, passive conformity. Mass culture is the first to allow communication between the different levels of society. Given that complete cultural unity is impossible, what is important is circulation between the different levels. When has there been more cultural circulation than in mass society? While the book as a medium for a long time maintained and even reinforced cultural segregation between classes, the newspaper allows the flow to begin, and film and radio have strengthened the exchange.

For the doubters, for those who insist on finding relationships between mass society and totalitarianism, D.M. White proposed a question that demolished all arguments: 'Was the Germany of 1932 a "mass society" when it *voted* Hitler's party into power? . . . This is the country which had more symphony orchestras per capita, published more books, pioneered and developed a cinema industry whose productions were of the highest quality' (Rosenberg and White, 1964: 15).

With the ground prepared by these reinterpretations, it is possible to bring this together into a more systematic theory. This was done by David Riesman in his classic book, *The Lonely Crowd*. The book is organized in terms of social psychology, making that a kind of science of sciences, because social psychology is the only science capable of integrating demographic data with the sociology of

knowledge, anthropology and business administration, economy and ethics. Riesman attempts to get to the core characteristics of a society which is emerging from 'another sort of revolution – a whole range of social developments associated with a shift from the era of production to the era of consumption' (Riesman, 1950).

Riesman reveals the basic cultural characteristics of this passage with a theoretical method of social types or, rather, by the construction of types of relation between personal character and society which touch the heart of the transformations producing mass society. Riesman proposes three types of society organized around the axes of demography and psychology: a society depending on a personality which is 'tradition directed', another depending on an 'inner directed' personality and, finally, the new mass society which is 'other directed'. Each of these three societies/personality types has its own form of family, school, peer groups, its own way of working, telling stories, organizing commerce, relating between the sexes, and providing political leadership.

For Riesman, mass society is the principle of comprehensive intelligibility explaining contemporary social reality. His conception of mass society has three basic theses: the middle class is the axis around which revolves the 'other directed' society; the relations of the individual with the broader world and with one's own inner consciousness are increasingly the product of the flow of mass communications; the analysis of the 'other-directed character is thus at once an analysis of the American and of contemporary man' (Riesman, 1950: 20). With this approach, Riesman interprets the dynamics of modernization in terms of two key processes: the creation of the 'average man and woman', thereby dissolving the conflicts of social class; and the elevation of mass communication to the level of an efficient cause which shapes contemporary history and culture. This conception of the processes of modernization summarizes the dominant North American line of thought characterizing mass society not as the end of culture but as the beginning of a new culture which the mass media make possible. And mass media are central not simply in the sense of circulation of information but in another more profound sense: 'In a society which lacks well-defined national institutions and a class of elite leadership fully conscious of its legitimate role, social integration is achieved through mass media' (Bell et al., 1969: 14).

Even a critic like B. Rosenberg, for whom mass culture conveys a tendency to confuse culture with entertainment and the genuine with the bastard culture, has the same belief in the all-powerful role of communication technology, and, specifically, mass mediation. Rosenberg does not find the explanation of the new culture in

capitalism, nor in the levelling processes of democracy nor in the peculiar configuration of the North American personality. In his view, 'If one can hazard a single positive formulation, . . . it would be that modern technology is the necessary and sufficient cause of mass culture' (Rosenberg and White, 1964: 12).

From these thinkers to McLuhan is only a short leap. McLuhan did little more than express in explicitly anti-theoretical language the obsessive intuition regarding the relationship between culture and society that was commonly held in North American thought in the 1940s and 1950s. There is a profound similarity in the basic concepts and arguments of the two books: *The Lonely Crowd* and *Understanding Media*. The differences are a question of style – 'the character-society types' of one and the 'technological ages' of the other – but the orientation is the same. A long period 'from the explosion and the anguish' ends and another begins in which '[c]oncern with *effect* rather than *meaning* is a basic change of our electric time, for effect involves the total situation, and not a single level of information movement' (McLuhan, 1987: 26).

All these American authors have great powers of observation, a deep sensitivity to the changes taking place around them, and a decisive perception of the significance of the civil society. None of this, however, has enabled their positive historical analysis of the role of the masses in the society to overcome the problems of their idealist wishing away of social conflict. Except in the case of C. Wright Mills (1956) and H. Arendt (1972), their cultural analysis is cut off from an analysis of the relations of power. This is the result of a conception of culture that, although an improvement on the aristocratic idealism of the past, continues to be tied to the liberal idealism that separates culture and work into the two unrelated spaces of 'pleasure' and 'necessity'. This leads to a culturalism reducing society to culture and culture to consumption. In a curious paradox of the concurrence of adversaries, the theories of North American sociologists and psychologists have ended up coinciding with the aristocratic pessimism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on a crucial point: the incorporation of the masses in society, for better or worse, means the disintegration of social classes.

In this line of thinking, the modes of articulation of social conflicts within culture and the overlapping of layers of contradictory cultural demand in the production of hegemony are ignored. The result is a culturalism that shrouds the idealism of its propositions with the technological materialism of effects and the ahistorical inflation of mediation.

The word 'popular' remains an attribution of mass culture only as

a tool of historical mystification. Yet, this opens for the first time the possibility of perceiving what occurs culturally to the masses in a 'positive manner'. 'Popular' presents a double challenge to the critics: the need to include in popular culture not only what is produced by the masses but also what is consumed, what feeds them; and the need to conceive of popular culture not as limited to the past, a rural past, but linked to modernization, racial integration and the complexity of the city.

3

The Culture Industry: Capitalism and Legitimacy

The radical experience of nazism is undoubtedly at the root of the radical way of thinking of the Frankfurt School. With the nazi system, capitalism was no longer solely an economic system. Its political and cultural texture and its tendency toward totalitarianism had surfaced. The Frankfurt School could not study economy or sociology without also studying the philosophical roots of the problem. This is what 'critical' has meant for them and explains why they attributed such a strategic role to culture. For this reason we can affirm that in Horkheimer, Adorno, and Benjamin, the problem of the popular and culture finally touches bottom.

For the first time, in a profound change of perspective, the processes of formation of mass society are seen to constitute rather than supplant the structural conflicts of society. Adorno and Horkheimer took as a point of departure the rationality of the industrialization and commercialization of social existence. They then studied the masses as an effect of the legitimation and as a manifestation of the culture in which the logic of commerce is realized. The Frankfurt School took cultural criticism out of the newspapers and put it at the centre of the philosophical debate of the time: the debate of Marxism with North American positivism and European existentialism. Culture becomes a strategic issue for the left-wing thinkers in the analysis of social contradictions.

At the end of the 1960s a line of thought which carried on the reflection of the Frankfurt School – either as an inheritance or as polemic – took as a central concern 'the crisis', namely, the crisis in the legitimacy of capitalism coming from the context of counterculture, social collapse, and death of the public sphere. And beyond the ideologies of crisis – which implicated everyone involved in their formulation – the reflections on the nature of the crisis generated an attempt to understand the new political movements and the new social actors emerging in the 1970s, some of the most important of which are the movements of youth, women and environmentalists. Also emerging are new sites of social contradiction as different as

new urban neighbourhoods and psychiatric hospitals where the everyday heterogeneity and conflicts of culture burst forth.

Benjamin versus Adorno, or 'the real debate'

Latin American critical theories have become involved in the mass culture debates largely through the Frankfurt School. Other theories of mass culture reached Latin America as little more than theoretical references associated or confused with functionalism and were summarily dismissed from a Marxist perspective that was often more affective than effective analysis. Initially, the Frankfurt School inspired an internal political debate because its theories did not lend themselves to the facile political instrumentalism as easily as did the other leftist approaches. Later, paradoxically, the School set off another debate when it became apparent that its theories were not suited for an analysis of the Latin American social and cultural reality.

The analysis that follows has an unmistakable flavour of settling accounts, especially with the theories of Adorno which had the greatest penetration and continuity in Latin America. The later arrival of the works of Walter Benjamin enriched the debate and helped to better understand the reasons for our uneasiness with Adorno. From within, but in clear discrepancy with many of the hypotheses of the School, Benjamin outlined some of the keys to thinking the unthinkable: the role of the people in culture not as negation but as experience and production.

From mercantile rationality to art as alienation

The concept of 'culture industry' was born in a text of Horkheimer and Adorno published in 1944 (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973). The contextual meaning of the concept came as much from Hitler's Germany as from the North American mass democracy. With this context in mind, the authors tried to think through the historical dialectic which began with the rationalism of the Enlightenment and ended in the irrationalism which is expressed in political totalitarianism and cultural massification as the two faces of the same dynamic.

The meaning of the new concept of culture industry was not immediately obvious, especially considering the seductiveness of the phrase when taken out of context. The definition unfolded in a discussion that extended wider and wider as the argumentation narrowed and became more cohesive. The discussion began with the sophism of 'cultural chaos' – the loss of centre and consequent

dispersion and diversificaton of cultural levels and experiences habitually discovered and described by students of mass society. The theory affirms the existence of an 'industrial system' which regulates and controls the dispersion of mass culture because, in the final analysis, it produces that mass culture. The 'unity of the system' is affirmed on the basis of the logic of industry stemming from two conditions of cultural creation in modern society. Firstly, processes of assembly line production are introduced, sacrificing thereby what distinguishes the work of art from the production of the social system. Secondly, the production of goods is closely associated with the production of a desire for those goods so that 'the cultural industry gains enormous cultural influence in the capacity to produce a sense of need'. The connecting point between the assembly line and the production of needs is the 'technological rationale [that] is the rationale of domination itself' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973: 121).

The concept of the unity of the system is one of the most valuable contributions of Adorno and Horkheimer. It is also one of the most polemical. On the one hand this concept reveals the fallacy of any culturalism. It shows 'the unity in the configuration of political tendencies' and helps us be aware that even cultural differences can be produced. On the other hand, this insistence on 'unity' becomes theoretically abusive and politically dangerous when it is used, for example, to argue that all films, from the most trivial to those of Chaplin or Wells, are the same. This affirmation makes film nothing more than the return on the capital that is invested in its production.

The materialization of this unity puts all productions into the same schema and reduces the active role of the spectator to almost nothing. According to this line of thinking, 'the jazz composer eliminates all rhythms that do not adapt perfectly to the standard jazz musical style'. Jazz becomes an example of how everyone must identify with the powers that govern it. Submission is 'in the principle of jazz syncopation, which simultaneously derides stumbling and makes it a rule' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973: 153).

Films are held up as one of the best examples of how the culture industries bring about the atrophied role of the spectator. The attention of the spectator must move so fast to keep up with the plot that they have no time to think. Because everything must be communicated through visual images, 'the sound film . . . leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audiences . . . the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973: 126). Thus, a fundamental dimension of media analysis, the role of the spectator, is cut off from study

because of a cultural pessimism that ascribes the unity of the system to its 'technical rationality'. What is but one historical aspect of the media becomes its basic quality.

The distortions that come from this ascription of unity to the culture industries become even more clear in a second dimension of the theories of the Frankfurt School, the progressive degradation of culture in the entertainment industries. Adorno and Horkheimer approach this question through an analysis of the experience of everyday life and discover how capitalism conditions the relationship of work and leisure, especially the deceptive sham of their supposed independence. This conception of unity helps to explain the social function of a leisure culture which is the 'other side of mechanized work'. Entertainment mimics the conditions of a world of assembly line production to the extent that shows must be organized in series – the automatic succession of regulated operations – and the ideology imbedded in entertainment motivates people to work. In this view, entertainment makes an inhuman life and an intolerable exploitation somehow tolerable, providing a kind of inoculating injection, day by day and week by week, that makes it possible to conform and get on with existence. This sort of entertainment trivializes even suffering. There is a slow strangulation of the sense of tragedy and the capacity to rise up and rebel.

Adorno continued this exploration some years later in his bold criticism of the 'ideology of authenticity' then found in the German existentialists – especially Heidegger. He unmasks the pretension of an existence that claims to be above any form of cultural blackmail and complicity, an existence constituted by an encounter which, to escape the communication of a lower form of culture, becomes a relation of I–you instead of an encounter with truth. As paradoxical as it may sound, the jargon of authenticity and of encounter serves the same end as the cultural degradation of entertainment. It has the same blood line as the language of the media, for it injects evasion and a sense of impotence to change the prevailing relationships of ownership and power.

A third line of argument of the Frankfurt School, the cheapening of art, is the reverse side of the degradation of culture. In the same stroke, the culture industries trivialize daily life and declare art to be an important part of our lives. The diminishment of art has its own history beginning when art became independent from religion and achieved its autonomy in the marketplace. In a seeming contradiction, art gained its freedom but 'as a negation of that social purposiveness which is spreading through the market, its freedom remains essentially bound up with the premise of a commodity economy' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973: 157). Art was able to maintain its independence only by accepting this contradiction. In opposition to any idealist aesthetic, art achieved its independence in a process that separated it from ritual, turned it into a product, and distanced it from life.

It was possible to maintain this contradiction for some time in a way that was convenient for both art and society. At a certain moment, however, the market for art underwent a decisive change, and the character of art as a commodity disintegrated 'in its attempt to fulfil its integral form'. The tension between art and society that safeguarded its freedom was lost. Art gave itself over entirely to market forces as a commodity that simply responds to demand. What remained of art was little more than its shell, its 'style', the purely aesthetic coherence that exhausted itself in imitation. This was the 'form' of art produced by the culture industries: the identification with the formula and the repetition of the formula. 'Reduced to culture', art 'became as accessible to the people as parks', available for the pleasure of all, just another object, a shadow of what it once was.

This is as far as Horkheimer and Adorno took their argument. There is another line of thought which is noted only in passing, the 'scoundrelizing' of art. This is the outcome of the market and of the price bourgeois art pays for the purity that keeps it apart from the lower classes. The authors do not follow this path any further. They continue to develop, however, the theme of the 'descent of art in culture', and much of Adorno's work is dedicated to the study of this descent. The following pages explore two principal veins of this development, cultural criticism and the philosophy of art, two elements that are of special concern in this book.

We begin by admitting to a certain amount of confusion. In reading Adorno one is never too sure what side he is on. In some texts his task seems to be one of demystification, the denunciation of complicity, the unmasking of the traps of ideology. In other texts he affirms that the complicity of criticism and culture is not due only to the ideology of the critic but is the result of the relationship of the critic with the object (Adorno, 1973). This leads us on another path that appears to be the one that truly interested Adorno. Hence our confusion. What is the value of the theories of the logic of the market and the criticism of the culture industries if 'what is decadent about culture is its self-fascination' (Adorno, 1973)?

Our apprehension increases from one text to another. The meaning of culture is made indistinguishable from history, 'the neutralization of culture achieved thanks to its emancipation from vital processes with the rise of the bourgeois' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1971: 81). Following Hegel, culture is identified with

the frustrations civilization imposes on its victims (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973). The condemnation of culture's subordination to power and the lament of the loss of culture's polemic force is resolved through an impossible reconciliation of the exiled spirit with itself. Isn't Adorno referring to this when he speaks of the impossible reconciliation of Art with Society?

From *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to *Aesthetic Theory*, published posthumously, Adorno remains rigidly faithful to his propositions although his perspective changes somewhat. If, in the first text, he emphasizes the contrasts between 'minor' or light art and serious art in the name of truth, in the second, he analyses this opposition at a 'lower level' and approaches the theme of popular culture from the perspective of *pleasure*. The concept of artistic pleasure must be destroyed, Adorno proclaims, for, as understood by the general public, pleasure is a deviation, a source of confusion: one who gets pleasure from the experience of art is a trivial person.

These statements of Adorno bring to mind similarities between this line of thought and ideas which are supposedly in strong ideological contrast. Some declarations of Adorno are remarkably similar to the most reactionary theories of Ortega: 'It was only after art had become thoroughly spiritualized that those who did not understand it began to clamour resentfully for a new species of consumer art that would be able to give them something to enjoy' (Adorno, 1984: 20). This repeated ritual could hardly be more confused. Are we to believe that the origin of the culture industries is not in the logic of the marketplace, but in the frustrated reaction of the masses to an art reserved for the few?

Although Adorno is laden with pessimism and a refined spite, this has not obstructed the lucidity of his reflection on the fleeting nature of pleasure – pure sensual pleasure – and the emotional distance, in the form of dissonance, assumed by art which can still claim to be art. Dissonance is the expression of art's internal strife, its refusal to compromise. Dissonance – 'the sign of all that is modern' – is the secret key that makes art possible, even though sociology, in its ignorance, sees dissonance as the road to alienation. Dissonance is the new essence of art now that art has become non-essential. The culture industries have built their market on the artifices of an 'inferior art' that never obeys the concept of art. Adorno insists that 'Entertainment . . . always protruded into the sphere of culture as living proof of culture's failure. In fact, much like humour then and now, entertainment has willed that failure of culture' (Adorno, 1984: 24). His insistence provides an important insight into Adorno's perception of 'inferior art' and its relation to the culture industries. Inferior art is a reaction to failure, but so also is the attempt to translate that failure into its own wish, something akin to humour.

The criticism of pleasure has motives that are not always aesthetic. Populists, fascists or not, have always preached the virtues of realism and compelled artists to produce works that show their meaning and relate directly to popular emotions. Adorno's criticism is in another direction. His criticism smells suspiciously of a cultural aristocrat who denies the existence of a plurality of aesthetic experiences or a plurality of social productions and uses of art. Adorno presents a theory of culture that makes art its only true ideal and that identifies it with a 'single concept'.[26] He dismisses any practice or use of art that is not derived from this single concept as a simple and alienating amusement. Art is society's only access to truth. Have we not come, through art, too close to the transcendence that Heidegger, Jaspers and others thought they discovered in the authenticity of the I–thou encounter?

Adorno would deny any convergence because for him any type of 'encounter' could be a reconciliation. If anything distinguishes his aesthetic, it is the denial of any reconciliation and affirmation. Adorno places 'alienation' at the centre of the movement that has created art: 'Art is able to utter the unutterable, which is Utopia, through the medium of the absolute negativity of the world' (Adorno, 1984: 48). Alienation makes it possible to distinguish clearly between art and *pastiche*: that mixture of sentimentality and vulgarity, that common element that true art abhors and that the Aristotelian catharsis justified for centuries by defending what it called 'the effects of art'. Instead of challenging the masses, as art does, the pastiche stirs the masses up by appealing to experiences.

For this inferior art that exploits emotion, social legitimation is impossible. The function of art is precisely the opposite of emotion: commotion, shock, upheaval. Standing at the other extreme of subjectivity, commotion is the moment in which the negation of the ego opens the door to an authentic emotional experience. The critics who insist with their muffled cackling that art must come down from its ivory tower fail to understand alienation as the basic condition for the autonomy of art.

All commitment to pastiche – with *kitsch*, with fashion – is, for Adorno, nothing but treason. The pressure from the masses is so strong that even the best succumb. But, 'To recommend the acceptance of jazz and rock-and-roll over Beethoven does nothing to dismantle the affirmative lie of culture. All it does is give the culture industry an excuse for more profit-taking and barbarity' (Adorno, 1984: 441). Faced with blackmail, the task of true art is to distance itself. Detachment is the only possible course for art that does not

want to end up identifying humanity with its own humiliation. In the era of mass communications, 'art maintains its integrity only by refusing to go along with communications' (Adorno, 1984: 443).

It is a pity that in order to formulate such a radically pure and elevated conception of art, it is necessary to put down all other forms of expression with sarcasm, making sentiment a clumsy and sinister associate of vulgarity. From such an elevated height, which leads the critic to necessarily seek escape from the degradation of culture, there is no way to conceive of the daily contradictions that make up the existence of the masses, their production of meaning and their articulation of symbols.

Experience and technology as mediations between the masses and culture

It is customary to study Benjamin as a member of the Frankfurt School. Although there are some points of convergence in the themes he studies and those of others associated with the group, some of his deepest concerns take him far away from them. Benjamin's non-academic talent, his sensitivity, and his method and form of writing are clearly not those of the Frankfurt School. It is only recently that we are coming to know that the relationship between Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer was not all that friendly and egalitarian. Adorno and Horkheimer were in New York helping Benjamin by paying for the occasional article while he lived his last years of wandering European exile.[27] Adorno and Horkheimer frequently reprimanded Benjamin for his heterodoxy, changed his manuscripts and delayed their publication indefinitely. Anecdote aside, these events reveal much about Benjamin's struggle to open a line of thought closely related to what we are attempting to explore.

The reason for Benjamin's break with the other two is his point of departure. He did not begin his research from a fixed point for he held reality to be discontinuous. The only coherent connections are found in histories, in the networks of crisscrossing paths which link together revolutions with the stories and myths told by grandmothers. This distintegration of the centre explains Benjamin's interest in the margins, whether this be the forces and efforts on the edges of politics or in art. For him it is important to attend to people such as Fourier or Baudelaire, to the minor arts, to legends or to photographs.

Hence the paradox that Adorno and Habermas accuse Benjamin of ignoring mediation and of jumping from economics to literature and from there to politics in a seemingly scattered fashion.[28] They failed to recognize Benjamin's pioneering role in perceiving the deeper process of mediation. His vision of mediation makes it possible to understand the historical relations between the conditions of production and the changes in the area of culture, that is, the transformations of the *sensorium* changing ways of perceiving and experiencing social reality. For enlightened rationality this level of experience is obscure, fundamentally opaque and inconceivable. For Benjamin, on the contrary, to think in terms of experience is the only way to study what burst into history with the appearance of the masses and of technology.

From this perspective, it is impossible to understand what is happening in the masses without listening to their experiences. In high culture, the key lies in the work itself, while in the other culture the key lies in perception and use. Benjamin (1973a: 87) dares to make the scandalous affirmation:

> What distinguishes the novel from the story . . . is its essential dependence on the book . . . The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual.

Thus, Benjamin took on himself the task of thinking through the changes which shape modernity from the viewpoint of perception. He mixes up what happens on the streets with what is going on in the factories and the experiences of the dark movie theatres with the reading of literature, especially marginal, perverse literature. And that is what some find so intolerable for a dialectic. It is one thing to proceed logically, deductively from one element to the next, elucidating the connections. It is another thing altogether to uncover affiliations, showing 'obscure relationships' between the refined writings of Baudelaire, film actors, and the expressions of the urban masses; or to trace the forms of class conflict revealed in the texts of cheap newspaper serials. An unusually creative method, but also so risky that Brecht once stated: 'I think with terror how small is the number of those who are disposed, at the very least, to try not to misunderstand him to some degree'.[29]

If we are to find our way through Benjamin, two themes, new technology and the modern city, can serve as our guides.

In recent years, few books have been so often cited and so often read out of context as *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. So often it is badly interpreted because it is not taken in relation to the complete line of thought of Benjamin. How can we understand the complex meaning of the 'atrophy of the aura' and its contradictory effects without reference to his reflections on the 'gaze' in his work on Paris or without consideration of his text on 'experience and poverty'? When Benjamin is reduced to a few

affirmations regarding art and technology, his work is falsely made into a song of praise to technological progress in the area of communications. Or his concept of the death of the aura becomes a concept about the death of art.

My own reading of Benjamin is centred on the essay on E. Fuchs where Benjamin establishes the central importance of a 'history of reception'. Rather than a question of art or technology, he is concerned here with transformations in experience and not just in aesthetics. 'Within the great historical periods, the mode and manner of sensory perceptions change together with the existence of the people.' Benjamin attempts to 'make evident the transformations in society that find their expression in the changes in sensory perception' (Benjamin, 1982a: 24).

Concretely, Benjamin was interested in studying the changes produced by the dynamic convergence of the new aspirations of the masses and the new technologies of reproduction. The truly important changes lie in 'bringing things closer together spatially and humanly. The capacity to take off the wrappings of each object, crushing its sacred aura, is the sign of a perception which, precisely through reproduction, has created such a growing sense of equality in the world that it establishes a completely new level of sociability' (Benjamin, 1982a: 25). This summarizes his thought perfectly: the new sensibility of the masses is their coming closer together. What for Adorno was a nefarious sign of the people's obsession for gluttony and rancour becomes for Benjamin, not a sign of an uncritical consciousness, but a sign of a long lasting social transformation, the conquest of an egalitarian sensibility.

The new *sensorium* is expressed and materialized in techniques like photography and film that violate and profane the sanctity of the aura 'or the unrepeatable manifestation of something held at a distance'. These popular media facilitate another type of existence of objects and another mode of access to them. The death of the aura in a work of art is not so much about art as about a new perception which breaks the wrapping, the halo and the shining brilliance thereby placing the common man, the masses, in a position to use and enjoy art. Before, not only works of art but so many other things apparently so near in daily life, were always so far away because social relations made them feel remote. Now the masses, with the help of technology, feel nearer to even the most remote and sacred things. Their perception carries a demand for equality that is the basic energy of the masses.

Perhaps a radical incomprehension of this feeling and energy is what made Adorno unable to understand the new art born with jazz and cinema. Adorno considers cinema the highest exponent of cultural degradation. For Benjamin, however, 'cinema is related to deep alterations in the sensory capacities, alterations experienced by every person on the street of the big city' (Benjamin, 1982a: 52, footnote).

Adorno, like Duhamel, who, according to Benjamin, 'hates cinema and does not understand any of its importance', persists in judging the new practices and cultural experiences from a hypostasis of Art that keeps him from seeing the enrichment of perception brought by cinema's new images and new ways of seeing old objects, even the most sordid aspects of daily life. The films of Chaplin or neo-realism confirm the hypothesis of Benjamin: 'cinema, with its dynamite of tenths of a second', blows up the prison walls of the home, the factory and the office.

Benjamin's analysis, however, is not one of technological optimism. Nothing is further from his theories than the blind Enlightenment belief in progress. 'The representation of the progress of the human race in history is inseparable from the representation of its prosecution through a long, homogeneous and empty period' (Benjamin, 1982a: 187).

Indeed, far from having a simple confidence in technological progress, Benjamin finds the modern concept of *work* an accomplice of that ideology. 'Nothing has corrupted the German workers as much as their opinion that they are swimming with the current. Technological development is for them the forward sweep of the current which they feel is supporting their own efforts to move ahead' (Benjamin, 1982a: 184). Benjamin's analysis of technology is pointing in quite a different direction: the role of technology in abolishing separations and privileges.

This removal of separating privilege is what the people who shaped the world of painting so resented about the rise of photography and explains why they attempted to defend themselves with a 'theology of art'. This tradition of art could not understand that the important issue is not whether photography should be considered art, but rather whether photography is profoundly transforming art, its modes of production and the conception of its scope and social function. The changes were not just a matter of technique and the magic power of technology, but the material expression of a new cultural perception.

The increasing *proximity* of art makes the old mode of reception, the cult value of the work of art, decline and opens the path to a new mode, centring on the exhibition value of the work. The paradigm of the first is painting while that of the latter is photography and cinema. The former seeks distance while photography erases and lessens distance. The first conception of art is single and total

experience while the other is a multiple experience. They require two different types of perception: the former gathers in while the latter disperses. The key to understanding this process of gathering in has already been referred to above in the discussion of Benjamin's distinction between the experience of 'narration' and that of the novel, typically the experience of the individual in solitude. Benjamin further points out that 'He who withdraws into himself in the presence of a work of art is submerged in it.' This was the only kind of artistic experience that Adorno could recognize: the complete, undivided opening of the individual to the work of art in order to become absorbed into the depths of it. The new form of reception is, in contrast, *collective* and its subjects are the masses who 'absorb into themselves the work of art'.

Benjamin was aware of the scandalous nature of his affirmation and warns that this mode of artistic participation is little appreciated by the self-proclaimed experts. This is demonstrated by the critics' reaction to cinema: 'The masses look for dissipation while art demands meditative concentration.'

Without doubt an awareness free of any class ethnocentrism is necessary in order to make the masses the authors of a new 'positive' mode of perception based on dispersion, the multiplication of the image and montage. Benjamin's concept of reception proposes a new relationship between the masses and art and the masses and culture in which entertaining distraction is an activity and a force of the masses in contrast to the degenerate recollection of the bourgeoisie. Benjamin's mass 'although primitive and backwards before a Picasso is transformed into a progressive group with the art of a Chaplin' (Benjamin, 1982a: 41). The film viewer is a new type of 'expert' who does not simply challenge the work of art but combines a critical attitude with pleasure. In frank opposition to Adorno, Benjamin sees technology and mass society as a way of emancipating art.

Benjamin approaches the relationship between the masses and the city – the second theme of our reading of this author – on a long and paradoxical path, the poetry of Baudelaire. In Baudelaire's writings, Benjamin finds the 'threatening and disturbing sides of urban life' where the masses appear in different symbolic images. The first literary image of the masses is *conspiracy*: a space in which is hatched a force of political rebellion formed out of the convergence of various groups, especially those living on the margins of social destitution and those from a Bohemian style of life such as the artists who have lost their patrons but still have not entered the market. Their meeting place is in the tavern with the unemployed workers, the writers and professional conspirators, the rag dealers

and the delinquents, where all joined in a more or less muffled protest against society (Benjamin, 1973a). Baudelaire felt that in the fumes of the tavern one experiences directly and deeply the dreams and anger of the oppressed. Benjamin discovered in this poetry, transformed into a protest against the puritanism of abstract literary themes and the preoccupation with the stupid beauty of words, a search for another language, the language of the masses moving between the tavern and the barricade.

A second symbolic image of the masses is that of the '*disappearing footprints*', that is, the mass as the erasure of the identifying footprints of individuals within the crowds of the great city. With industrialization the city grew and filled with masses who wipe away their personal marks – the signs of identification so necessary in the life of the bourgeoisie – and cover over the clues of criminality. Faced with these two operations of the urban masses, the bourgeoisie map out a double defensive movement which leads them, firstly, to seclude themselves and recover their identifying marks, their signs, in the design and furnishings of the interiors of their homes. In opposition to the stark realism exhibited in their offices, the search for an *interior* finds refuge in their homes, an interior which sustains the bourgeoisie in their dreams of being able to conserve for themselves, as a part of themselves, two forms of distance from the masses: a recognized past and an air of remoteness. It is in this 'interior' that the bourgeoisie provide an asylum for Art and it is in this art that they try to maintain their identifying marks.

Secondly, the bourgeoisie compensate for the loss of personal identity in the city 'with the multiple interweaving of registered documentation'. And in the same act, they control the masses with public registration: from the systems of numbering houses to the techniques of detectives who can ferret out from hiding places even the most clever delinquents. Interestingly, the police novel provides the literary clues for analysing urban life and for discovering the strategies of concealment used by the masses in the city.

The third image of the masses is the *experience of the multitude*. Engels suggests this figure in his description of the multiplication of the force which is created in the massive concentration of people, a repressed force at the point of exploding. The urban masses, however, dismayed Engels. Benjamin sees in Engels' consternation a provincialism and a moralism which prevents him from getting inside of the true meaning of the multitude. In contrast with Engels, the experience of Baudelaire is fully *modern*, the ability to take pleasure in the crowd. He does not sense the multitude to be an external, quantifiable mass but something which has become part of

his own being. In the crowd he discovers a new faculty of perception, a *sensorium* that finds a charm in what is deteriorated and rotten but that is nevertheless not an intoxication which takes away from the masses their terrible social reality (Benjamin, 1973a).

It is precisely in their multitude that the masses exercise their right to the city. The masses have two faces. One face is the concrete juxtaposition of people that becomes a social abstraction with only a statistical existence. The other is the living face such as Victor Hugo perceived, the face of the multitude as subject, the multitude become the popular classes. Benjamin was not led into a false idealism when he read Baudelaire. He recognized the temptation to an aesthetic socialism that worshipped the proletariat without assuming the consequences of their oppression. Yet, this does not stop him from finding in the literature of Baudelaire a new source of meaning and a new *sensorium* of the masses: the expression of a new way of perceiving.

One evidence of Benjamin's discovery is his interest in the 'minor arts' that Fuchs collected such as cartoons, pornography and the pictures of everyday life. Benjamin was inspired by what Aguirre called 'a nostalgia that looks ahead up the hill' that enabled him to knit together the old and the modern. Benjamin reveals in his interest in the marginal, the seemingly unimportant, the fleeting tastes of popular culture, a belief in the 'possibility of liberation (of the popular) from a past of oppression'. For Horkheimer and Adorno this interest was a kind of strange mysticism, but I think that it is precisely here that we find the central issue of our debate: the very *possibility* of conceiving of the 'mass' as intimately related with the 'popular'. The critics and censors of Benjamin, convinced that the omnipotence of capital had no limits, could never see in media technology anything else than a fatal instrument of totalitarian alienation.[30] In great part they are blind to the contradictions originating in the active struggles of the workers and in the resistance and creativity of the popular classes. They show an innocence of how hegemony functions, a confusion between society and the state, and an ignorance of the contradictory existence of civil society.[31]

For Adorno this struggle seems to take place only between the state and the individual. This interpretation of Adorno is not mine but comes from Habermas himself: the media experience that Adorno tries desperately to preserve is 'solitary reading and contemplative listening, in other words, the rich life of the bourgeois formation of the individual' (Habermas, 1981b: 116). That is why Adorno thought all was lost when he discovered the historical

breakdown in that culture. For him, only the highest, the purest, the most abstract art escaped manipulation and the decline into commercialism and totalitarianism. Benjamin, on the other hand, does not believe the market negates and drowns meaning. For him, 'meaning is not something that grows like monetary value'. It is, therefore, not something produced but is transformed in so far as it depends on the process of production (Habermas, 1981b: 120).

Thus, social experience may have two faces. It may become obscured and impoverished but at the same time it does not lose its capacity for criticism and creativity. Having sensed this, Benjamin knew how to quickly shift out of the bourgeois perception which had ceased to be the sole normative reference for judging the value of modern experience. The moment when the commercialization of culture seems to have reached its most extreme form is precisely when social reality fragments and begins to swing to the other side, the side of the masses and to the new *sensorium* with its contradictory perceptions. Benjamin's political and methodological shift makes him a pioneer of a concept that since the mid-1970s has cleared the path of analysis and action regarding the culture industry. Benjamin's shift is the discovery of the cultural experience of the oppressed that produces forms of resistance and a perception of the meaning of struggles. As Benjamin himself states, 'we have not been given hope except through those who have no hope'.

From criticism to crisis

The theoretical perspectives introduced by Adorno and Horkheimer were further developed in France during the 1970s, especially by Edgar Morin. The evolution of the thought of Morin enables us to detect the symptoms which were leading to the exhaustion of one model and the emergence of another. I refer especially to the events at the end of the 1960s when, with the beginnings of the economic crisis (though the real effects of the economic shift would not be fully apparent until later), a political crisis erupted, with culture as its major battlefield. Although this crisis of politics in the field of culture – and a crisis in the traditions of political culture – exploded on both sides of the Atlantic, from Paris and Milan to Berkeley and Mexico, the experience of and reflection on the crisis in France seems to be particularly relevant for it carried to the extreme and then to collapse the theoretical proposal of the Frankfurt School. It is significant, however, that the analysis of the crisis found its most far reaching exponent in the works of the most lucid heir of the Frankfurt School: Jürgen Habermas.

The first stage of the analysis of Morin owes much to the Frankfurt School although he did not, by any means, limit himself to the issues which that group was concerned with.[32] With a method somewhere between dialectic and eclectic, Morin seeks to connect the pessimism of the Frankfurt School with the optimism of the North American theorists. Morin disagrees with the thesis of the all-powerful democratizing power of the mass media held by the latter, but, in contrast with the 'apocalyptical vision' of the former, he feels a certain seduction by the cultural mutation which the mass media bring. On more than one occasion, the irony running through Morin's analysis of the myths which shape the semantic field of the new culture reveals the fascination of these myths for the critic.

For Morin the term 'culture industry' suggests not so much the rationality which penetrates that culture as the peculiar model in which are organized the new processes of cultural production. In spite of its philosophical title, *L'Esprit du temps*, the methods Morin uses in the analysis, especially in the first part, are those of the sociologist. The echoing influence of the book, however, spread far beyond sociology, both among thinkers of the right and the left. Pierre Bourdieu and Passeron (1975) correctly identify the limits of Morin's sociological analysis, but, in so far as they generalize their criticism and put Morin in the same bag with the popularizers of an optimistic mass-media ideology, they demonstrate their incapacity to differentiate his important contribution – for them, perhaps, not really salvageable – from his particular theoretical and methodological approach.

With Morin, 'culture industry' comes to mean that combination of mechanisms and operations through which cultural *creation* is transformed into *production*. The value of this observation is not only his socioeconomic description of the processes of cultural production and consumption but especially his critique of the fatal mistake in the thought of Horkheimer and Adorno, namely, their persistence in the thesis that if something is industrial it cannot be art. Morin shows, especially in his analysis of film, how the division of labour and technological mediation of the culture industry are not incompatible with artistic 'creation'. Furthermore, a certain degree of standardization does not automatically imply an annulment of the searching tensions of creative work.

Redefined in these terms, the concept of culture industry becomes less fatalistic and therefore more operative – although for Adorno the operationalization of the concept would perhaps mean that the concept had fallen into the very instrumental rationality that the concept denounced. As Morin would suggest in his subsequent writings, the concept of culture industry makes a contribution when, freed from its negative connotations, it can become the framework for an analysis that moves from a focus on the political dimension of culture to the design of a policy or policies of culture. The negation contained in the concept may then open up to a consideration of alternatives (Morin, 1969: 5–39).

Having redefined the meaning of culture industry, Morin developed his analysis of mass culture in two directions: the semantic structure – the field of archetypical meanings – and the modes of developing meaning in daily life. In the first, Morin's main advance is a description of how the culture industry constructs meaning – essentially, by fusing the cultural spaces which media ideology declares to be separated: the functions of information and fictional imagination. This implies, firstly, a historical analysis of the cultural origins of the press and literature and the transformations in these two fields that have made possible a cross-fertilization between these two spaces. Secondly, it implies a phenomenological analysis of the new cultural forms that this interchange produces.

For the first time the study of mass culture is forced to explore its historical connections with the culture of folklore, discovering in the dramatic serial stories (*feuilleton*) in the newspaper 'the first medium of osmosis' (Morin, 1962: 77) between the realism of the bourgeois novel and the fantasy of popular literature. The serial story was the bridge. It is a novel written in the newspaper and following the conditions of production in the press. The discourse of the new fiction is the language of information at a time when the discourse of information has found in the language of melodrama and adventure the key to its own logic. The culture industry produces a type of information where the extraordinary and enigmatic events of daily life play a central role and an imaginative fiction in which realism predominates. In the second major area of analysis of mass culture – the development of meaning in daily life – Morin takes culture seriously in his examination of the culture industry. Morin defines culture as the 'set of daily exchanges between reality and the imaginary' (Morin, 1962: 104). The exchange provides imaginative support for the practical affairs of daily life and pragmatism for the world of imagination.

This, of course, implies a critique of that approach to the concept of *alienation* which throws into a negative category everything which occurs at the imaginary level whether this be dreams or entertainment. Morin does not question that alienation does, indeed, exist and that it is a fundamental mechanism in the functioning of society. But to then argue that the industrial process is, in itself, a constitutive factor in alienation is an enormous leap. And it is in his analysis of this 'leap' that Morin turns to Freud and his proposal

regarding the mechanisms of identification and projection. These psychoanalytical categories provide a way to conceptualize the modes in which the culture industry responds, in an era of instrumental rationality, to the demand for myths and heroes. For, if a mythology 'functions', it is because it responds to the questions and unexplained mysteries, the collective wonderings, the fears and hopes which neither rationalism at the level of knowledge nor progress at the level of action has managed to abolish or satisfy. The political impotence and social anonymity in which the great majority of people live makes them yearn for a larger ration of daily fantasy as a kind of supplement–complement to their everyday existence. This, according to Morin, is the real *mediation*, the function of a medium, which mass culture fulfils day by day: the communication between the real and the imaginary.

In a series of essays written between 1968 and 1973 and published under the title, *L'Esprit du temps II*, Morin suggests the need to link the change in the analytic paradigm of culture to an understanding of the sociopolitical crisis. The crisis marks a rediscovery of the 'event',[33] that is, culture as the historical dimension and action of different protagonists who are creating culture, discarding a concept of culture limited to code and structure. An event is defined as 'the invasion of the single and the concrete into the mesh of social life'. The crisis appears, then, as that moment in which the latent conflicts which build and destroy social patterns emerge into the open and take on a concrete sociocultural form.

The crisis at the end of the 1960s revealed the 'eruption of the fermenting enzymes at the margins of society' – blacks, women, crazies, gays, the Third World – bringing to the surface their conflictiveness, throwing into crisis a conception of culture incapable of understanding their movements and their transformations of social meaning. The crisis undermined an art separated from life and a culture abstracted from everyday existence, a culture that 'attempted to rebaptize bourgeois materialism as a kind of spirituality'. From this perspective, the most incisive experiences have been the countercultural movements in the United States while the most biting analysis has been done by the French situationists (Vaneigem, 1977: 24).

The situationists, returning to the theories of Fourier, to the early Marx and to the liberationist movements, carried out a devastating analysis of the penetration of the structures of power into the fabric of daily life. From the outset, they introduced a new political understanding of the moments in daily life considered 'dead' and marginal to political life. Indeed, 'there is no dead time, no truce between aggressors and their victims . . . When one analyses the routine of obligations, daily life is governed by an economic system in which the production and consumption of abuse tend to balance out' (Vaneigem, 1977: 24). Who benefits from so much fatigue, so much segregation, so much humiliation? How is it possible that what is important for my daily existence is worth so little for history if history is only important when it *organizes* daily life?

The critique next aimed its guns at a 'society of mass entertainment'[34] which, by bringing commercial relations into every aspect of daily life, including sex and intimacy, turns them into political arenas in the struggle against the power structure. And here the reflection of the situationists converges with the new conception of power developed by Michel Foucault, perhaps the most profound shift in political theory in recent years. Although a discussion of his concept falls outside the scope of the present book, the way Foucault reinterprets the relationship between culture and politics is highly pertinent.

Foucault challenges the theory of the state and its apparatus as the origin and form of effecting power. We now know approximately who exploits, who gets the benefits, and through whose hands these benefits flow. Who exercises power and where? Through what lines of command and levels of hierarchy, control, surveillance, prohibitions, and compulsions is it exercised? asks Foucault (1981). Although the state remains at the centre, power *flows* outward because it is not a property but something that is exercised. Most important, power is exercised in that very special form which in the West is called culture. Never has the conception of culture as superstructure been shown to be so problematic as in the light of this conception of power as production of truth, intelligibility and legitimacy. This takes us back to the heart of our present argument: to the denial of the meaning and legitimacy of all the practices and modes of cultural production that do not come from the national or international centre; the negation of the people as subject not by the culture industry but by the dominant concept of 'politics' unable to assume the specificity of power exercised through culture. It is a concept of politics that flattens plurality and the complexity of social conflict around the unifying axis of class conflict.

Close to the position of Morin and the situationists are the initial propositions of Baudrillard, propositions also critical of the political theory that prevents us from understanding the significance of the new movements and conflicts underlying the crisis. Baudrillard's work, however, is a good expression of the political alibi contained in the negative dialectics brought into the discussion by the Frankfurt School. Benjamin warns against the dialectic temptation

of placing meaning and value on the same ontological plane. The entire work of Baudrillard, especially starting with *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, would endeavour to demonstrate the absolute disintegration of the points of reference in meaning systems and their transformation into agents of a general simulation, deceptive appearances. At the end of the era of production and the beginning of the era of information, the crisis resolves itself in a recycling of the system which would have information not only as its economic dynamic, but as the new and sole arena for the production of power and meaning. Its 'political' legitimation lies in the kind of axiomatic separation of information and meaning that Wiener, Shannon and others proposed.

To conceptualize this transformation, Baudrillard uses a double axiom: 'the more the information, the less the meaning' and 'the more institutional, the less social' (1985). As occurred with the Frankfurt School, instrumental rationality, which disenchanted nature, ends up by disenchanting social relations to the point of devouring its subject and reason itself. So also for Baudrillard, 'the institutions that have dragged forth social progress (urbanization, production, labour, medicine, education, social security, etc.) produce and destroy sociality in the same act' (Baudrillard, 1983). 'Abstraction' is the key, the destruction of the symbolic exchange and ritual on which the life of all societies has depended up to the present. Abstraction is accomplished in a form of generalized information that becomes a model of action and devours social relations.

According to Baudrillard, this happens in two ways. Firstly, by transforming communication into nothing more than the appearance of communication, it becomes a sham, a matter of creating public images. Something similar had already been affirmed by McLuhan when he claimed that 'the media absorbs the message'. Now the process goes further and the message consumes reality. The elimination of distance between reality and sham, especially in television, produces a 'reality more real than life'. Secondly, injecting the masses with more and more information unleashes the process of social entropy and disintegration which constitutes the phenomenon of mass. Contrary to the expectations of those who think that increasing the amount of information available to the masses frees their energies, 'information produces a larger and larger mass', a more atomized mass, a mass further from the explosion. Indeed, the real result is 'the implosion of sociality in the masses' (Baudrillard, 1985).

In the face of this fact of history, which, according to Baudrillard, is irreversible, it is no longer possible to take refuge in the old theories of manipulation because – and here the theories of Baudrillard separate from those of Foucault and the situationists – inertia, indifference, the passivity of the masses are not the result of any action of power but are *an intrinsic property of the life of the masses*. Does this not remind us of that statement of Adorno, 'what appears to us decadence of culture is nothing more than arriving at the true nature of that culture'? Baudrillard confirms this interpretation when he says that the political indifference and passivity, the *silence*, is the mode of activity of the masses. And what does this silence tell us? It proclaims the end of politics. It says that it is no longer possible to speak in their name as if they are a subject because the time is past when we can refer to them, as we once did, as that class or as the people (Baudrillard, 1985).

The position of Baudrillard is predictable. Once negative dialectics are left to their own dynamics, rational instrumentality or the pretence of image making do not stop until they have devoured *everything*. True, for this logic to function, it is necessary to eliminate the contradictions that arise outside the scope of technology and institutions. But then what the argument of implosion of the mass or culture, in a supposedly infinite capacity to absorb conflicts, presents us is a formidable alibi. Was it through an analysis of historical process that these thinkers have arrived at the decadence of culture and the impossibility of politics or, rather, don't these explanations start with a very particular personal situation and a particular experience of cultural degradation and political impasse?

Habermas, rather than reifying the crisis, attempts to question its causes and, by placing the crisis of politics at the centre of the process, arrives at very different conclusions. What makes politics the centre of the crisis which undermines capitalism is the impossibility that economic factors can, by themselves, assure a necessary social integration. Market mechanisms alone have never performed this social function and have always needed from the state the guarantee of the general conditions of production. Today we are faced with something different: the state discharges functions which cannot be explained on the basis of the modes of production or the movements of capital (Habermas, 1976). As the situationists pointed out, this historical shift gives rise to new problems of legitimation which are located in the area of 'conflicts over distribution and reproduction'. The long cycle of economic crises is now replaced by a permanent crisis of inflation and budget deficits. This is the price, in terms of economics and administrative rationality, of trying to satisfy the system's growing need of legitimacy with services of health, education, social security, communication, etc.

But what about the theory that the generalized spread of information in society, introducing new forms of accumulating and organizing information, reduces political problems to merely technical problems. Is this not related to that 'deficit of rationality' that Habermas speaks about? But then we are not dealing with 'the death' of politics but of its replacement: informatics, perhaps, can provide the supplement of rationality which effective administration demands.

The crisis, however, is not such a simple matter of informatics and administrative rationality. What has been uncovered once more is the old phenomenon of class domination. And this is not simply a crisis for intellectuals and political militants but for the great masses who begin to perceive in the forms of exchange the exercise of social coercion. There lies the crisis of legitimization as such: the political system is forced to assume *ideological* tasks that have gotten out of control of the economic system. This, in turn, generates a rejection of the state and a mobilization in the area of culture. Both Adorno and Baudrillard perceived the expansion of the state as inevitable and unstoppable. Adorno described this in terms of the crushing weight of the commercial administration of culture while, for Baudrillard, the apposite figure is the growing abstractness of institutions and the increasing informational sham. This expansion, according to Habermas, is resented to the point of open conflict and resisted actively within the realm of culture. For Habermas, it is clear that there is no such thing as the administrative production of meaning in culture. Culture is thus preserved as the strategic arena of contradiction where the deficit of economic rationality and the excess of political legitimacy become a crisis of motivation and meaning.

The social implosion of Baudrillard, the explosion of expectations that Bell proposes and the decline of the public person that Sennett speaks of[35] all suggest some form of crisis of meaning. Habermas, however, rejects their interpretation of the crisis. For Habermas the cultural crisis is not identified with the end of politics but with its qualitative transformation. The new value assigned to everyday life – the modern day hedonism – and the new sense of intimacy are not just functional operations of the system. They are the new arenas of conflict and the expression of a new subjectivity. 'The manner in which we portray the revolution changes and includes within it the formation of a new subjectivity' (Habermas, 1981b: 127).

Bell is correct when he perceives the emergence of a new type of contradiction between an economy based on the rationale of discipline and earnings and a culture that prizes spontaneity and experimentation. Capitalist industry would die without the hedonism stimulated by mass culture. At the same time, hedonism destroyed the foundations of obedience and daily discipline, the roots of bourgeois morality.[36] Sennett rightly denounces the wearing away of the public sphere, the basis of democratic organization and social participation. But Sennett forgot something in his long criticism of the flight into intimacy and privacy in his brilliant analysis of modern narcissism. He forgot that, in a system that progressively, relentlessly and with great sophistication cuts back individual and collective rights, refuge in personal life might lead to a break with the general interests of the system.

When, at last, the critique of the crisis is beginning to declare a crisis in the critique, then it is the moment to redefine the field of debate itself.

frontation and exchange. The 'deep' Middle Ages is that period when the popular was constituted by the simultaneous interaction of conflict and dialogue. The conflicts are more notorious, more visible and easier to analyse in the High Middle Ages when the 'weight of the peasant mass and the clerical monopoly are the two basic factors that influence the association between social groups and cultural levels' (Le Goff, 1980: 154). But long before, the emergence of the mass of peasants as a cultural force was generating a 'culture of folklore' and confronting the clergy, masters of a literate culture. In spite of the efforts of adaptation which the propagation of Christianity demanded and the complicity which peasant culture encountered among some expressions of clerical mentality, the clerical culture collided head on with the culture of the peasant masses. More precisely, the clash was located in the rationality of ecclesiastical culture – the unyielding separation of good and evil, truth and falsehood, saints and demons. Such a culture was bound to conflict with the ambiguity and equivocation which permeates the peasant culture with its belief in forces that are now good, now evil, a culture guided by rules that are shifting and changing because they are based on pragmatic presuppositions rather than the ontological distinction of truth and falsity. Thus the Manichaean dualism and oversimplification, paradoxically, do not appear to be originally forms of popular culture but forms imposed by the clerical tradition.

Although the official culture was resisted and often defied, it managed to replicate itself in three ways: the *destruction* of temples, ritual objects, and iconographic forms of gods, etc.; the *obliteration* of practices, rites, customs and devotions; and the *de-naturalization* or deformation of myths and themes of legends in a way that allowed them to be given a new meaning and recovered for the clerical culture.

Neither conflict nor repression paralysed the exchange between the cultures. Indeed, as the two cultures came into close contact, 'body against body' so to speak, the confrontation opens them to more intimate revelation. With time, the oppositions gave way to a *dialogue* made up of pressures and repressions, borrowings and rejections between Christ and Merlin, saints and dragons, Joan of Arc and Melusine. Le Goff notes tellingly that the *sabbat* and the Inquisition appear only when the symbiosis broke down. For ten centuries the dialogue between written and oral culture transformed popular story telling into the legends which the feudal lords begin to use to recount and to write their histories. The same dialogue filled the clergy's gospel stories with popular wonders, converting the saints into sprites and devils into ghosts. The contribution of Le Goff has been to rediscover the dynamics of this cultural process,

showing how popular culture came into existence through a dialectic of permanence and transformation, resistance and exchange.

M. Bakhtin and C. Ginzburg have also studied the dynamics of culture formation using the texts and contexts of the sixteenth century. The focus of their work is not the constitution of popular culture but the factors influencing the forms and modes of expression that this culture has finally taken on. Both approach popular culture from the perspective of its internal logic. Bakhtin places the accent on what is strange, alternative and outside of official culture. Ginzburg analyses the forms of resistance in order to discover the capacity to assume active conflict in creative ways.

What interests Mikhail Bakhtin is that popular culture, in opposing the official culture, gains both internal cohesion and segregation. Consequently, his studies have focused on the *natural space* of popular culture – the public square, 'the place where people can go to raise their voice in song' – and the *most intense moment* (the *tempo forte*) of popular culture, the carnival. The public square is a socially ambivalent space, open to the movement of daily life and to a kind of theatre that makes no distinction between actors and spectators. Bakhtin characterizes the square as a language, a particular type of communication (Bakhtin, 1974) formed without the constraints which are the speciality of official language such as that of the church or the courts. The language and gestures of the square are suffused with ambiguous and ambivalent expressions which simultaneously reproduce and give vent to prohibited actions and, by parodying the forbidden in a strange form of degradation–regeneration, 'contribute to an atmosphere of freedom'. Obscenities, slanders and blasphemies condense into gross images the physical, bodily aspects of life, giving vent to the grotesque and the comic, the two expressive axes of popular culture.

I have often debated the tendency to define the popular as a form of *realism* because one almost always perceives in this attribution a strong projection of class ethnocentrism. Thus, I found in Bakhtin's. formulation of 'grotesque realism' a fruitful lead. We are dealing here with a realism which is the very antithesis of what a disguised rationalism normally imposes on the reading of popular culture. The grotesque is not simply a direct reproduction but exaggerates and degrades. Grotesque realism does not merely affirm the real but rather suggests a world view in which the ultimate and essential reality is the body-world and the world of the body. It is a transfer to the material and corporal plane that which is most elevated, spiritual, ideal and abstract (Bakhtin, 1974). The grotesque is a world view which gives value to what are commonly considered the

lowest elements – the earth, the belly – posed in direct contrast to the higher things – the heavens and the human countenance. The grotesque values the lower regions because 'the lowest is always a beginning'.

In contrast to the realism which we have generally learned to recognize – a rationalistic naturalism in which each object has a separate, finished and isolated existence – grotesque realism maintains a world in which the body is not isolated and finalized. What constitutes the body are precisely those parts that open up communication with the world: the mouth, the nose, the genitals, the breasts, the anus and the phallus. An obscenity is so valuable precisely because through it we can express the grotesque: the realism of the body.

In the carnival, the language of the public square reaches its paroxysm, its fullness, with its affirmation of the body of the people, the body-people, and their *humour*. How revealing is the confusion in the Spanish language of the meanings of the word *humour*: a visceral liquid, those strange secretions of the body which the Galenians analysed, and 'humour' as an expression of parody and ridicule. Before comedy is raised to the level of a 'minor art', it is parody become flesh in the carnival with expressions of ribald laughter and the mask. In the carnival, laughter is not just entertainment and pleasure, but an expression of opposition and challenge to the seriousness of the official world with its ascetic penance for sin and its identification of value with higher things. The laughter of the people, according to Bahktin, is 'a victory over fear' because it emerges in the effort to make laughable and subject to ridicule all that causes fear, especially the holy with its power and its moral condemnation. It is the holy which is at the heart of the strongest censure. While solemnity is related to fear, prolonging and projecting it, laughter connects with freedom.

Umberto Eco develops this same relationship when, at the end of *The Name of the Rose*, he puts into the mouth of the blind old librarian of the monastery a formidable diatribe which sums up the attitude of the medieval church, the official culture, denouncing laughter. The monk's accusation justified the church's censorship of the mysterious book, the most nefarious of all books, in which laughter is recognized as a mode of truth. The church had two arguments against the book on laughter: 'Laughter frees the villein from fear of the Devil, because in the feast of fools the Devil also appears poor and foolish'; and the book 'would have justified the idea that the tongue of the simple is the vehicle of wisdom' (Eco, 1984: 474, 478).

The mask, the other expression of comedy and of carnival, even more clearly denies identity as a univocal quality. The disguise operates like a nickname. It covers up, violates and ridicules identity while, at the same time, it facilitates a metamorphosis and reincarnation of the person which gives a new life. The mask also operates on another level: it conceals, obscures, and deceives the authorities and overturns hierarchy.

Ginzburg, using material from the century of Rabelais (although the texts are of a very different kind from those of Rabelais), explores the report of the trial, judgement and condemnation of a sixteenth-century Italian miller, Menocchio, by a tribunal of the Inquisition. What has interested Ginzburg are the cultural dynamics which permitted this miller in a little village of sixteenth-century Italy to elaborate a vision of the world which epitomized the active resistance of the popular classes at the time. The point of entry into the miller's conception of the world is found in the profound and constant discrepancy between the perception of reality out of which emerged the questions of the judges and the perceptions implied by the answers of Menocchio. The world view of the miller was shaped by two different levels of meaning: a nucleus of autonomous popular beliefs – 'obscure peasant mythologies' coming from a remote oral tradition – and a surprising but clear convergence of the ideas and position of Menocchio with the most progressive intellects of the time. To understand the 'discrepancy' from which arose the viewpoints of the miller implies studying both the *memory* and the *cultural circularity* which feeds this viewpoint. And to do this there is no other means of access but a reconstruction of Menocchio's 'manner of reading' where both memory and cultural circularity are activated.

What made possible the reading which Menocchio got from a few books was not so much the miller's particular talents – and not because a miller cannot be talented – but the convergence of the new technology of the printing press and the ideas of the Reformation. The press facilitated the spread of books to the peasant villages and made possible the confrontation of ideas from books with those which came from an oral tradition. Books gave Menocchio the words to 'express the obscure, inarticulate vision of the world that fermented within him' (Ginzburg, 1980: 59). The Reformation gave him the courage to speak out, disclose his feelings to his neighbours and defend them before the judges of the Inquisition.

How different is Ginzburg's understanding from that of McLuhan. The cultural innovations do not emerge from some intrinsic force within the technology itself, but are a process of liberating a social energy which explodes with the spread of reading

beyond the monopoly of the learned. These innovations were further reinforced by the cultural radicalism expressed in the Reformation, that is, in the social movements which find their mode of expression in that moment through the religious struggles.

Within this social content, Menocchio's reading is both an objective report of the content of the books and a subjective interpretation, but in the eyes of the tribunal of the Inquisition it is a deviant reading. In fact, the content of the books was nothing very original: lives of the saints, a burlesque poem, a book of bible stories, a travel book, a chronicle, the Koran and the Decameron. Nor does the key to the interpretation come from the books themselves.

> More than the text, then, what is important is the key to his reading, a screen that he unconsciously placed between himself and the printed page: a filter that emphasized certain words while obscuring others, that stretched the meaning of a word, taking it out of its context, that acted upon Menocchio's memory and distorted the very words of the text. (Ginzburg, 1980: 72)

The impact of Menocchio's layers of reinterpretation is such that we feel obliged to move away from the texts and to explore into the depths of peasant cultural memory, not as an attempt to find there what the miller makes the texts say but rather to discover the sources of the conflict which gave rise to Menocchio's supposedly heretical deviation. What interests us here are the sources of the mixture of clash and dialogue between the oral and the written which Le Goff alludes to. Only with an understanding of this mixture are we able to explain in the conceptions of Menocchio the presence of a religious tolerance radically different from the intolerance of the inquisitors, his subtle awareness of the different modes of injustice inflicted by the rich, and his perception of the forms of commercialization of religion. Confrontation and dialogue explain his tendency to sidestep the dogmatic dimensions of religion and seize upon the moral demands which harmonize with his peasant tradition and his naive utopianism which leads him to wish that 'there were a new world and another way of life'.

Reading Ginzburg, one is tempted at times to suspect in the researcher a deviant construction of the text, trying to portray popular culture as too coherent and the vision of Menocchio as excessively progressive. And yet, the richness and precision of this reconstruction of the historical and sociocultural context and the process of maturation of the ideas of Menocchio give us assurance of the truth and justice of the conclusions of this historian. One's feeling of distrust of Ginzburg's interpretation may, perhaps, be traced back to our complicity with the twisting of meaning which has

converted Marx's often quoted affirmation – the dominant ideas of a period are the ideas of the dominant classes – into a justification of a class ethnocentrism in which the dominated classes have no ideas and are not capable of producing ideas. This deformation of Marx's thought is so deeply rooted in us that we are scandalized by the sight of an obscure miller in an Italian village in the sixteenth century being able to think 'with his own head' or (as the miller himself might say 'pull opinions out of his brain'). The contribution of Ginzburg would be important if it did no more than unmask this prejudice. The importance of Ginzburg, however, is that he provides us with a methodogical model for discovering in the practice of reading a fertile ground for the analysis of conflict and cultural creativity among the popular classes.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, the conditions of the world of popular culture change enormously. The reasons for the change as well as the new modes of cultural expression which were set in motion have been particularly well analysed by R. Muchembled (1985). He has focused primarily on France, but his study offers a basic perspective for understanding the processes of repression and enculturation throughout Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

With the wars of religion which reinforce the 'sentiments of nationalism' and encourage a free market, came a political transformation of far-reaching consequence: the unification of markets and the centralization of power.[37] This was a process that, simultaneous with fixing the external borders, broke down all internal divisions that fragmented the interior of the nation. The modern state obliterated or replaced the plurality of mediations, knitting together the different communities and regions. In this process the state set up overseeing institutions which tied every citizen to the central authority of the sovereign and kept watch over the well-being and security of all. The dynamics of popular culture were first obstructed and later paralysed by the new organization of social life.

The slow penetration of the commercial economy into the communities destroyed the economic framework of life there and created conditions which progressively cut back the political and cultural autonomy of the provincial communities. Little by little cultural differences came to be perceived as threats to a central power that aspired to legitimize a national culture, and, through the unification of language and condemnation of superstitions, integrated a national market and centralized the mechanisms of political power. After the middle of the seventeenth century, there began to be a rupture of the political balance that had made possible the coexistence of different cultural evolutions, and 'a movement for

the acculturation of the masses' pushed for a unified cultural model. Muchembled represents a significant advance in the uncovering of the mechanisms for repressing popular cultures which began to be present at the end of the seventeenth century and which were the forerunners of the cultural massification that would develop in the nineteenth century, reaching its zenith in our own times.

Ironically, the process which destroyed the different regional cultures in order to create national cultures carries within itself the seeds of its own negation: the construction of a supra or trans-national culture. This insight enables us to see that the destruction of the popular festivals and the persecution of witches are linked without a break with the enculturation which is brought about by the spread of the literature of the *cordel*, the circulation of an iconography and the transformation of popular entertainment, a theme to be studied in greater detail in Part II, Chapter 6.

P. Burke (1978) has studied the cultural assimilation of the popular world in an analysis that at times borders on culturalism but which provides us with rich information. Burke identifies two stages in this long process of enculturation. In the first stage, from 1500 to 1650, the clergy were the principal agents of assimilation. In the second, from 1650 to 1800, the agents of assimilation were primarily secular. The first stage was set in motion by the rise of the Protestant reformation and by the Catholic Counter-reformation. Although these two movements had different dogmatic proposals and methods of action, they converged on the same objective of purifying the culture of what remained of paganism. And the 'cleansing' applied not just to religious imagery and rites but also to cultural practices such as ballads, dances and popular medicine. Erasmus' criticism of the popular preachers is a good example. He showed no tolerance for superstition or for the expressions that carried hidden forms of superstition. He made no concession to popular language with its tone of vulgarity or to any emotion or stories that could prompt laughter.

With Bakhtin's and Eco's work on the significance of popular language and humour, it is easy to understand the insistence on the 'solemnity' of religion and the efforts to destroy at any cost the mix of the sacred and the profane. The rationalism that Le Goff identifies in the Middle Ages as the key ingredient of clericalism made difficult any exchange between the sacred and the profane. Both Catholics and Protestants sensed in the dances, games, songs and dramas the dangerous emotions, dark feelings and secret passions that harboured superstitions. There were, however, differences and contradictions between Catholics and Protestants.

According to Burke, while the Catholics attempted to modify customs, the Protestants tried to abolish completely popular traditions and morality in the name of the new Christian virtues of sobriety, hard work and discipline.

The dimension of conflict entered in with the way the Protestants first supported the peasant uprisings but then turned against them, because they perceived a relation between popular revolt and festivals and sought a complete separation between religious celebration and popular festivals. The Protestants did allow the language of the people to enter into celebrations, abolishing the use of Latin and using popular music in their religious hymns. At the same time, paradoxically, the Protestants became more and more intolerant of what remained of the old cultures: spontaneity, a generosity that placed little value on savings and a certain taste for disorder and fun.

In the second stage of the long enculturation, secularization was more important than direct repression. The disenchantment of the world brought about by the expansion of the new types of knowledge and work made much deeper and more radical the chasm between the cultures of the minority and the majority. Both John Calvin and Carlo Borromeo, Burke notes, believed in the power of magic: in the second stage, magic simply had no meaning and came to be considered foolishness rather than heresy. Superstitions, instead of being considered a false religion, would be looked upon and, later, studied as practices that were irrational. On the other hand, the division of labour, the standardization of certain household utensils - pottery dishes, watches, linens – and the organization of entertainment according to the demands of work helped to cut the ground out from under the network of exchanges that nourished popular culture.

Among those who have studied this gradual erosion of the 'moral economy of the common people', few have been more insightful than Edward Palmer Thompson. His historical analysis has radically renewed our understanding of the relationship between social movements and cultural dynamics. Thompson believed that a history of the working class was not possible without taking into account popular memories and experiences, not only as historical background, but as the composition of the labour movement itself. His proposal implies a redefinition of three basic components: class, people, and culture.[38]

According to Thompson, a social class is a way of experiencing social existence and not merely one of the many relationships with the means of production: 'a class happens when some men, as a

result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs' (Thompson, 1968: 9–10).

For Thompson, class is more of a historical than an economic category, breaking with the rigid Marxist model that mechanically derived the classes, their position and their consciousness from their place in the relationships of production. It also broke with the functionalist model that reduced the classes to a quantitative stratification of salary, type of work and level of education.

> Classes do not exist as separate entities that look around and find an enemy class and begin to struggle. On the contrary, in a structured society, people find themselves integrated socially according to the way they experience exploitation. They identify opposing points of interests, and they begin to struggle for these points. In the struggle they realize they are a class. (Thompson, 1979: 37).

Thompson broke with an obstinate historical tradition and re-thought the relationship between people and class when he discovered in the common people of the pre-industrial riots a politicization until then overlooked or explicitly denied. The political dimension of the riots did not clearly emerge from the actions. It could only be captured by looking at the culture of which it formed part, a popular culture that Thompson hesitated to call a class culture, but that nevertheless 'could not be understood outside class antagonisms, adjustments and occasional dialectical reconciliations'.

We discover something totally different if, instead of judging the struggles of the common people from a dogmatic notion of politics, the struggles are seen as part of the antagonisms that expresses their culture. The riots, the mockery of bourgeois virtues, the disorder, the seditious use of the market, the blasphemies of anonymous letters, the obscene songs, even the ghost stories, acquire meaning and gain political coherence from the 'forces of the class'. They are all forms of combating the destruction of the 'moral economy' of the common people, politically symbolizing their force and challenging the hegemony of the other class.

In his studies of the evolution of popular culture from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, Thompson has uncovered a contradictory paradox that was unnoticed by historians but essential to understanding how hegemony works. The contradiction is the apparent conservativism of external forms combined, strangely, with the rebelliousness of the content of popular culture, a rebelliousness in the name of customs, that, paradoxically, was a form of defending identity. We had to wait until the present crisis of

'progress' to understand the meaning of this contradiction and discover the 'arsenal of protest' contained in many of the popular practices and customs. For those who maintain a narrow view of politics and strive to politicize a culture – ignoring the political meaning behind many of the cultural practices and expressions of the populace – it is an invisible arsenal.

Thompson was criticized for emphasizing the continuity of the rebellious consciousness and seeing signs of resistance where others saw only irrationality (Shiach, 1983: 55 ff). It is often difficult, however, to break new ground without going to extremes. The shake-up of old certainties and the new clues they offered to scholars, however, more than compensated for any possible overemphasis.

Historical studies of popular tastes, feelings and aesthetics provide the latest step in the revision of what is popular. Until recently, popular taste was considered the absolute opposite of educated taste. History automatically discarded everything that smelled of the people. History books told us how the rich dressed, what they ate, their taste in music and how they organized their homes. All they told about the poor was their stupidity, uprisings, exploitations, resentments and revolts.

For this reason, the work of Zeldin (1973) on France between 1848 and 1948 is so innovative. Zeldin tells us about good and bad taste, about the official as well as the popular view of health, housing and even humour. History at last stopped confusing bad taste with the absence of any taste at all.

Culture, hegemony and daily life

Much of the path that led through the critical tradition of the social sciences toward an interest in culture, especially popular culture, passes through Gramsci. Among the many 'rereadings' that the historical moment of the 1970s brought about (especially in Latin America), none is so discussed as that of Gramsci. More than a 'rereading', it was for many – including many Marxists – the discovery of a line of thought that the circumstances of a historical period kept hidden and that a new juncture of circumstances once again opened to view. The analysis of the reasons behind the new encounter with Gramsci has already been made on both sides of the Atlantic (Glucsman, 1980; Portantiero, 1981). What interests us here is the role of Gramsci's thought in opening up the Marxist tradition of analysis to the question of culture and to the dimension of social class in popular culture.

Perhaps the single most important contribution of Gramsci is his conception of *hegemony*, which made it possible to move beyond the conception of social domination as simply an outside imposition without subjects of cultural action. In Gramsci's view, one class exercises hegemony to the extent that the dominating class has interests which the subaltern classes recognize as being in some degree in their interests too. And the term 'in some degree' means, in this context, that hegemony is not a stable state but that it is being continually disestablished in a 'lived process'. This process is not based only on force but on shared meaning and the appropriation of the meaning of life through power, seduction and complicity.

This implies a certain limit to the effectiveness of ideology – not everything that the subjects of hegemony think and do contributes to the reproduction of the system. Also implied is a reevaluation of the significance of culture as a strategic battlefield in the struggle to define the terms of conflict.

Gramsci's other important contribution is the understanding of folklore as popular culture in the strongest sense of the term 'popular', that is, 'as a conception of the world and of life' which is 'in opposition (implicitly, mechanically, objectively) to the conception of the official world (or in a broader sense, in opposition to the learned sectors of the official world) that has emerged historically' (Gramsci, 1977). Gramsci links popular culture to the subaltern classes, but not in a simple way. Although the linking of popular culture to an underclass implies that this culture is inorganic, fragmentary and degraded, it also affirms that this culture has a particular tenacity, a spontaneous capacity to take advantage of the material conditions so that, at times, this culture becomes a force for political and social transformation.

A. Cirese, in his development of Gramsci's conception of the popular, catches the essential note when he conceives of 'the popular as a use and not as an origin, as a fact and not an essence, as relational position and not as substance' (Cirese, 1980a). In contrast to culturalist tendencies, the importance of the popular does not rest on its authenticity or beauty but rather on its sociocultural representativity and on its capacity to make material and to express the ways of living and thinking of the underclasses. The popular refers to the ways these classes survive and to the strategies through which they first filter and reorganize what comes from the hegemonic culture and then integrate and fuse this with what comes from their own historical memory.

The recovery of the positive aspects of popular culture by groups of the left in the moments of crisis such as these groups are now experiencing could not but lead to an exaggeration of this positiveness. In some cases there has been a tendency to make the capacity of the subaltern classes to resist and respond an almost magic resource from which flows the new, authentic revolutionary impulse. If previously the left's fatalistic and mechanical conception of domination made the dominated class a passive social reality, capable of mobilization only by outside forces, now the tendency is to attribute to these classes an unlimited capacity for defiance and an almost metaphysical power to produce an alternative. The most dangerous aspect of this oscillation between extremes, as García Canclini (1984b) notes,

> is that there is so much insistence on the juxtaposition of the subaltern and hegemonic culture and on the political necessity of defending the independence of the subaltern culture that the two come to be thought of as two quite separate entities. With the presupposition that the task of hegemonic culture is to dominate and that of the subaltern culture is to resist, much research has had no other aim than to inquire about the ways the two distinct roles were carried out.

The fact that interpretations of Gramsci have come to this extreme does not imply, in my view, a limitation in the thought of Gramsci, as García Canclini seems to think. I do not consider such positions simply an 'enthusiastic expansion' of the thought of Gramsci, but a serious deformation. The mistake is to attribute to 'hegemony' and 'subaltern' a meaning of exteriority which these terms originally sought to overcome. The recent interpretations have simply inverted the meaning of the terms: the capacity for action – for domination, imposition, and manipulation – which before was attributed to the dominating class becomes the capacity for action, resistance and defiance in the dominated class. This deformation illustrates how difficult it is for some Marxists to change their mental schemes and underlying theories. The logic survives in the very attempt to negate or overcome the framework. The deformation is itself the best proof that Gramsci was right: we face the powerful hegemony of a functionalism that penetrates the categories of its adversary until it succeeds in giving them a quite different meaning.

An Italian anthropologist has alerted us to this reincarnation of dichotomies that freeze the sociocultural dynamics of society, whether this compartmentalization be the 'soft' tendency such as Cirese's interpretation of distinct levels[39] or the 'hard' tendency which emphasizes the antagonisms, along the lines of Lombardi Satriani (1978). The root of the problem is the theoretical and methodological impossibility of putting the anthropological concept of culture into the Marxist concept of social class without overemphasizing dichotomous alternatives. It is similar to the problem

of wanting to promote the power of the industrial proletariat without allowing an idealization of the working class to affect the complexities of interaction between the cultural and political spheres (Clemente, 1980, 1982).

Certainly, Gramsci's view of the popular is far from the facile polarization and dualism criticized by García Canclini. If there is one thing Gramsci has taught us, it is to pay closer attention to the underlying plot. Not every assumption of hegemonic power by the underclass is a sign of submission and not every rejection is resistance. Not everything that comes 'from above' represents the values of the dominant class. Some aspects of popular culture respond to logics other than the logic of domination.

The intriguing plot of popular reality becomes even more complex and contradictory as we move into conceptions of mass culture. The Manichaean tendency to see everything in black-and-white contrasts becomes especially strong in the thinking about the culture industry. But parallel to the conception of that cultural formation as simply a strategem of domination, there opens up another path much closer to the ideas of Gramsci and Benjamin. A pioneer work along these lines is Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1958). Here we discover what mass culture does with the world of everyday experience of the popular classes and the way mass culture is filtered through the experience of the working class family. In the first part of the book, Hoggart studies working class culture from the inside, from the perspective of the daily life and the ways that experience shapes the mentality of the English working class. His method combines ethnographical surveys with phenomenological analysis in a way that allows him to avoid even the slightest touch of culturalism, and the culture he presents is never separated from the material conditions of working class existence.

Hoggart has been faulted for overemphasizing the coherence of popular practices. The impression of coherence, however, stems from the method of exposition that he adopted, namely, placing the description of the action of mass society 'after' the description of how traditional culture – with its strong social solidarity and integrated cultural world view – continues on in the life styles of the popular classes. This life style mixes together a social universe of 'them and us' with a strong regard for the family circle and a great openness to group relationships, especially those of the neighbourhood. It is a style that conveys a sense of moral certitude, blending together a taste for practical concreteness, a certain cynicism, an elemental religiosity and an ability to live for the day with much improvisation and enjoyment. The popular life style contains conformism based on a suspicion of change, a fatalism deriving from the long experience of social and economic hardships and a tendency to retreat into a small social circle when things are going badly.

Hoggart evaluated the role of the culture industry with a basic criterion: 'the success of the more powerful contemporary approaches is partly decided by the extent to which they can identify themselves with "older" attitudes' (1958: 170). At the same time the action of mass culture can be experienced as the loss of control over one's own culture. In the articulation of these two criteria we find the basis of Hoggart's project which permits him to denounce the seductive blackmail of the culture industry while at the same time he studies their origin and development from the perspective of popular culture. For example, he analyses how the press, 'in order to induce the members of the popular classes to accept the status quo, finds support in values such as tolerance, solidarity, enjoyment of life – values which, only fifty years previously, were the language used to express the desire of the popular classes to transform their conditions of life and reclaim their dignity' (1958). Here we find a splendid synthesis of how hegemony functions in the culture industry: in the very act of enabling the popular classes to recognize their identity there is an expropriation of that identity. Hoggart maps out the operations that exploit the aspirations for freedom: first draining them of their sense of rebellion and then filling them with consumerism. Thus, tolerance is transformed into indifference and solidarity into conformist egalitarianism, converting the fondness for personal relationships into a superficial and deceptive 'personalization.'

The intuitions of Benjamin found their confirmation in Hoggart: the secret reason behind the success of the culture industry is the way it inserts itself into popular experience and transforms this experience from within. But we can also trace back to that experience of daily life the mechanisms the popular classes use, with an almost unconscious reflex action, to effectively resist the seduction of mass culture. These are mechanisms that involve both continuity with remembered identities and learning to deal with their present situation. With their oblique reading of mass culture, the popular classes discover ways to 'get pleasure from the use of media without losing their identity', as is demonstrated by their daily purchase of the conservative newspapers and then voting solidly labour and vice versa.

The obstacles to understanding the penetration of the logic of hegemony in the culture industry stem both from the difficulty of perceiving the ways in which this industry articulates the popular and from the diversity of dimensions and levels at which cultural

change occurs. Raymond Williams dedicates much of his work to the study of the second aspect, but always closely linked to the way the culture industry expresses the popular culture (Williams, 1976, 1980). He begins by analysing the concept of culture, unravelling the mass of representations and interests that formed the concept from the moment when it no longer designates the development of nature such as the cultivation of plants, animals or human virtues. It is in the eighteenth century that culture begins to mean something in itself, a value that the select few can possess or aspire to possess. The gradual spiritualization of culture continues apace with an increasing connotation of exclusiveness as 'authentic culture'. Culture becomes identified with education – especially higher education in the arts and humanities – and is reserved for superior individuals. The more culture is identified with intellectual life in opposition to material existence defined in terms of civilization, the more it becomes an interior world, subjective and individualized. But at that point, well into the nineteenth century, the original concept of culture exploded, broke up and radically inverted its meaning. Culture is applied to the world of the material and spiritual organization of different social classes, ideologies and societies. Along with this deconstruction of the concept of culture, Williams brings about a reconstruction which is of special interest to our discussion. He takes up, on the one hand, the increasing importance of the concept of the 'common culture' and the democratic tradition which finds its axis in the culture of the working class. On the other hand, his analysis contains a model that sorts out the complex dynamics of a continuing past and radical change operating in contemporary cultures (1977, 1982). The most striking characteristic of Williams' work on the evolution of popular culture is the way in which he captures the articulation of practices in that culture.

In his study of the popular press, for example (1978: 41–51), Williams looks at this as a process of political mediations – how it articulates the forms of workers' association and the expression of protest. The popular press reveals the relation between the way the popular classes read newspapers and the social organization of time in the working class. This press also assimilates the modes of narrative – radical oratory, melodrama, sermons – shaped by working class contexts and facilitates in the process of commercialization the survival of oral culture. What ties together Williams' analysis is essentially the same line of thought used by Hoggart – mass culture working within popular culture. The popular press takes its cue as much from what happens in the factory, the tavern, popular melodrama and the clamour of rallies with their slogans and pamphlets as it does from the world of the newspaper. This does not, however, diminish the importance of the technological revolution and its control by the private sector.

Williams' model of contemporary cultural dynamics has two fronts. The theoretical front explores the implications for cultural theory posed by the introduction of the Gramscian concept of hegemony moving the idea of culture from the framework of ideology as its only context, that is, as direct line of reproduction, towards the field of conflicting social groups that are continually transforming the structure of power and reconstituting the shape of social existence.

The methodological front presents a topology of cultural forms in terms of three strata: archaic, residual and emerging. The *archaic* stratum is what survives from the past, but only as something past, as an object of study or of memory. The *residual* stratum, in contrast, 'has been effectively formed in the past but is nevertheless still found active today within the cultural process' (Williams, 1980: 144). The residual stratum is pivotal to the model since it is not uniform but carries two types of elements: those which have been fully incorporated into or 'recovered' by the dominant culture and those which constitute a reserve of opposition and defiance to the dominant culture, implying, therefore, an alternative culture. The third stratum of popular culture is made up of elements which are new and *emerging*, the process of innovation in practice and meanings. This dimension of culture is not uniform either since all that is new is not necessarily radically alternative to the dominant culture or simply a dependent function of that culture.

The distinction between archaic and residual dimensions of culture is important because it allows us to overcome historicism without annulling history. It is a dialectic of past and present that avoids both nostalgia and escapism. The residual stratum is the mix of what is pushed up from the past and still holds back from the future, of what works for domination and what resists this domination by secretly allying with what is emerging. The residual layer as a concept provides a clear and precise methodological image of the complex process of popular culture and a programme not only for research but for cultural policy.

Another sociological school that takes seriously the question of culture is found in France with the most valuable contribution, in my opinion, coming from Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau.

For Bourdieu, the guiding concept which provides a frame for his work is what he himself chose as the title of his study on the educational system: *reproduction*. The concept of reproduction is for Bourdieu the way to harmonize within Marxist theory an analysis of culture which goes beyond the limitations of super-

structure but always reveals the elements of social class in culture. Throughout his work, from his research on the educational system to the study of knowledge as art, this harmonization is operationalized in the concept of *habitus of class*. It is this concept which gives coherence to Bourdieu's thought and dominates his general theory of cultural practice. In an earlier version, *habitus* is defined as the product of the interiorization of the principles of a cultural arbiter strong enough to perpetuate in practice the principles of this interiorized authority (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). The mode of operation of *habitus* is established by the shaping of practices according to different relationships of those practices – to language, to art and to science – that emerge from the way that these cultural goods are acquired.

> In cultural matters the manner of acquiring perpetuates itself in what is acquired, in the form of a certain manner of using the acquirement, the mode of acquisition itself expressing the objective relations between the social characteristics of the acquirer and the social quality of what is acquired (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 116).

From this rather limited definition, closely linked to a restricted conception of culture, Bourdieu passes on to an analysis of cultural competence based on a general theory of cultural practices. In this analysis, *habitus* is no longer seen from the outside – a product – but becomes 'a system of enduring dispositions which, by integrating all past experiences, functions as the matrix of perceptions, of opinion and action' (Bourdieu, 1972).

When analysed from the perspective of the *habitus* of class, the apparently dispersed daily practices reveal their organic and systematic unity. Where there seemed to be a chaotic lack of meaning, one can discover a homologous structure linking practices and the social order which is expressed in them. It is in this structuring of everyday life according to *habitus* that hegemony effectively 'programs' the expectations and tastes of a particular class. And it is in this action also that one finds the objective and subjective limitations of the proposals for transforming the alternatives which the popular classes produce (García Canclini, 1984a).

The area where *habitus* functions in the most masked fashion is art. Although artists may deny that they are in the hire of social structures, art is nevertheless the terrain where the different ways of relating to culture are most marked. What a paradox it is that, although music is the most 'spiritual' of the arts, there is nothing like musical tastes to affirm social class distinctions. Note well that the word 'distinctions' in its semantic composition, articulates two dimensions of cultural competence: difference and distance. Distinction links the secret affirmation of legitimate taste and the

establishment of a prestige which endeavours to maintain a distance unsurmountable by those who do not have the 'taste'. To say that a person 'has class' has a similar connotation as saying that a person is highly cultivated, that is, that the person possesses a *legitimate culture*. It implies that the person has control, practice and expertise regarding the instruments of symbolic appropriation of the works of art already legitimated or on their way to legitimation (Bourdieu, 1984). The affirmation of distinction, however, is not limited to the area of art. Every aspect of life is its field of operation: clothing, cuisine and sport also reveal the affirmation of class. Thus, those who inhabit a legitimate culture become true natives. It is this that Bourdieu calls *ethnocentrism of class*, to consider something to be 'natural', that is, to consider a manner of perceiving the world to be obvious and rooted in nature when that perception is no more than one among many possibilities (Bourdieu, 1968). This is an ethnocentrism which transforms a division of classes into the negation that there can rightfully exist other tastes. One class affirms itself by denying to another its right to participate in the culture, declaring openly that another aesthetic or set of sensibilities has absolutely no value. Once the legitimate culture has affirmed distinction, it rejects, above all, any aesthetic that does not know how to distinguish the forms and current styles of art, especially the inability to distinguish art from real life. It is what Kant calls 'the barbaric taste', the mixing of artistic satisfaction with emotion, making the latter the measure of the former. It is precisely this, mixture that so scandalizes Adorno when he finds that it gives shape to the culture industries.

As we shall see in greater detail later when we take up the question of a popular aesthetic, Bourdieu's analysis itself projects a certain ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, he does not fall into Kantian dualism or populism. This is clear when he affirms that 'It is as dangerous to attribute the coherence of a systematic aesthetic to the aesthetic commitments of the popular classes as it is to adopt, albeit unconsciously, the conception of ordinary vision which is the basis of every "high" aesthetic' (Bourdieu, 1984: 32). As I mentioned at the outset, Bourdieu's orienting conception of practice comes from seeing reproduction as a fundamental social process. On this conceptual framework he has constructed a model as open, complex and non-mechanical as possible in order to comprehend the relation of practices with the structure of social class. Bourdieu has neglected to think through, however, the relation of practices with the *situations* which produce innovation and transformation.

De Certeau has provided one of the most accurate critiques of the

implications of Bourdieu's omissions and one of the clearest accounts of the 'other dimensions' of practices (1974b, 1979a, 1984). It is dangerous to think that the only possible systematization and the only intelligible explanation of practices comes from the logic of reproduction. That would be equivalent to considering meaningless every other principle of organization of social structure and of discourse. Without denying the value of the theory of *habitus*, de Certeau proposes an alternative explanation of uses as forms of *appropriation*, but he locates uses in moments of time and place and sees uses as the relation of 'subjects' with 'others'. This is the other face of daily life, the creativity operating in popular culture which is dispersed, hidden and without expression in a discourse. It is the creativity of a production incorporated into forms of apparently unimportant consumption. It is what becomes visible only when we change, not simply the words of the script, but the basic meaning of the question: 'What do the people *do* with what they believe, with what they buy, with what they see?' A single logic of domination cannot encompass all the arts of creative action.

There is something in daily life which is marginal to the discourse of the dominant rationality, unwilling to let itself be measured in statistical terms. It exists as a mode of action characterized more by *tactics* than by strategy. Strategy is a calculation of the relationships of force, 'which makes it possible to take possession of one's own place in order to have a base to build relations with a differentiated exteriority'. Tactics, on the other hand, are a confrontational mode of operation for one who does not have a base and border with a visible external world (de Certeau, 1984).

This makes tactics a mode of operation dependent on a moment of time, very open to the context and especially sensitive to the occasion. Tactics are the mode of operation of workers, who, taking advantage of some free time on the job, use the left-over materials and idle machines of their factories to make utensils for their families, thereby liberating a creativity castrated by the division of labour and the assembly line. We see an example of tactics in the practice of the people of north-east Brazil who, by astutely introducing current events of everyday life into religious discourse, transform the narrative of a miracle of a saint into a form of protest against the unalterability of a social order. This order thereby ceases to be part of nature and becomes part of human history. Tactics are the mode of reading and listening in which unlettered people interrupt the logic of the text and refashion it in function of the situation and expectation of the people.

De Certeau finds the paradigm of this 'other logic' in popular culture. This is in no way an attempt to return to the past or to the

primitive in search of a model of authentic origins. In the face of the tendency to idealize popular culture in reaction to a high culture that emasculates the popular classes, de Certeau attempts to reconstruct the landmarks of history remembered by popular culture and retraces the map of what high culture has covered over (1974a). The popular culture to which de Certeau refers is the impure and conflictive urban popular culture. Popular is the name for a range of practices which accompany the transformation of industrial life or, better, the vantage point from which these practices should be observed in order to understand their tactics.

Popular culture does not refer to something foreign, but rather to a remnant and a style. It is a remnant in the sense of a memory of experience without discourse, a memory which resists discourse and allows itself to be spoken only in the act of narration. It is a remnant made up of the knowledge unusable for technological colonization, but, by being thrown away, charges everyday life with symbolic meaning and transforms it into a space of mute and collective creativity. Popular culture is also a style, a plan of operations, a way of walking through the city, a way of living in a home, of seeing television, a style of social interchange which becomes a place for technical inventiveness and of moral resistance.

5

The Long Process of Enculturation

The nation-state and the conditions of hegemony

Where did the repression of popular cultures in modern Europe begin and what was it based on? What were the interests and mechanisms that justified and institutionalized the devaluation and disintegration of everything popular? We are just beginning to disentangle the various historical dimensions of this process and to see it in relation to the political transformation that brought about, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the formation of the modern state and the definitive consolidation of the nation as state.

The nation as a market did not become a reality until the maturity of industrial capitalism, but, nevertheless, it was during the centuries of evolution of mercantilism that the modern state took shape. At that time the economy ceases to be 'domestic' and is transformed into a national economic policy. There emerges the first unity of the national market based on the identification of the interests of the state with the 'common interests', symbolized in the unified currency (Villar, 1981).

The fragmentation of Christianity as a result of the Protestant Reformation became a justification of religious wars in which a sense of the nation played an important role. The struggle of the Netherlands against Philip II demonstrated for the first time what was beginning to be called 'national sentiment': the interests of the bourgeoisie linking together the defence of language and religion. Integration became concretely defined in terms of a delimited territorial area whose scope was found both in the demarcation of external frontiers and in the 'interior' centralization of political power.

Political centralization and cultural unification

There are two basic means of centralization (Muchembled, 1985): *horizontal integration* and *vertical integration*. In the former, the state as it evolves demonstrates a growing incompatibility with a segmented society made up of regional and local popular cultures; that is, a society organized in terms of a multiplicity of groups and subgroups – classes, lineages, corporations, fraternities, age groupings, etc. – whose relations and internal solidarity are governed by complex rituals and systems of norms. Regional privileges and characteristics which have preserved cultural differences became obstacles to the national unity which sustains the power of the state. The processes of *vertical integration* underlying centralization were constituted by new patterns of social relations through which each individual was disconnected from the hold of the group solidarity and reconnected to the central authority. By breaking the hold of the group, each individual became a free agent on the labour market.

The Church has played a predisposing role in vertical integration by preaching a faith which relates individualism – in the doctrine of free will – with a blind submission to the hierarchy, a conception which was already undermining the traditional solidarities of popular culture based on clans, families, etc. All the old relationships were replaced with vertical relationships that tied each individual to God through the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Muchembled, 1985). The state and national law as a guarantee for all subjects replaced the complex network of associations that provided an integrating fabric for personal goals, enabled individuals to become active subjects and gave them security. The state becomes the sole corporate base of social cohesion.

The state reached its fullest form in the nation-state conceived by the Enlightenment and its 'realization' by the French Revolution. For the people of the Enlightenment, the nation means both the sovereignty of the state and social and economic unity. It is the idea of the 'Fatherland' now charged with social meaning in so far as it implied the predominance of the public good over private interests and privileges. Sovereignty is the statement of the 'general will' of the people incarnate in the power of the state.

The state, however, asserted its unity, paradoxically, just at the moment when class struggle emerged. The prince disappears not simply because he dies but because sovereignty replaces him. By sustaining sovereignty as the principle of the state, the revolutionaries perpetuated the 'prince', that is, the statist model . . . By putting the nation at the forefront of politics, the revolutionaries displaced the monarch. In this radical change, however, they wanted only one thing: to occupy the throne of the king (Mairet, 1978: 48, 51).

This paradox finds its best expression in the process by which the nation, in constituting the people as a corporate existence, replaced the people. Moving from the 'plurality of peoples' to the 'unity of the people' now transformed into nation (integrated through the centralized state power), there is set in motion the inversion of meaning which will make manifest the culture to be called popular

in the nineteenth century. And when mass culture presents itself as popular culture, this is only a continuation of this substitution of the people by the nation on the political plane. This substitution has been possible only through the dissolution of social plurality and progressive integration of state centralization. Cultural integration made it possible to move from the unity of the market to political unity.

The stabilization of national boundaries was tied to the destruction of internal boundaries drawn by custom and local jurisdictions. Cultural differences were perceived as an obstacle to the free exchange of goods and represented an inadmissible parcelation of power for an absolute monarch. Both obstacles were overcome through the construction of a national culture.

And it is just in that moment when the local popular cultures are beginning to be undermined – in the moment when they are being denied the right to exist – that scholars begin to take an interest in them. 'Political repression is the origin of scientific curiosity . . . It was necessary to censure popular cultures in order that academics would take an interest in them' (de Certeau, 1974b: 55). Thus begins a historical constant: only when the peoples are not allowed to speak do academics become interested in their language.

The effectiveness of repression is not the result, however, of some sinister design, but of various scattered and even contradictory mechanisms and procedures. As in Foucault's analysis (1977), the destruction of popular culture began with the destruction of the pattern of life, but it operates through a control of sexuality – the devaluation of the images of the body, the 'corporal topography' studied by Bahktin – injecting a feeling of guilt, of inferiority and of respect through the universalization of the 'principle of obedience' which begins with paternal authority and leads to subjection to the sovereign. Enculturation becomes clearest in two areas: the transformation of the sense of time that abolishes a cyclical concept and imposes a linear perception centred on production; and the transformation of knowledge and its forms of transmission beginning with the persecution of witches and ending with the establishment of the school.

Ruptures in the sense of time

Cyclical perception of time is a time based on festivals. By their repetition or, better, by their continual return, festivals carry along the sense of social organization of time embedded in popular cultures. Each season, each year, is organized in a cycle of festivals, a time charged with heightened social participation and collective action. The festival, however, does not imply an opposition to daily life; it is rather the force which recharges daily routines with meaning as if daily life continually uses up meaning and the festival comes along periodically to replenish it and renew the sense of belonging to the community. The festival does this by providing the community with periodic moments for discharging tensions, giving vent to the accumulated anxieties, and, through 'economic' rituals, ensures the fertility of the fields and the flocks. The time which the festivals carry ahead, the time of the cycles, is also a time lived not only for the collectivity and its recurrent memory, but also for individuals in so far as it is a time of personal life growth nourished by the rites of initiation at different moments of age (Zonabend, 1984; Thompson, 1979). Cyclical time is also a rhythm of occupational tasks, for example, the time employed in baking bread or reciting a rosary.

The sense of time in popular cultures is prevented from functioning and drained away by two converging forces: the force that, first, changed the meaning of the festivals and, then, that which replaced them entirely. With the disappearance of the cyclical festivals, production becomes the new axis for the organization of social time and destroys the sense of time of popular cultures. The festivals were deformed by their transformation into *spectacles*, something not to live and be involved with but to watch and admire. In the world of popular culture, the festival is the time and place where the sacred and profane are most closely fused, and by making the festival a spectacle the separation of sacred and profane becomes most noticeable. The separation between religion and production turned the dichotomy festival/daily life into the dichotomy of leisure/work. Only advanced capitalism, the 'society of spectacle and entertainment', would bring together again the dichotomy of festival/daily life, producing a new truth to be negated.

The replacement of the cycles of festivals with the linear time of production is a process of long duration, which, according to Le Goff, began in the fourteenth century. The appearance of the clock made possible the unification of time periods and the discovery, by the merchant mentality, of the value of time. This is the origin of a new morality and a new piety. 'Wasting one's time became a serious sin, a spiritual scandal. On the model of money and of the merchant who, in Italy, at least, became an accountant of time, there arose a calculating morality and miserly piety' (Le Goff, 1980: 50).

With the industrial revolution, the time of the merchant evolved into the conception of time of industrial capitalism. In this shift, time as an instrument and as a value in itself maintained its supremacy over time as living, but there was, nevertheless, a profound change. The value of time, or, rather, the source of value,

was not in the *circulation* of money and merchandise but in *production*, time as work which is irreversible and in homogeneous units.

> The existence of the bourgeoisie is linked to the time of work, for the first time liberated from the cycle. For the bourgeoisie is the first dominant class for which work is a value in itself . . . a class that does not recognize any other source of value than that coming from work. (Debord, 1971: 95)

By abstracting time from the rhythms of human life, the time of production socially degrades the time of subjects – both individual and collective subjects – and transforms time into segmented homogeneous units – the time of objects – time which is mechanically fragmented and unrelated to context. Time becomes an irreversible progression, for it is produced as the time of the whole society and of history, a history whose 'secret' lies in the dynamics of indefinite accumulation and whose rationale suppresses any obstruction or makes these obstacles an anachronism.

'How can one capitalize the time of individuals, accumulate it in each of them, in their bodies, in their forces or in their abilities in a way that is susceptible of use and control?' (Foucault, 1977: 159). Herein lies the question revealing the hidden side of time as production: it is a measure and a control of bodies and souls. Time becomes a discipline through which develops the mystique with which is sublimated the exploitation that the new conditions of production imply. It is the *mystique of work*, originated in the 'sermon that organizes the moral control over the principles which determine the mechanical conditions of life' (Ure, 1835, cited in Thompson, 1979). The integration of the popular classes into capitalist society is a proletarianization not only in the sense of the sale of their labour, but also in another more profound sense of interiorizing the discipline and morality that 'the new organization of time' demands.

Transformation of the modes of knowing

The other key to enculturation was the transformation of knowing and the way knowledge is transmitted. With the persecution of witches, the new society tried to penetrate the hard core of traditional cultures. Today we are beginning to understand that witches symbolized for the clergy and the magistrates, for the wealthy and the educated, a world that had to be eliminated. For it represented a world decentralized, horizontal and ambivalent[1] which enters into radical conflict with the new image of the world designed by reason: vertical, uniform and centralized. The magical knowledge – astrological, medicinal or psychological – permeates the popular conception of the world completely. It is not merely a passing activity or sentiment, but a certain quality of life and death, a corporal imagery which privileges the lowest zones as places of pleasure, significant signs and taboos. It is a knowledge possessed and transmitted almost exclusively by women. More than 70 per cent of those accused, tortured and tried for witchcraft were women. Still to be studied – without the prejudices which cover machismo with rationalism – is the role which women have played in the transmission of the popular memory and women's obstinate rejection over centuries of the official religion and culture.

Women often presided over the evening social gatherings and informal meetings around the hearth in rural communities as dusk fell, moments of particular importance for conserving traditional forms of cultural transmission. These were nightly sessions which combined ghost tales and stories of bandits with a chronicle of events in the village. Here is transmitted a morality in proverbs and home remedies along with a knowledge about plants and the cycle of the planets. According to Michelet (1966), witches, together with popular rebellions, are one of the two fundamental modes of expressing the popular consciousness.

The school would play a key role in undermining this consciousness. It was impossible for the school to carry out its function of initiating the young into the conditioning necessary for entering into productive life without deactivating the forms of persistence of the popular consciousness. The school followed two principles: teaching as a form of filling empty vessels and instilling morality as a means of rooting out vices.

In the new society, learning began by removing the harmful influence of the parents, especially the mother who was seen as the one who conserved and transmitted superstitions. Above all the school represented a change in the modes of transmitting knowledge. Before, learning was a process of imitating activities and preparing for ritual initiations. The new pedagogy sanitized learning by intellectualizing it, making learning the unsullied transmission of information separated from other knowledge and from life (Foucault, 1977). It is from the change in education, more than from the witch hunts, that the popular classes began to lose respect for their culture and to consider it primitive and vulgar.

These are not mere utopian diatribes against the school, but an indication of the beginning of the diffusion of a sense of shame among the popular classes regarding their cultural world. This attitude will end up being a sense of guilt and depreciation of themselves in the degree that they feel irremediably trapped by this 'lack' of culture.

The sense of being 'uncultured' begins to appear, however, only when society has accepted the myth of a universal culture. Such a myth is at once the presupposition of bourgeois hegemony and the attempt to impose the hegemony of a class that for the first time, according to Marx, considered itself universal. 'The very idea of culture first appeared as an attempt to unify the arguments for the legitimacy of bourgeois power over meaning (Muñiz Sodré, 1983: 32). In other words, with the idea of culture, the bourgeois bring about a unified integration of meaning by universalizing it in a way that reduces all differences of meaning to their generalized equivalent: value. The mythical rationality of a universal culture forms part of the world of imagery which the bourgeois produces and through which this class sees and understands itself.[2] Long before anthropology constituted itself as a scientific discipline, the bourgeois set in motion the 'anthropological operation' through which their world is transformed into *the* world and their culture into *the* culture. This is the unification of meaning which anthropologists rationalize in the central concept of their field. Anthropology makes culture an evolutionary concept in which all cultural differences cannot be anything but backwardness. And no culture can cease to be backward, in this vision, except by evolving toward the kind of modernity which is incarnated in the Western bourgeoisie culture.

The idea of culture would allow the bourgeoisie to split history and social practices into modern and backwards, noble and vulgar and reconcile all differences, including class differences, in the liberal and progressive creed of *one culture for all*. Hobsbawm (1977) affirms that, during the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie attempted to create a symbiosis of what was noble and what was popular, trying not only to reconcile the class differences in its own culture, but to reconcile ends and means in a rationalistic unity which would make technology identical with culture. This instrumental rationality, however, is not able to divorce itself from being essentially the negation and exclusion of every other cultural matrix that cannot be integrated into its domination. The popular classes perceived that the separation of progress from liberation is a form of domination long before it was transformed into an explicit political discourse. They perceived it and they confronted it in their own fashion through the movements that resisted enculturation.

The political culture of popular resistance

It is necessary to examine the process of enculturation from the perspective of the other side, the side of those being enculturated. For this process does not reveal its deeper meaning except in the experience of the dominated and in the form in which the popular classes resented and resisted this. Until recently, however, it seemed that the only thing about this resistance which interested the historians was the element of *reaction* in the sense of opposition to progress. But in this reaction there was something much more than the desire to destroy technology; there was a struggle against new forms of exploitation. Certainly, it was not by chance that work days of 16 hours, labour carried out in chains and starvation wages were all justified in the name of progress. Why shouldn't the working classes mix up exploitation with progress? It is too easy for us, today, to separate the two. And armed with a logic – Hegelian, perhaps – we can place the blame on an 'alienated consciousness' of the masses for not having been able to distinguish and appreciate the progress which industrial capitalism represented in the face of feudal oppression. It is precisely in this reaction, mixed as it is with a stubborn clinging to *their* culture, that we can read the political meaning of their resistance. What capitalism was destroying was not just a mode of working but a whole way of life. It is a capitalism which identifies life with production and reduces life to nothing more than production, inducing its critics to identify and reduce politics to the same process of production. Thus, in order not to reduce this resistance to reaction we must find a way to escape from that logic, reading culture in a political key and politics in a cultural key.

The political dimension of the economy

In France and England the one hundred years from approximately 1750 to 1850 have been termed pre-industrial. During this period society gradually adapted to the changes brought about by industrialization and by the end of these years society was transformed radically (Rudé, 1988). The popular classes participated actively in this process with almost permanent movements of resistance and protest. Seen from the *outside*, these movements – 'riots seeking food to eat' or protesting mobs – seem to be little more than struggles over the price of bread and they are characterized by direct action – setting fires, destruction of houses and machinery, imposition of controls over prices. Typically, the actions are *spontaneous*, that is, they lack organization and the ability to follow through by transforming protests into revolution with attacks on property. But a closer look at the motives and objectives of these movements reveals not only the bias of this perspective but also its fallacy since it does not perceive in popular protest anything more than a response to economic stimulus.

For a long time historians of both the right and the left have

accepted this conception of popular protest. Neither the idealization of the masses as 'the people' nor the detailed social description of the movements in terms of crowd behaviour have permitted historians to escape this misconception or rise above the right's prejudiced view of this as the action of the emotional mob. It is in research such as that of Eric Hobsbawm (1959, 1964) or Albert Soboul (1964) and most clearly in the work of Edward P. Thompson that a real change of perspective begins to present itself. These researchers takes into account the political dimension that permeates and sustains popular protest, articulating new forms of struggle and popular culture.

The change in perspective moves beyond the view of history as 'periodic spasms', which reduces popular protest to riots, that is, to compulsive explosions which can be fully explained by bad harvests and the 'instinctive manly reaction to hunger'. But the riots are only the visible part of the iceberg. The real influence and significance of these movements are found at a deeper level: in the permanent and flagrant abuse by the market economy of what Thompson calls 'the moral economy of the common citizens'. In the mechanisms of the free market, the new economic order produces a *de-moralization* of the traditional economy which is expressed, for example, in the 'act of setting a just price'. This sense of justice rather than the desire for pillage and destruction constitutes the central action of uprisings and connects them with forms of resistance and daily informal struggle of the citizenry. The popular classes were convinced that prices should be regulated by mutual agreement, above all in times of scarcity. And that conviction brought into existence traditional customs, rights and legitimate practices in the popular culture. Thus, in the process of riots what became visible was something much more than the defence of 'bread and butter'. It was a question of the old economic order based on a moral imperative, what 'should be', namely, exchange as a reciprocal obligation between subjects. The popular classes refused to accept the new superstition of a *natural and self-regulating economy*, of relations between *objects*, or an abstract mercantile economy.

When this economy abstracted from persons, it undermined the very foundations of popular culture, its moral presuppositions and the rights defined by local and regional customs. The popular classes experienced both the economic and technical innovations above all as expropriation and dissolutions of these rights. This is the significance of the destruction of machinery by the Luddites, a movement which has passed into history with a grotesque image created by the right but readily swallowed by historians of the left until recently. The image is that of workers impelled by gross

ignorance mixed with religious superstitions that led them to destroy the new weaving machinery. Today we know that the organizers of the movement were not the most primitive of the workers but rather the skilled and educated leaders who later continued on with the movement to limit the work day to ten hours. They were not driven simply by religious bias but by a perceptive understanding of the relationship between the machinery and the new social relations. They saw clearly how the conditions of mechanization were linked with the organization of work in the factories. The destruction of the machinery was a response to the question, 'By what social alchemy did inventions for saving labour become engines of immiseration?' (Thompson, 1968: 224).

The real conflict revealed in the riot is not between the hungry mobs and the buyers of wheat, nor were the efforts expended in simply trying to punish the abusive property owners. The real conflict was between the popular culture and the emerging logic of capital. With this starting point, popular movements will eventually reach the explicit terrain of political action against progressive strengthening of the state, against the centralization which destroyed local rights and the local forms of doing justice. Soboul states quite explicitly: 'Political differences increased the bitterness of social conflicts. The popular movement after 1789 aimed at decentralization and local autonomy – an old deep-rooted desire' (1964: 12).

If this was the vantage point from which the people experienced their relationship with the new economic order, there is little need to discuss the objective living conditions of pre-industrial society. As Thompson has observed, 'It is quite possible for statistical averages and human experiences to run in opposite directions. A *per capita* increase in quantitative factors may take place at the same time as a great qualitative disturbance in people's way of life, traditional relationships, and sanctions' (1968: 231). The political meaning of the popular movements can be found in the demand for vindication for betrayals inflicted and in the sense of certainty of an intolerable injustice.

The symbolic dimension of the struggles

Historians typically describe the popular struggles in the pre-industrial period as lacking in organization and political design. Given this false interpretation of a historical process of major importance, we must begin by unmasking the bias which caused historians to confusedly characterize as immediatism something that is, in fact, a key aspect of popular culture: the limited possibility of the poor to plan their future, a condition which leads to a peculiar

way of deciphering the meaning of their historical context. De Certeau calls this the 'logic of historical juncture' (*logica de coyuntura*), an interpretation of events which depends on precise timing and is articulated in the march of circumstances, the ability to know how to strike a blow which is a special art of the weak and the oppressed (1984). The significance of the forms of organization and of struggle in popular movements is currently being rethought radically as a result of studies on the anarchist movements in the nineteenth century. These movements were for a long time confused with the millenarians and reduced to a 'hunger for religion'. Only now are the deep roots of the anarchists in the life styles and expression of popular culture beginning to be understood, dispelling the argument that these movements were only 'the irrational fury against unknown forces' or merely the transfer of loyalty and religious faith from the church to revolutionary ideals.[3]

All of these analyses underestimate the anarchists' clear understanding of the social origins of their oppression. They ignore or cover up the fact that many of the forms of struggle of the liberationists themselves developed out of organizational traditions with deep roots in peasant and artisan culture. They underrate the way anarchists consciously used the forms of popular communication.[4]

The anarchist movements were decidedly not irrational outbursts, but grew out of a long experience with popular resistance. For example, they knew how to plan the timing of the general strikes when good harvests and increased demand made labour in short supply. Later, they modified their strategies as the development of capitalism transformed social relations. Paradoxically, for many historians, including those of the left, the evidence of the irrationality of the anarchists was their solidarity and strong sense of community. Where did the anarchists get their strategy of general strikes which involved even the women, minors, and the elderly unless it came out of a popular sense of solidarity? And from this same cultural background they learned their 'spontaneity' which is less a form of immediatism and closer to a strategy of defending their autonomy by local collective action. This is above all a rejection of coercion and the kind of 'administrative discipline' which the liberationists of the nineteenth century smelled out and condemned with deadly accuracy as closely linked with the productivist strategies of capitalism.

Closely linked with this alternative logic of popular culture are the forms of symbolic protest. In the cases of both the English workers in the eighteenth century and the Spanish anarchists in the nineteenth, an old culture, conservative in its forms, provided a safe refuge and context for the new proposals of liberation, resistance and confrontation. In both cases the movements invoke paternalistic regulations or biblical expressions to legitimate the movements, the attacks on property or the strike. They have no other language to express a new sense of egalitarian awareness (Kaplan, 1977). From the burning of witches and of heretics, the masses took the symbolism of burning their enemies in effigy. The anonymous letters threatening the rich are filled with the magic force of verse and blasphemy. The noisy processions full of buffoonery are the countertheatre in which the symbols of hegemony are ridiculed and insulted. Note carefully the key to the meaning of this: since the popular classes are especially sensitive to the symbols of hegemony, the field of symbols, as much as or even more than direct action, becomes an invaluable cultural area for investigating the forms of popular protest. Neither the riots nor the general strikes are entirely explained as economic responses since they were intended to be political symbols, that is, to defy hegemonic security by demonstrating to the dominant class the power of the poor.

When the social crisis of industrial capitalism hit, the process of enculturation at work for over a century could not stop the popular classes from recognizing their traditional cultures as the vital source of their identity, their collective memory and the weapon with which to oppose the destruction coming from their proletarianization. Starting in the middle of the eighteenth century, popular culture began a process of exciting adventure: although threatened with disappearance, it became simultaneously traditional and rebellious. Looked at from the perspective of Enlightenment rationalism, the popular culture seemed to consist of little more than myth and prejudices, ignorance and superstition. And without question there was much of that in it. What the Enlightenment could not understand about popular culture, however, was the historical significance of many of the seemingly unimportant practices: from the stubborn insistence on fixing the price of wheat 'face to face' to the satirical processions, the obscene songs and the terrifying fables. What greater challenge to the rationalists than the ghost stories that the popular classes fed upon in the heart of the Century of Light! It is perhaps even more scandalous to affirm, without populist nostalgia, that the culture of the tavern, the popular novels, the country fairs and the penny press preserved a style of life that valued spontaneity and loyalty, a distrust of the big words of politics and morality, an ironic attitude toward the law and a capacity for pleasure which neither the clergy nor the proprietary classes could kill off.

That this was not just a *traditional culture* in the sense of

conservative is shown by the capacity of that culture to reinterpret events and their guiding norms, transforming them into the matrix for a new political consciousness. This new political vision would orient the pioneers of the workers struggles and would be expressed in the English radical press and Spanish political cartoons of the nineteenth century. Hoggart, in his studies of the cultural processes at the beginning of our century, recognizes the persisting presence of that culture which 'throughout the nineteenth century has allowed the English workers to pass from the ways of rural life to those of the city without becoming an amorphous lumpen proletariat' (1958: 330).

6

From Folklore to Popular Culture

The process of enculturation was never one of pure repression. Already in the seventeenth century we see developing a production of culture aimed at the popular classes. Through an 'industry' of stories and images there gradually evolved a form of cultural production which has both mediated between and separated the classes. In order for hegemony to function, the people had to have access to the language in which hegemony was articulated. But at the same time hegemony points out the difference and the distance between what is noble and what is vulgar, what is cultured and what becomes later the popular. There is no hegemony – nor counter-hegemony – without cultural circulation. There is no imposition from above which does not imply, in some form, an incorporation of what comes from below.

In this chapter we will examine a cultural production which, although oriented to the common people, was never pure ideology since it not only gave hegemonic culture access to the popular classes but also enabled these classes to make communicable their memories and experiences. Certainly we should not allow ourselves to be fooled by the terminology used in this culture produced from above since the syntax of that culture is not truly from the popular classes, but represents the disgust and disdain of the upper classes regarding the popular. But this only gives assurance that in this there is not just imposition and manipulation; in cultural terms, the hegemonic class had no other alternative but to give recognition to the other as it expressed its own culture.

A literature which is between the oral and the written

A literature, completely absent from the libraries and bookstores of the times, made it possible for the popular classes to move from an oral to a written world and transformed folklore into popular culture. I refer to what in Spain is called the literature of the *cordel* (literally, 'cord' or 'string', so called because printed broadsheets were hung on a string in the market place), and in France the literature of *colportage* (peddling). This literature initiated a new relationship with language, a relationship of those who can barely

write yet could read. It had an oral structure, not only because of the verse form in which it was written – the songs, the ditties, the proverbs – but because it was meant to be read aloud to groups. Yet it was printed and therefore subject to the norms, formalities, technologies and the rationalization of the written form of production.

Although the literatures of the *cordel* and *colportage* developed at roughly the same time, they had striking differences which makes it possible to analyse more deeply the contradictions which underlay the dynamics of the presence of the popular in these literatures. A first observation is that whereas the literature of *colportage* is directed predominantly to the peasant population, as we see from the patterns of distribution, the literature of the *cordel* was clearly urban. The classification of the *cordel* as 'vulgar' differentiates it, according to one scholar, from the culture of peasants. For, by the seventeenth century peasant is synonymous with 'close to nature'. Vulgar is 'what moves to the city' (García de Enterría, 1973: 180). It is plebeian, streetwise, perverted and contaminated literature.

What the market offers

> No sé come se consienten
> que mil inventadas cosas
> por ignorantes se vendan
> por los ciegos que las toman.
> Allí se cuentan milagros,
> martirios, muertes, deshonras
> que no han pasado en el mundo
> y al fin se vende y se compra.
>
> I don't know why they agree
> to the sale of a thousand things
> invented by idiots
> and sold by the blind.
> There they tell of miracles,
> martyrs, deaths and dishonors
> that have never occurred in this world
> but in the end are bought and sold.

Thus Lope de Vega described the literature of the *cordel* in a character in his comedy, *Santiago el Verde*. But also more directly in a letter to the king defending his copyright, Lope de Vega provides a rich and precise characterization of what he calls 'couplets of the blind' and 'sheets of the *cordel*'. What kind of persons were the composers and vendors?

> Men who stir up the people, badger the nobility, defame the police by bellowing in the streets fables, couplets and other kinds of verses. They are half-breeds (*mulatos*) and vagabonds who wander about the streets inciting the people to riot with loud and cracking voices, proclaiming in prose what is contained in the verses.

What are the genres and themes of these verses?

> The events they seek out, the tragedies they make up, the fables they invent are about men in the cities of Spain who mistreat their children, kill their mothers, speak with the devil, deny their faith and blaspheme. At other times, they fake miracles, print satires against well-known cities and persons who can be known from their titles, offices and deeds.

More painful still was 'the malice of these men against the honour and opinions of well-known writers and excellent painters, seeking to boldly sell in public these falsehoods and ignorant statements'. Finally, Lope de Vega complains of the 'liberty [of these vendors] to print and sell the works composed by Ledesma, Linan, Medinilla, Lope and other well-known persons to those who have never seen the original works'.

The portrayal of Lope de Vega goes straight to the heart of the problem. His description is not just the wounded conscience of the author in the face of a literature which undermines and parodies him – they steal his name, summarize and deform the text, mix up the genres. It also showed an awareness of the producer who knows that works of literature become stereotyped when they enter the world of popular consumption. Indeed, he knew this well enough to be able to write *The New Art of Writing Comedies for These Times*. For these reasons Lope can indicate so clearly the procedures of this popular literature: the deliberate confusion between the anonymity of the one who edits/writes these texts and the attribution to famous writers; the re-writing as the key to these texts; the sale out on the streets; the summary of contents which the sales pitch makes; the mixing up of real life and theatre, of fable and miracle, satire and blasphemy. Clearly Lope was concerned with much more than just recounting the 'image' of of the unwashed masses as this was perceived through the culture of the nobility. This is revealed in the effects that he attributes to this popular literature: it stirs up the people, bothers the nobility, destroys the reputation of the police (who were, at the time, the symbol of the reigning political and social order).

The terminology of Lope is also a point of entry into the social meaning of this at the time. 'Sheet' (*pliego*) indicated the technical 'medium': a simple leaf of paper folded twice, or several folded sheets forming a booklet, printed with two or three columns. *Cordel* indicates the means of distribution since the folded sheets were exhibited and sold in the plaza hung on a cord. Couplet or poems 'of

the blind' because they were composed and sold by the blind, who chanted and hawked the works with the help of assistants who gathered up the events which were then selected by the blind master and then put to paper according to the instructions of the blind vendor. It would be valuable to make a separate study of the figure of the blind person and his role in the world of popular culture, from the mythic blindness of rhapsodies to the roguish literature of baroque Spain and the specialized relation of the blind with singing and verbal expression. Finally, the price was minimal, varying according to a complex network of sales and a roguish business which distributed the sheets from the printers out among the brotherhood of the blind.

Here we have a *medium* which, different from the book but like the newspaper, went out on the street in search of readers. The design was well thought through with a striking *title* that was both advertising and motivation to read. Following the title there was a *summary* which gave the reader the keys to the interpretation and explained the usefulness which the booklet offered. And always there was a dramatic *woodcut* to set the imagination working. Also present are the dynamics of a *market* with the influence of offer and demand to the point that the titles and summaries eventually became stereotyped with a formula expressing each genre. We can see an evolution which shows the steps from a largely distributive enterprise – adventure stories, carols and other popular songs – to another sort of enterprise which is involved in collecting news of events and in publishing almanacs. This evolution accompanied a gradual loss of good taste so that by the end of the seventeenth century the printing and engravings become cheaper and the sensationalism greatly exaggerated.[5]

The *cordel* was not just a *medium*, however; it was also a *mediation*. This process of 'mediation' is evident, first of all, in the language which is neither high nor low, but a mixture of the two. It was a blending together of languages and of religiosity. And this was the origin of its blasphemy. We are presented with a literature which moves between vulgarization of what comes from above and its function for those below as an escape valve for the repression which explodes in laughter and exaggeration. Instead of innovating creatively, it tended to stereotype everything. The stereotypes, however, were not simply the product of commercialization and demands for certain generic formats, but reflected the repetition and popular styles of narration.

The literature of *colportage* in France had an even clearer industrial structure of production and distribution.[6] At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a family of publishers and editors, the Oudot, in the city of Troyes, began to publish a type of pamphlet which was printed on cheap, grainy paper, badly bound and covered with the dark blue cover that gave the collection its title, *La Bibliothèque Bleue*.

The Oudot family, taking advantage of the old type almost worn out and occasionally idle printing presses, put their own printers and labourers to work summarizing and rewriting love stories, fairy tales, lives of saints, folk remedies, calendars, etc. In other words, the Oudot family used the workers of the printing establishment as *mediators* to select oral traditions and *to adapt* texts which came from the literate tradition. But the industrial organization did not stop there. It included a network of *colporteurs*, peddlers and travelling salesmen, who went around to the country fairs and small villages distributing the booklets. They returned to the editor once or twice a year to inform him regarding what they had sold or had not sold, returning what they could not sell, and giving suggestions on how the production could better respond to the demand. Thus, they served as mediators between the clientele and the entrepreneur.

When C. Nissard was commissioned by the government to investigate this literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he found over 3,000 *colporteurs* travelling around the country in an organized fashion and distributing approximately 20 million copies a year. 'You could find in their basket of wares, among the buttons and the needles, eye glasses and home remedies, books costing one or two soles consisting of a few dingy, cheap grey pages, smudged with ink. The type was old and run down and hard to read' (Louisse, 1981: 78).

Like the *cordel* literature, the *Bibliothèque Bleue* actively searched for its audience, hawking books at the fairs and appealing to the basic needs of life. The vendors came to know the established patterns of the likes and dislikes which revealed the cultural sensibilities of this new reading public. The collection of this editorial house consisted of tales of knights and adventurers, religious literature and some scientific texts. The 450 volumes that survive to this day include 120 religious books, 80 novels or plays and some 40 historical books. The rest are practical books containing information and recipes, scientific texts, arithmetic tables, almanacs and songs, some dedicated to love and others to the virtues of wine.

Robert Mandrou introduces, in his analysis of the production-distribution cycle, the context of reception and use: the evening gatherings, the most popular place for reading aloud, their importance and attractiveness attested to by the cheap visual prints and

surviving sermons with the scolding of the preachers. Even in the remotest peasant communities there was always someone who knew how to read, and, as night came on, when people returned from work in the fields, men and women, children and adults all gathered around the fire to listen to the person who read aloud while the women mended or knitted and the men cleaned their tools. Most historians seem to know little about this collective reading. To speak of reading among the lower classes before the nineteenth century is commonly considered absurd since, supposedly, only a tiny minority of the population knew how to read – that is, knew how to *sign their name*. The confusion between reading and writing, along with the difficulty of conceiving another type of reading except a person alone with a book, is a prejudice of the 'cultured' that blinds them to the existence and peculiarities of popular reading.[7]

In chapter 22 of *Don Quixote*, the innkeeper, referring to reading books about knights and adventurers, explains, 'At harvest time, many of the reapers gathered at the fairs and there is always one who knows how to read. He takes one of these books in his hands and more than 30 people gather around. We listen to him with such pleasure that it takes away a thousand grey hairs.'

Centuries later, the anarchist peasants in Andalucia would buy a newspaper even if they did not know how to read so that someone in their families could read it to them. It was an oral reading or listening, very different from the silent style of reading of the literate. The distribution and acquisition of reading materials was also very different. For the inhabitants of an oral culture, reading is listening, but a sonorous listening. It is the same listening as the popular theatre audience, or, today, the neighbourhood movie houses. It is a listening marked with applause and whistles, sighs and laughter, a reading whose rhythm is not established by the text but by the group. What was read was not an end in itself but the beginning of a mutual acknowledgement of meaning and an awakening of collective memories that might set in motion a conversation. Thus, reading might end up redoing the text in function of the context, in a sense, *re-writing* the text in order to talk about what the group is living.

Still to be written is a social history of forms of reading which incorporates the history of the modes of reading and compares the typology of reading publics as well as the mediations that are possible as one moves from one type to another. But the process of reading is here seen more from the perspective of what the people bring to it than what the market provides or, better, from the perspective of what the meeting of the two creates.

What the people bring

To enter into the 'other side' of the industry of story telling, the side of popular culture, is to begin exploring the process of *cultural circulation* that developed in the kind of literature we are studying. Here we begin to see the new mode of existence of popular culture. We find in the literatures of the *cordel* and *colportage* the keys to the path from folklore to the 'vulgar' (in the sense of the urban populace) and from the vulgar to the popular. Unamuno recognized the presence of folklore in this literature.

> The [sheets of the *cordel*] carried the poetic sediment of the centuries. After nourishing the songs and stories which have been the consolation of life for so many generations, passing from mouth to ear and from ear to mouth, recounted lovingly in the light of candles, they live, through the ministry of blind street wanderers, in the perennially fertile fantasy of the people. (cited in Caro Baroja, 1969: 19)

The *cordel* represents the first large industry of 'vulgarization' that irritated educated spirits such as Valera: 'The chivalrous spirit of heroic deeds, valour and love of the heroes and ladies of Calderon and Lope have become degraded to the point that they are now found among the lowest dregs of the common people'. There are two meanings in the term vulgarization. A first meaning is to put within the reach of the common people; a second is to lower it, bringing it down to an oversimplified and stereotyped level.

In the literature of the *cordel*, there is a third meaning, that which refers to the vulgar in the sense of 'the people who live in the city', the popular classes of the city as opposed to the peasants in rural communities. This points to the emergence of a new meaning of the popular as the place of *mestizajes* and reappropriations.

> In the mouths of blind sellers of ballads, the ideas of honour and of knighthood were accommodated to the figures of bandits and bull-fighters. This created a new culture that, while it maintained the essence of the old romance, put it at the service of the new estate that was growing and confronting the rotten neoclassic aristocracy. It put culture at the service of a people who were beginning to gain an identity. (Rodríguez, 1971: 57)

Not only was what comes from the people deformed and contaminated, but also the people deformed and re-signified the 'grand themes' of love and passion. They desecrated the narrative forms and reconstructed the life of marginal people into new models of human worth. The result of all this was a new language that, on the one hand, relished bombastic adjectives and, on the other, accommodated itself to the rhythm, irony and impudence of the people. The people responded to the cultural distance and social barriers erected by the Spanish upper classes of the eighteenth century by

turning this culture on its head, imitating it in a ridiculing fashion, laughing at it and producing strange new mixtures of it. We owe to Caro Baroja the ability to read the literature of the *cordel* from the perspective of the *mestizajes*. The courtly love stories of esteemed plays were mixed with scenes of violence and witchcraft. The reverse also occurred. The histories of bandits became duels of honour which exalts those who live outside the law and glorifies the value of living dangerously. In the *cordel* the heroes are the Diego Corrientes, the Francisco Estebans and Luis Candelas. This was not just an anachronism as some literary critics think. It was the rebellious use of a traditional high culture that Thompson speaks of, the countertheatre which, by reversing and confusing historical periods, allows the people to hear their own voice. By applying the old ideas of honour and chivalry to bandits and other social delinquents, the sheets of the *cordel* do not speak only of an obsolete past. Rather they are taking revenge in their own way on the bourgeois aristocracy by building up their own heroes. 'The great bandits run through the imagination of the people with a distant call to vindicate the anarchists' claims' (Rodríguez, 1971: 67).

Another important frequent theme animating the literature of the *cordel* are the striking events, especially the stories of bloody crimes. Here the *cordel* laid the foundations for what would later become popular journalism. Julio Nombela, a pamphleteer who worked in his youth for a blind man, explained,

> when an important robbery or a crime occurred that are today called crimes of passion, the blind man would call to his service one of the two or three starving poets always at his beck and call. He would give them detailed instructions about the gory adventure they were to write. If he liked the story, he would pay them 30 or 40 reales. (Caro Baroja, 1969: 55)

In these instructions we can find the beginnings of sensationalist journalism. It is precisely in these accounts of crimes that we discover the leap from the verse to prose: a description without embellishments, with its touch of 'objectivity' in the details and in its search for the 'causes' of the crime. These accounts also speak to us about the popular obsession for news of crimes. At times the important aspect is the sheer brutality and cathartic force of the events. Other accounts, however, pointed in other directions, a glorification of the reparation of injustices as a popular form of social control. This is precisely the orientation of a type of story which begins to move away from a type of frighteningly impassioned realism of rural crimes toward a form of description exalting social marginality in the city. These are stories which, along with a

scription of the crime, 'take notice of the lives and times of oundrels and bandits'.

Finally, there are the almanacs, a favourite place for special types f mixtures and cross-fertilization of many types of knowledge, high nd low, new and old, astrology and astronomy, popular and arned medicine, fiction and history.

> At the beginning of the eighteenth century, forecasting was transformed and incorporated more scientific and useful knowledge. A new relationship with the world of everyday life was established not just as a revelation of what will happen tomorrow but as practical and simple advice for better control over everyday matters. (Zavala, 1978: 209)

A convincing example of the mixture and circulation of ideas in he almanacs is found in the prologue to one of the almanacs written y Torres Villaroel in 1752. Torres explained, 'I write for the ommon people because they are the ones who want to know about w things. These are the people who live in a state of fear and it is ese people whom we must shake out of their fright and ignorce.' The almanacs were the first popular encyclopedias. They ixed magic formulas with advice on health and hygiene, and esented problems of physics and mathematics in the form of estions and answers. A researcher on the culture industry as romantic as Robert Escarpit has said in reference to this literare: 'The novels of the *Bibliothèque Bleue* and the modest science f the almanacs have done more for the cultural level of the masses the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than all the organizion of the official culture' (Escarpit, 1974: 253).

In France the research on the literature of *colportage* has brought out a polemic with two sharply divided camps. For some the manacs and stories of the *Bibliothèque Bleue* captured well the pressions of a culture which had its origin in the world of the pular or at least found wide acceptance and a profound resonance this world. Others believe that this literature was merely an position, a manipulative strategy that did not reach the people d was read largely by a middle class audience. Undoubtedly, the oduction and circulation of the literature of *colportage* were ganized more from above and, thus, left much less opportunity popular creativity than in the case of the leaflets of the *cordel*. vertheless, one can conclude from the debates in France that if me tend to have an image of popular culture that too easily rifies its happiness and spontaneity, others tend to reproduce the miliar dichotomy that prevents them from understanding the mplexity of cultural circulation. Those who hold the latter view gue that what comes from above can never really communicate th those below because it never comprehends popular aspirations

or, if it does reach them, it can only manipulate and alienate as does mass culture today. In either case, although the culture that served as a vehicle for the *cordel* and the almanacs was no longer folklore, neither was it yet mass culture. It is precisely what mediated between the two. It constituted a new mode of existence of popular culture that one must understand to avoid setting up a Manichaean and simplistic separation between popular and mass culture.

An iconography for plebeian use

The popular classes have a relationship to images very different from their experience of written texts. Images, too, had their codes of interpetation but with codes of composition and of reading at a 'secondary level'.[8] From the time of the Middle Ages, images were the 'book of the poor', the text through which the masses learned a history and a vision of the world depicted in a Christian mode. With the figures and scenes from altarpieces and cornices of pillars, and later the group sculptures and bas-relief of the gothic cathedrals, the Church created an imagery in which all could share – clergy and lay, rich and poor.

The proximity of the people to images, however, was paradoxical. The world of icons was much stranger, external and removed from the popular world than the content collected and diffused through the written texts. Precisely because in images there is produced a discourse which is accessible to the masses, the selection of what could be said and distributed would be much more careful and censured. The popularity of the images came not so much from the themes – which do not have folkloric origins except in a few references to clothing and dances – or from the forms, but from the *uses*. In their clinging to certain images, the popular classes would produce in them an anachronistic, archaic effect similar to the popular stories. Or, by using images as amulets, the images were reinserted into the functions of their own culture.

After the fifteen century, with new technical possibilities for reproducing engravings,[9] images moved out of their location in fixed places and began to invade the space of everyday life in homes, clothing and other objects of use. Most of the images were still religious – in a collection of 2,047 images from this period, only 100 were not religious. Their primary function was the preservation and edification of faith.[10] The images were sewn in clothing and pasted on the furniture to protect against sickness, demons and thieves. An image pasted on the inside top of a trunk made this an altar. Prayers were believed to be more effective if they were said before the eyes of the image of the saint to whom the people

rayed. Muchembled speaks of the 'insidious penetration of the cred' that accompanied the distribution of images. Images reaced the words of the sermons, prolonging and keeping its essage alive.

In the fifteenth century, the Church was the main distributor of ages either through the brotherhoods – each one was identified th an image of its patron saint or with an object symbol of the ssion of Christ – or through the indulgences associated with a votion that required the presence of a specific image in order to effective. Most of the images were of two main themes: the ysteries of the lives of Christ and the Virgin and the miracles enes that summarized concretely the lives of the saints. These re the origins of images that persist even to our time, such as the nt St Christopher carrying a child across a river that we see today taxis and buses. The few non-religious images came from legends personages such as King Arthur and Charlemagne or from fables out the vigilant cock, the wise fox, or the crafty cat. Some have eir origins in playing cards and in a few religiopolitical farces and ires.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the reproction and distribution of images underwent a major transformon. Technology passed from the wood engraving, which rmitted the printing of some 400 sheets from one engraved board, the etching, which, with its use of nitric acid on sheets of copper, t only made possible engravings of much finer detail but also ch more varied designs. This new technology also greatly reased the number of reproductions from one engraving. though still amateur, production came closer to an industry with a ecialization of functions: the draughtsman, the illustrator, the graver and the printer. Distribution passed from the hands of the urch – which now exercised its social control through other ans – to the merchants who sold the engravings in their stores or tributed them in the countryside through travelling salesmen who nt around to the country fairs or to the urban neighbourhoods on rket days.

This commercialization was the beginning of popular demand, ntrolled, undoubtedly, by the supply and by religious censure. t demand nevertheless begins to influence the forms of a pular' iconography. Evidence of this influence is shown in the sence of the engravings in the majority of homes, both in the city d in the rural areas. These images were the only luxury of the or, and the passion for rare and artistic images 'began to mpensate the proprietory classes for their loss of privileged ntrol over images in general' (Ramírez, 1976: 31). From this time

on, it would be the *quality* of the image, the capacity of an engraving to reproduce a painting, which would differentiate and distance the levels of taste. The engravings which reached the popular classes were primarily of a cheaper type, those that reproduced very traditional images and with quite crude drawings.

The transformation of the kinds of images – the secularization which affected both the themes treated and the form of treatment gradually began to reach the popular classes. Secularization liberated the iconographic creativity from the religious pressure, and the Protestant Reformation, which pulled the ground out from under indulgences and cast doubt on devotions to the saints, opened the way to an iconography which caricatured the ecclesiastical institutions and personages. The pope became a donkey; the cardinals, foxes, etc. New topics also appeared: the saints were replaced by figures from mythology and scenes of everyday life which introduced the customs and rites of daily existence.

In reaction to these changes, the Church attempted to 'popularize' its message by making its devotions more worldly, drawing on the cultural vitality of the baroque period and by exhibiting a certain tolerance for the remains of paganism that the popular masses still conserved. This popularization translated itself into the diffusion of an iconography which brought the lives of the saints closer to the people, which tolerated the magic uses of religious images and which sought the expanded distribution, rather than a deepening of meaning.[11] The bourgeoisie also found a new function for images: the political and civic education of the people. They took advantage of celebrations and the anniversaries of battles and patriotic dates to make drawings and engravings that played on emotional content and the power of suggestive political symbolism that went beyond the actual portrayal.[12]

Finally, secularization also began to appear in the relationship between the iconography and the culture of the imagination. From the sixteenth century a series of new themes enter the iconography such as 'the upside down world', 'money as the devil', and 'the tree of love'. Especially characteristic are the changes in the interpretation of the theme, the 'stages of life'. Like 'the wheel of fortune', the theme of the stairs or stages of life, from birth to death, began to have a graphic representation already in the fifteenth century, but until the seventeenth century this was always interpreted with a religious image. In an engraving of 1630 the stages or steps of the stairs are five: at the right are placed the symbols of life and at the left those of death with justice portrayed underneath the stairs. In an almanac of 1673 each age is represented by a symbolic pair, a number and an epithet, and the ages are twelve. At the bottom, there is an image of the last judgement and four medallions representing baptism, marriage, the last rites and the funeral. By the eighteenth century, however, the religious meaning and the macabre images disappeared and were replaced by optimistic and secular imagery. The stairs are transformed into ascent up the social scale and the maturation of the individual needed for this social mobility. The stairs remain and the indication of ascent, but emptied of the religious imagery. The point of reference is now the bourgeoisie which publicizes its new imagery: the ideal of life is no longer salvation but social success (Muchembled, 1985).

Throughout this evolution, one aspect particularly marked the distancing which both enhances and blurs the process of popularization of images. Painting ceased to use as its customary painter's easel the altarpiece background which often had a temporal sequence of images, and moved towards a single framed presentation. Thus, painting in a social context of higher culture rejected the practice of putting images in a narrative sequence. The popular iconography, on the other hand, emphasized this, and the cartoon strip begins to arrive on the scene. In this process, the 'images of Épinal' played an important role.

Starting in 1660 Europe's largest industry of images developed in Épinal, a city in the north-east of France (Blandez, 1961: 69–138). There we find the production of all types of images: religious pictures, playing cards, tarot cards, dominos, almanacs, toy soldiers, illustrations for song sheets, etc. The Pellerin brothers, who established themselves in the city after 1740, made Épinal famous for the 'images of Épinal'. At first, the images were directed at children. For this new clientele, stories were told in pictures divided over a page in sixteen consecutive images on four rows read from left to right and from top to bottom. Each picture had a small text printed underneath. The new style was so successful that it was soon used for a wider market and for different types of stories, especially for cartoons, legends and popular stories.

In Spain the *cordel* always had an illustration on the first page. Sometimes there was another illustration in the middle of the text. At first the sheets of the *cordel* took illustrations from books that had some relationship with the subject matter. But gradually this evolved. A first stage was to pass the engraving from the book to the *cordel* just as it was; in a second step, the producers of the *cordel* took particular personages or scenes and from this built up their own compositions; finally, by the eighteenth century, it was common to find engravings created especially for the sheets of the *cordel*.[13] These engravings, however, usually represented only one scene of the story.

The *cordel* did influence the telling of stories through pictures, but through a more indirect route: the advertising poster for fairs and the pictures illustrating the stories recited by the blind. The *lazarillo*, the boy in the blind man's service, would point with a stick to the picture that illustrated the part of the story the blind man was telling. The Spanish *aleluyas* or *aucas* were similar to the picture stories of Épinal. They were a series of squares, each one containing a picture, developing a narrative on a particular theme. These *aleluyas* cover virtually all of the themes of the *cordel* and are, according to Caro Baroja, the 'last phase in the process of summarizing and shortening the stories'.

The next step in the industry of popular iconography was the illustrated magazine that first appeared in 1832 with the *Penny Magazine* of London. But, with that, we enter another stage, the beginnings of mass culture.

Melodrama: The great popular entertainment

Beginning in 1790, the term 'melodrama', especially in France and England, refers to a popular spectacle which is much less and much more than theatre. Although melodrama eventually took on some of the aspects of theatre, its origins are less in theatre and more in the forms and styles of entertainment in the popular fairs and in the oral story-telling tradition that emphasized fear, mystery and terror. An important factor in the development of the melodramatic style were the government regulations in England and France at the end of the seventeenth century which prohibited popular theatre in the cities as 'a means of combating rioting' (Habermas, 1981a; Sennett, 1977). The official, 'legitimate' theatre was limited to the upper classes. What was permitted for the people were the dramatizations without dialogue, either spoken or sung, under the pretext that 'real theatre would therefore not be corrupted'. The prohibition would remain in effect in France until 1806 when the use of three theatres was authorized for popular drama.[14]

Strange as it may sound, however, the melodrama of 1800, which had its paradigm in *Celine ou la fille du mystère* by Gilbert de Pixérécourt, is linked in many aspects to the French Revolution. It is a portrayal of the transformation of the rabble into an organized public and the social contexts of this transformation. With its links to revolution, melodrama brought the people on to the 'scene' in a double sense. The new political passions and the terrible scenes of the Revolution fired the imagination and heightened the sensibilities of the popular masses. In melodrama, they could put their emotions on the stage. The scenes of this entertainment were filled with prisons, conspiracies, trials, the tragedies of innocent victims and vengeance against evil traitors. Was not this the lesson of the Revolution? 'Before it became a form of propaganda, the melodrama was a reflection of the popular consciousness' (Reboul, 1976).

What eventually was presented on the stage was tried out first in the open air of the plazas, the streets where the mime ridiculed the nobility. All the stage scenery that the melodrama needed was found directly in the spaces where the people sought to make their drama public: streets and plazas, seas and mountains with volcanos and earthquakes. Melodrama was born as a total spectacle for a people who could now see themselves as a whole corporate entity: 'imposing and trivial; solemn and humorous; breathing terror, exaggerations and merriment' (Nodier, *Revue de Paris*, 1835, cited by Reboul, 1976).

This was the origin of the complicity of melodrama with a public which could not read and who looked to the stage not for words but for action and great passions. Pixérécourt claimed, 'I write for those who do not know how to read'. It is the strong emotional flavour which has definitively marked melodrama, locating it on the side of the popular classes. For, just at that moment, as Sennett notes (1977), the mark of bourgeois education is manifested in everything which is the opposite of melodrama: especially in the control of emotional sentiments which, separated from the social scene, are interiorized and shaped by the 'private scene'.

Melodrama's complicity with the new popular public and with the cultural space which this public marked out for itself provide the keys which help us situate this form of popular spectacle at the turning point of the process which moved from the popular to the mass. Melodrama provided a point of arrival for the narrative memory and gestural forms of popular culture and the point of emergence of the dramatization of mass culture. That is, melodrama is where the popular begins to be the object of a process that erases local cultural frontiers, a process that takes off with the constitution of a homogeneous discourse and with the unification of the images of the popular, a unification that is the first form of mass culture. The erasing of the plurality of cultural streams in the story lines and dramatic gestures obstructs the permeability of melodrama to different contexts. The lessening of the presence of those elements most characteristic of the popular will now be accompanied by the entry of themes and cultural forms coming from another aesthetic such as conflict of characters, the individual quest for success and the transformation of the heroic and the wondrous into pseudorealism.

Between the circus and the stage

What becomes theatre in melodrama had been for many centuries the performances of travelling troupes which go from fair to fair. Their profession was not that of 'actors' but a combination which mixes the presentation of farces and comic interludes with acrobatics, puppetry, and juggling. After 1680, the prohibition of dialogue not only forced the popular performances to come back to mime – 'the art of mime revived because the actor could not express himself in words' (Remy, 1965: 1497) – but made it necessary to invent a new set of performative strategies which have been sustained in their original form in good part because the spectators liked them. At times the solution was to let one actor talk and the other respond with gestures. Another solution was for the person responding to go on stage only after the exit of the person who had been talking. The most common strategies, however, were posters or signs with the explanations of the scenes or the missing dialogue[15] and the words of popular songs printed on handbills and distributed at the entrance so that the public could sing them.[16] In comparison with the high theatre, which, at the time, was an eminently literary theatre with a dramatic complexity sustained entirely by verbal rhetoric, melodrama sustained its dramatic action with a quite peculiar form of staging and acting. The staging of melodrama was of far greater importance in the performance than the dramatic presentation. 'What you pay for is what you get', affirmed one critic of the time. Pixérécourt took only fifteen or twenty days to write a play, but needed two or three months to organize the staging. 'The dramatic action provided a theme for the execution of the complicated scenery' (Akakia-Viala, 1965: 90). The centre of action was a veritable edifice of extremely complicated machinery for the movement of scenery as well as the optical and sound effects necessary to reproduce a shipwreck or earthquake. Words were of much less importance that the optical and mechanical tricks. The sparing use of verbal dexterity was convenient for a spectacle of sight and sound where pantomime and dance were central (Billaz, 1976: 239ff). Sound effects were the object of laborious effort. Music was used to mark the solemn and comic moments, characterize the villain, prepare the entrance of the victim, build up or relax tension; songs and the special music of the ballets reinforced all this. The art of music and sound effects in contemporary *radionovelas* found in melodrama not only an antecedent but a model. Appearing in the melodramas were a great variety of optical illusions similar to those in magic shows, phantasmagoria, and the use of Chinese lanterns. The link of contemporary cinema with melodrama is not only thematic; a good part of the tricks that go into the 'magic' of cinema

are already developed in melodrama. We should not forget that one of the pioneers in the creation of the technical conventions of cinema, Méliès, had earlier worked as a conjurer and a juggler in the booth of a fair.[17]

The special effects of the scenery corresponded to the peculiar style of acting based very largely on physiognomy – the relationship between the physical and moral aspects of a personality. This produced a metonymical stylization[18] that translated moral character into physical traits, charging the visible appearance of the actors with ethical values and countervalues. This often exaggerated symbolism of facial and other personal characteristics is quite fitting when what is seen is most important. But this also goes back to the strong codification that corporal appearance and gestures have in popular culture, so clearly expressed by the harlequins and the representations of Punch in the *commedia dell'arte*.

Thus, the acting picked up and reinforced the willing complicity of the public, a complicity so strongly based in class and culture! Sennett (1977) provides clear evidence of this.

> The popular English theatre was so noisy and the crowd so much part of the show that the theatres had to be periodically rebuilt and redecorated as a result of the damage caused by the public when it demonstrated its approval or disapproval of what occurred on the stage. The passion and spontaneous demonstrations of the public were partially the result of the social class of the actors.

In Spain about the same time, an adherent of the Englightenment, Jovellanos, was directed by the king to investigate the public performances and the forms of popular entertainment. He observed and denounced this complicity of audiences and proposed that some sort of reform should be begun in order to abolish the vulgar mode of behaviour,

> the shouts and unseemly screams, the violent contortions and rude postures, the exaggerated gestures and, finally, that lack of study and memory, the shameless impudence, the lewd looks, the indecent shaking, the lack of propriety, decorum, modesty, manners and decency which so stirs up the lawless and insolent people and upsets the sane and well educated. (Jovellanos, 1967: 121–2)

When melodrama and its attempts to cause an emotional effect were incorporated into mass media by radio and television, the style was attributed to the strategies of commercialization. However, if we wish to understand the cultural significance of melodrama, we should not forget that in its origins – in the melodrama of 1800 – the sentimental styles have other conditions. Perhaps the emphasis on effects that we see in the melodramatic gestures is historically linked

less to the tearful comedies than to the prohibition of the spoken dialogue in the popular performances and the corresponding need for excessive gestures. Here we find an emotional expressiveness in a culture was not able to be 'educated' by the bourgeois patrons.

Dramatic structure and symbolic functions

The 'total spectacle' of melodrama is not only at the level of elaborate staging, but appears also in the dramatic structure.[19] Taking as a central axis four basic emotions – fear, enthusiasm, pity and laughter – melodrama relates these to four types of situations and sensations – frightening, exciting, tender and burlesque. These four pairs are further linked with four types of characters – the traitor, the hero who imposes justice, the victim and the fool. The mix of these elements produces four genres: the mystery, the epic, the tragedy and the comedy.

These structures demand the systematic implementation of two operations – schematizing and polarization – which, even though they may reflect artificial strategies, still have their origins in a particular cultural matrix. The schematizing is understood by the majority of analysts as the 'absence of psychology', for example, the characters become mere symbols, without any depth or human experience. They are the very opposite of characters in the novel – entirely unproblematic – according to Lukács. Benjamin, however, opens another line of interpretation when he suggests that the difference between dramatic narration and the novel is related to the different employment of experience and memory in the 'reading' of oral and written expressions. Something which is meant to be read silently cannot have the same structure as something which is to be told orally. Melodrama has a strong kinship with oral narrative.

Following this same line of argument, Hoggart sees in the schematizing and stereotypes a function of 'permitting the relation of experience with archetypes' (1972). The polarization tends to split reality into Manichaean divisions and this evaluative reduction of the dramatic characters to either good or evil is, according to some analysts, ideological blackmail. Goimard is aware of this effect, but he explains this in terms of the psychological regression which would be present, according to Freud, in the experience of all works of art, charging objects of identification with a positive sign of benefactor and objects of projection with the negative sign of evil aggressor. Northrop Frye, referring to the structure of sentimental novels, proposes that the polarization between good and evil characters is not produced just in this kind of story; it is found also in narratives which take into consideration limit situations of

collectivities – situations of 'revolution' – so that the opposition between good and evil need not always have a 'conservative' meaning. In these analyses, the supposedly oversimplified, polarized structure of the melodrama is a form of dramatizing the tensions and social conflicts which its public experiences (Frye, 1976).

Central to the dramatic structure of melodrama is the network of connections that form around the four principal types of characters. The traitor – or persecutor, or aggressor – is undoubtedly the character which links melodrama to the stories of mystery, intrigue and terror such as is developed in the gothic novel of the eighteenth century or in the frightening stories that come from far back in history. This first character is the personification of evil and of vice, but also of magical seduction which fascinates the victim, master of crafty deception and disguises. The traitor, the secularization of the devil and the vulgarization of Faust, is sociologically a villainous aristocrat, a bourgeois megalomaniac, a corrupt priest. He acts through imputation, maintaining a secret and perverse relationship with the victim. While she is a noble believing herself to be a bastard, he is a bastard pretending to be a noble. The dramatic action is to trap the victim and make her suffer. Personifying terrifying passion and aggression, the traitor strikes fear into the hearts of the audience. He takes their breath away when he sets foot on the stage. Yet, he is a charmer, both prince and serpent, moving in the shadows, through the labyrinth, always in secret.

The victim, almost always a woman, is the heroine. She incarnates innocence and virtue. Frye (1976) observes that, 'the romantic ethos tends to portray heroism in terms of suffering, endurance and patience in parallel with the ethos of the Christian myth. This change in the concept of heroism explains much of the preeminence of women in romantic dramas, in other words, in the popular tragedies. The catharsis works by making the victim of tragedy a character whose weakness calls out for protection and inspires the protective feelings of the public, but whose virtue is a strength that causes admiration and calms the public.

Sociologically, the victim is a princess who is not recognized as such. She comes from above but has been debased, humiliated and treated unjustly. More than one critic has perceived the figure of the proletariat in the condition of the victim, her 'loss of identity' and her condemnation to suffer unjustly. Naturally, in the melodrama, the recovery of the lost identity by the victim is resolved miraculously, not by an act of political awareness or struggle. The 'situation', however, exists and some of the most 'popular' pamphlets interpreted it as such. 'Social alienation is not hidden in the

melodrama. It continues to be its theme, although submitted to a fantasized transposition' (Goimard, 1980: 24).

The champion of justice or protector is the character who, at the last minute, saves the victim and punishes the traitor. Coming from the epics and based on the figure of the hero, at times the young gentleman is replaced by an older man of some elegance linked to the victim either by blood or love. Generous and sensitive, the protector is the opposite of the traitor. The protector's role is to unravel the web of misunderstandings and to uncover the truth, thereby revealing the true character of both the victim and the traitor. Cutting short the tragedy, the happy ending makes the melodrama a fairy tale.

The last character is the fool. Although outside the triangle of the main characters, the fool provides for melodrama the comedy, the other essential dimension of popular culture. The fool is like the circus clown, releasing tension after a frightening or intense moment, a key role in a drama that always holds situations and emotions at the limit. The fool is also the plebeian, the clumsy anti-hero with vulgar language; making fun of the stiff manners, rhetoric and corrections of the protagonists; introducing the irony of an apparently bumbling body, in spite of his being traditionally part of the acrobats; and, out of the seemingly moralistic refrains and puns, there often emerges the earthy wisdom and balanced perspective of the common people.

The dramatic structure of the melodrama has another element that its scholarly critics tend to confuse with 'reactionary ideology'. Follain (1968: 43) rightly observed that the old popular theatre was much less respectful of the established norms than melodrama. Reboul also with reason accused the melodrama of retaining nothing of the revolution except its moralizations and of thereby becoming a form of propaganda. But the central organizing symbol system of classic melodrama has much more to it than this. Melodrama stands within another universe of signification connected with the matrix of popular culture we have been exploring. It displays itself in another symbolic space 'in which the moral signification in a desacralized universe is affirmed' (Brooks, 1974). This moral affirmation already, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, enunciates a language anachronistic in two ways: that of familial and kinship relations as the basis of primordial fidelities in life and the language of rhetorical excess.

All the weight of the drama rests upon the fact that the source of suffering is found in the secret of these primary familial loyalties. In melodrama human existence becomes centred on the unravelling of secret familial relationships – from the mysteries of paternity to

people unaware that they are blood brothers or identical twins. Entailed in these revelations is the struggle against false appearances and malicious suppression of information. In this sort of plot is centred so much of the development of the drama: the movement from lack of recognition to rediscovery of long-veiled identities. 'At this point, truth and morality prevail' (Brooks, 1974).

And doesn't the morality typical of the melodrama have its origins in another 'moral economy' that Thompson speaks about? If it does, then the most appropriate hypothesis is that the enormously complicated web of family relations which provides the basis for the plot of melodrama would be the perspective from which popular culture understands and speaks about the opacity and complexity of the new social relations of mass society. The anachronism thus becomes a metaphor, a way of symbolizing the social context.

A second symbolic anachronism, the rhetoric of excess, is omnipresent in melodrama. Everything must be extravagantly stated, from the staging which exaggerates the audio and visual contrasts to the dramatic structure which openly exploits the bathos of quick and sentimental emotional reactions. The acting tries to provoke a constant response in raucous laughter, sobs, sweaty tension and gushy outbursts of identification with the protagonists. Cultured people might consider all this degrading, but it nevertheless represents a victory over repression, a form of resistance against a particular 'economy' of order, saving and polite restraint.

The stubborn persistence of the melodrama genre long after the conditions of its genesis have disappeared and its capacity to adapt to different technological formats cannot be explained simply in terms of commercial or ideological manipulations. One must continually pose anew the question of the cultural matrices of melodrama, for only with an analysis of the cultural conditions can we explain how melodrama mediates between the folkloric culture of the country fairs and the urban-popular culture of the spectacle, the emerging mass culture. This is a mediation which, on the level of narrative forms, moves ahead through serial novels in newspapers, to the shows of the music hall and to cinema. And as we move from film to radio theatre and then to the *telenovela*, the history of the modes of narrating and organizing the *mise-en-scène* of mass culture is, in large part, a history of melodrama.

7

From the Masses to Mass

> The concept of mass emerges as an integral part of the dominant ideology and the popular awareness in the moment that the focus of bourgeois legitimacy shifts from above toward the interior. Now, all of us are mass.
>
> A. Swingewood

> When the masses of the unpropertied bring the general rules of social movements to the forefront of the public debate, the reproduction of social life becomes a topic of general discussion rather than merely a form of private appropriation.
>
> Jürgen Habermas

The inversion of meaning and the meaning of inversion

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the long process of enculturating the popular classes into the capitalistic organization of society underwent a major change in strategies which ensured its continuity. The ways of sustaining bourgeois legitimacy shifted 'from above to within', that is, this legitimacy sought its basis less in forms of submission and more in consensus. This 'leap' carries with it a variety of social changes, the most important of which were the dissolution of the traditional system of marking social differences, the constitution of the masses as social classes, and the rise of a new culture, mass culture. The formation of mass culture has most commonly been interpreted from a 'culturalist' perspective, namely, as the loss of authenticity or cultural degradation, and relatively little attention is given to the changes in the social function of culture itself or to the relation of the formation of mass culture to two other movements, urbanization and the emergence of a new form of the popular in mass culture.

We can understand the meaning of these social changes only if we look at two of the historical meanings of 'the appearance of the masses on the social scene', namely, the significance of the concentration of the industrial workforce in the cities, *making the strength of the masses more visible*, and the way in which mass culture became a new form of popular culture.

The social visibility of the masses can be traced back fundamentally to a political process, a revolutionary change which, as Marx says, made the state an affair of all the people. This liberated politics from being an exclusively bourgeois realm and constituted the political as 'the sphere of the community, the sphere of the public affairs of the people'. This made it possible for social strata other than the bourgeoisie, the non-proletarian masses, to enter into the public sphere. The process also transformed the meaning which the liberal bourgeoisie had given to the public sphere, that is, radically deprivatizing it. As Habermas (1981a: 173) explains,

> The dialectics of a progressive extension of the state into all corners of society, parallel with the deprivatization and socialization of the state, began to gradually destroy what had been the foundation of the bourgeois public sphere: the separation between the state and society. Between these two or, better, from the two, a public sphere emerged that obliterated the differences between public and private.

Nevertheless, the second meaning of the inversion – the crisis of bourgeois legitimacy produced by the dissolution of bourgeois control of the public sphere – did not lead to a social revolution but to a reconstitution of hegemony. 'The occupation of the political sphere by the masses of dispossessed led to a joining of the state and society that destroyed the foundations of the old public sphere without producing a new one' (Habermas, 1981a: 205). And it is due to this process that culture takes on a new meaning and changes its function. The vacuum created by the disintegration of the public sphere would henceforth be occupied by a new organization of society which produced the phenomenon of the mass and mass culture. It is a culture which, instead of being the place where differences are marked, becomes the place where these differences are covered over and their existence denied. This is not done through some conspiratorial strategy of the dominators, but as a constitutive element of the new mode of functioning of the bourgeois hegemony and an integral part of the dominant ideology and of the popular consciousness (Swingewood, 1977).

Mass designates, in the moment of change, the way in which the popular classes live the new conditions of existence, encompassing both the new forms of oppression and the way the new social relations spark aspirations for and a demand for social democratization. And, most important, out of the mass will emerge the new form of culture called popular. For in the moment at which popular culture tends to become the culture of a class, that very cultural formation will be undermined from within and transformed into mass culture. We know that this inversion has been slowly gestating for a long time, but it does not become effective until the moment

when the masses are beginning to be transformed into social class and culture changes its role, becoming the strategic space for the operation of hegemony. Culture then becomes a *mediating factor*, that is, covering over differences and reconciling tastes. The influence of mass mediation thus is found structurally linked to two important tendencies towards new forms of legitimacy which articulate culture: the social construction which gives the abstraction of the commercial form a concrete material existence in the technical logic of the factory and the newspaper; and the mediation which covers over the conflict between the classes by producing a uniting resolution at the level of imaginative symbols and assuring the active consent of the dominated. But this mediation and this consent are possible historically only to the extent that mass culture becomes a force simultaneously activating and deforming the identifying marks of the old popular culture, and thus integrating into the market the new demands of the masses.

Mass culture did not appear suddenly out of the blue and in sharp confrontation with the old popular culture. Mass culture evolved slowly out of popular culture. Only an enormous distortion of historical interpretation and a powerful class ethnocentrism which refuses to accept the popular as a culture has made it possible to hide the relation between the old popular culture and mass culture and to consider mass culture as nothing more than a vulgarization and degradation of high culture.

Narrative memory and the culture industry

The incorporation of the popular classes into the hegemonic culture has a long history in which the industry of short stories and novels occupies a primordial place. In the middle of the nineteenth century, popular demand and the development of printing technologies turned the artisanal storybook industries into mass production. The penetration of popular narrative was a slow osmosis that started in the press. By 1830 the press had begun to move down the path from political journalism to commercial enterprise. This was the birthplace of the serial story, the first written text in popular mass format. The serial, more of a cultural than a literary phenomenon, provides an excellent case for studying the emergence of what was to become not just a medium directed at the masses but a new mode of communication, back and forth, between social classes.

Until the late 1960s researchers had virtually ignored the sociocultural significance of the newspaper serial. It was rediscovered by the students of 'para' or 'sub' literature who took widely divergent positions regarding its significance. Some saw the serial as a literary

production and as ideology, considering it both a literary failure and a significant victory of the most reactionary ideology. Others, following Gramsci, saw the serial as a study in the history of culture, not as literary history (Gramsci, 1977), and they made an effort to rise above the sociologism of an ideological reading.

In order to consider the serial a significant cultural phenomenon, it has been necessary first to break with many of the myths surrounding the written text in order to open the analysis of history to the possibility of a plurality of heterogeneous literary experiences. Secondly, it was necessary to shift the interpretation from the ideological field in order to discover not only the dominant ideology but the different logics in conflict, both in the production and in the consumption. It is quite revealing that it was Roland Barthes, not a 'sociologist', who explicitly posed question of the 'break-up of the unity of the written text', locating this about 1850. He linked the process to three major historical events: the demographic changes in Europe, the birth of modern capitalism, and the division of society into classes, thereby destroying the hopes of the liberals' (Barthes, 1967b). Thus, it is through our understanding of social changes – not through academic or political dogmas – that the newspaper serial reveals to us a new relationship with the language both within and from the perspective of literature. The new forms of hegemony required this: an inversion which implied a literature 'not in the written mode', a 'novel which is not literary'. In other words, we have an essentially spoken, oral style entering the field of literature and disrupting the closed circle of literary styles. But this also implies that this spoken, oral mode is going to be trapped and, to a great extent, disarticulated, deactivated and put to other uses. The popular classes gain access to literature only through a commercial operation that cuts the writer off from literary forms of writing and shifts the writer toward the identity of the journalist. Nevertheless, the newspaper serial will express a new cultural experience that will open the way to recognition of its importance.

The arrival of the medium

Before the serial (*folletin* or, in French, *feuilleton*) began to refer to a popular novel published by episodes in a newspaper, it indicated a place in the newspaper: the 'basement' of the first page where there came to rest a mix of announcements of the variety shows, literary criticisms, theatre reviews, culinary recipes, and, at times, political articles disguised as literature. Often articles not permitted in the body of the newspaper would appear in this section, and these origins, with its mix of literature with politics, left their mark on its format.

In 1836, with the transformation of the newspaper into a commercial enterprise, the owners of *La Presse* and *Le Siècle* in Paris began to carry classified advertisements and the publication of stories by popular novelists of the day.[20] Soon these stories occupied all of the space of the *feuilleton* and from that the stories took their name in French, Spanish, etc. Along with the commercialization of the newpaper, the owners sought to reorient newspapers toward the 'general public', lowering costs and taking advantage of the technological revolution in printing, especially the rotary press that appeared in just these years and that made it possible to jump from 1,100 pages to 18,000 pages per hour. Competition among rival newspapers played an important role in shaping the format of the serial novels. *Le Siècle* began publishing episodes of *The Lazarillo* [blind man's guide] *of Torres* in August 1836. *La Presse* resisted until October when it began publishing a Balzac novel. A year later, on September 28, *Journal des Débats* began publishing episodes of the first serial novel written in episodes and published periodically, *The Memories of the Devil* by Frédéric Soulié. The early serials already contained the basic ingredients of their later success – a mystery mixed with social romanticism (or romantic socialism). *Le Siècle* specialized in translations of famous English and Spanish novels, although in 1838 it published a story of the playwright Dumas. Other newspapers like *Le Constitutionel* and *Le Commerce* competed for the same public. The walls of Paris were filled with advertisements for the papers. In the case of *Le Constitutionel*, the circulation jumped from 5,000 to 80,000 with the publication of *The Wandering Jew*.

There were debates over what type of novel was best suited for serialization. Some argued for the historical novel like those of Sir Walter Scott, in which, as Soulié argued, the characters portrayed the interests, passions, habits and prejudices of the times. Others, like Dumas, argued that history could not be written as a novel. Newspapers experimented with different contents between 1837 and 1842. In 1843 there appeared *The Mysteries of Paris* by Eugène Sue and in 1844, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the two greatest examples of the genre.

For those who see the serial as merely a commercial and ideological strategy, it is necessary to differentiate three periods of its development. In the first period, a form of social romanticism prevailed in the serials which – remaining close to the life of the popular classes – resolved a dualistic conflict of social forces always in a magico-reformist manner. This period, represented by Soulié, Sue and Dumas, lasted until the Revolution of 1848. In the second period, adventure and intrigue replaced social concerns, showing that the serial was adjusting its narrative to the industrial requirements. This period lasted until 1870 and was marked by the success of Pierre-Alexis Ponson du Terrail and Paul Féval. In the third period, following the Paris Commune, the serial goes into a stage of clear decadence and ideologically assumes an openly reactionary position in authors such as Xavier de Montépin.

Thus, the evolution of the serial followed social changes, moving from a presentation that undermined the confidence of the people in bourgeois society to the affirmation of an integration that reflected bourgeois alarm at the events of the Commune.

Forms of presentation

Methodologically, the possibility of defining the place of any form of literature within types of cultural production depends on how it is conceived of in the processes and practices of communication. The importance of this approach is shown both in the sociological studies directed by Robert Escarpit (1965, 1968, 1974) and in the semiological analyses of Yuri M. Lotman and the Tartu school (1972b, 1990). This methodological frame of reference analyses the process of writing as a process of expression within a medium which does not have the closed structure of the book but one that is open, like the newspaper or weekly periodical. This structure implies a form of writing which is subject to two external exigencies, publication at regular periods of time and the need to pay salaries. It is also a form of writing that is traced back to and responds to a context of reading that breaks down the isolation and distance of the writer by placing the writer in a position of permanent interpellation by the reader.

In the case of the serial, the canons of literary communication are influenced by two conditioning factors. The first is the move from the book to the newspaper – which implies the mediation of the techniques of periodical writing and the technological apparatus of composition and design of a specific format. The second is the radical change in the role of the author–writer who now must not only make available the 'raw material' but be ready also to rewrite to publishable quality and to take on the role of editor–producer which often means being responsible for directing and carrying out the whole project from writing to publication.

The reaction of scholars to this type of serial publication is very similar whether they be from the right or the left: they feel themselves to be in the presence of the destruction of literary creation at the hands of an industrial organization and dirty commercialism. For them the authentic literary production is always something different. That was the reaction of the bourgeois criticism at the time when the serial first appeared, and it continues

to be the most frequent position today. And yet, as Barthes recognizes, it is the whole body of literature that is affected by these transformations in literary communication, and the serial novel is but one example of this. What is so revealing in all of this is not that Balzac or Dickens 'also' wrote serials to make a living, but that the appearance of this new type of writing – which is halfway between information and fiction and changes the nature of both – marks the emergence of a new social canon for the writer, now become a salaried professional. For what secret and sacred reasons do many think that the kind of writing which does not dishonour the journalist does in fact demean the role of the literary writer? Could it be that the 'aura' expelled from the work of art insisted on finding a refuge in a 'profession'?

The conditions of producing and editing

That the formula of the serial novel was the creation of entrepreneurs, there is no question. But this does not mean that they invented it from scratch or from a purely commercial logic. The serial editors, like the film producers of the 1920s, were not simply businessmen.[21] Nor was the fact that many of the newspaper editors were also themselves writers of serials and journalists as important as the role of these editors in creating the conditions of cultural production which were just being established. These conditions established a new relation between editor and author, which at the same time shaped the relation between writer and the written materials.

For some time, payment to the author had been a salary in disguise.[22] What was new and decisive was that the relationship of employer–employee began to penetrate the rhythm and mode of writing. Now the author wrote against the clock for a medium that imposed a format. This pulled the author out of the privacy of the study and exposed him to public demands by placing between the author and the text an institutional mediation with the market that reoriented and rearticulated the artistic intentionality of the writer. For some this mediation corrupts the writing almost ontologically and justifies their refusal to accept this product as literature. Such a 'noble' gesture, however, impedes our access to the pulsations of social influence which pass through the logic of the market but also reveal much of the sense of the new popular culture. A good example is Dumas' 'scandalous' use of ghost writers and other assistants to prepare some of the serials. The major author sketched the outline of the episode – its place in the overall plot of the series and the characters to be developed – and the assistant filled in the details. This permitted an author to write two or more serials at a time. But just where is the 'scandal' in all this? Is the scandal the

increase in productivity and income which this system provided or in the degradation of the writing in destroying the 'unity of authorship' or blurring the identity of the author? Does not this scandal depend on cultural presuppositions that have little to do with the function of these stories in popular culture or with their mass diffusion? The authorship of the serials mattered so little to the great majority of the public that 'many believed that they were written by the same people who sold them on the streets' (Botrel, 1971: 125). The names of the authors were seldom included in the lists of publications distributed by editors.

Could the inexcusable omission of the name of the author be at the root of the scandal? In not a few cases, the author dictated to an assistant, but the process of dictation took on a meaning of great importance beyond the pecuniary interests of the 'author'. It emphasized the essentially oral nature of the serial and the closeness to a type of literature in which 'the author spoke more than he wrote, and the reader listened more than he read' (Goimard, 1974: 21).

A similar process took place in the factors which organized the relationship with the public. Looked at only from the perspective of the commercial functions, these would be no more than strategies of a pioneer operation of marketing. But there is something more in this. The new approaches to sales and advertising incorporated these practices and experiences into a modern style which gave these social legitimacy. No doubt this legitimacy functioned for interests that were different from the cultural expressiveness of the serial literature, but this only reveals once more the way in which hegemony works. Any study of cultural production which ignores its relationship with the formation of hegemony is either purely culturalist or tries to ignore the historical conditions of society.

In their study of the distribution of the serialized novel in Spain, Jean-François Botrel (1971) and Leonardo Romero Tobar (1976) describe its relationship with the forms of advertising and marketing used for the *cordel*. Along with the practice of using raffles and gifts to attract subscribers, the serial novels make explicit the cultural continuity of this literature with the life of the people, that is, the avoidance of any separation from 'the cultural dimension' of the popular classes.

Since the serials were published in the newspaper or in pamphlets distributed weekly, they never had the cultural status of the book. They could not be displayed on the shelf and did not have the attractive cover that would make them in any way a symbol of high culture. On the contrary, once read, the serial became mere paper for other domestic uses. Only its illustrations had any decorative

value and would occasionally be found adorning the walls of the kitchen.

The channels of distribution never touched the book stores. With sales primarily in the streets or by distributors who went door to door, the serial novels found a means of mass circulation without ever passing through cultured circles. The same logic determined the typesetting, layout and the way the stories were divided for weekly instalments keeping in mind the amount of time working class people could give to reading or the amount of money they had for weekly purchases. These mechanisms mediated between the requirements of the market and the cultural form, between cultural demand and commercial formulas.

The dialectics of writing and reading

Eco leads us to the heart of what we are pointing to in this chapter.

> Although the *Mysteries of Paris* by Sue was written from the perspective of a dandy telling a wider public about the exciting and colourful lives of the poor, they were read by the proletariat as a clear and honest description of their oppression. When Sue became aware of this, he continued to write the episodes but with his readers more explicitly in mind . . . The book becomes a strange journey through the souls of its readers whom we will once again meet on the barricades of 1848, committed to making a revolution because, among other things, they had read the *Mysteries of Paris*. (Eco, 1979: 83)

The case of Sue illustrates better than any other author the web of connections in the dialectics of reading and writing and how this web sustains 'infrastructurally' the plot that the serial recounts to us.

As a point of entry, let us analyse the journey of Sue in its various stages. A young man of leisure from a good family of doctors, he spent most of his life travelling and writing adventure novels like those of James Fenimore Cooper. One day, needing money, he entered the world of the serialized novel. He proposed to the director of the *Journal des Débats* that he write a new style of crime novel, the title of which was adapted from a famous tale of horror, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Ann Radcliffe.

At first the serial was like a travel book written by a tourist in an exotic land, except that the exotic land was the poor slums of Paris. About the same time as Sue's publication, *Le Deux Serruriers*, by F. Piat, opened on the Paris stage to great public acclaim. The play presented a picture of the lower classes similar to Sue's: a combination of surprises, fear and fascination. The reactions of Sue's readers, however, soon added to the surprise. Two types of letters reached the editors of the *Journal*. Some were angry that a respectable conservative paper should print such socialist views.

Others, more frequent, coming from the popular sectors, encouraged the paper to continue the story in the same vein.

Sue tried from a literary perspective to justify and excuse his presentation of such powerful material, explaining that he wrote about 'the lives of barbarians as far from civilization as the savages described by Cooper'. The interest in his work, however, pushed Sue to document more closely the lives of his subjects. Dressing himself as a poor worker, he began frequenting the poor slums in search of material.

Popular enthusiasm for Sue's episodes increased and the letters, now in the National Library in Paris, continued. They were filled with emotion, some with suggestions on how to solve his characters' problems and requests for advice from people confronting similar situations. One letter asked for the address of the Prince of Geroldstein, the main character. The fusion of fact and fiction stemmed from the confusion between the reality of the readers and the fantasy of the serial. The people had the sensation that they were reading their own lives. Support for Sue poured in from all directions. The *Phalange* wrote supporting the courage of the *Mysteries* in condemning the poverty of the city, and a proletarian paper, *La Ruche Ouvrière*, praised Sue's profound social concern.

As Sue read these letters and the commentary, which interpreted as witness and protest what he had written simply out of curiosity, he was moved to change his own interpretative code in writing. He shifted from a discourse that looked on the poor from the outside, seeing the people of the working class neighbourhoods simply as dangerous barbarians – an exotic *object* – to discourse in which he took the workers as the subjects and protagonists of the action (Meyer, 1982a: 17). From then on, the *Mysteries* were filled with moral and political reflections and proposals for reform in the judicial system, in the organization of work, and in the administration of prisons and asylums. Many of the proposals were not just reformist in their orientation. Some were charged with a strange moral mystification such as the replacement of the death penalty with the blinding of the guilty person and the creation of a 'bank for the poor'. In the climate prevailing before 1848, these reforms were seen by the popular classes as an invitation to social change and a justification for uprising. The *Mysteries* were followed by the publication of *The Wandering Jew*. In 1849 Sue was elected as a 'red' deputy and was expelled from France as a perpetrator of the 1849 uprising. In 1850 under the Rancey Law a tax was levied on all newspapers that published serials.

With this description of the 'story' of the origins of serials, we now move to the analysis. Neither literary criticism nor ideological

analysis, as much as they may try to overcome the limitations of a semiotic approach, have been able to avoid going from the structures of the text to those of society and vice versa without passing through the mediation of an interpretative 'reading'. And here we are referring to a 'living reading' made by the people from the perspective of their life context and the social movements that their lives are wrapped up in. The absence of this reading in the analysis of serials implies, whether the analysts be of the right or of the left, not taking seriously the reading perspective of the popular classes and not taking these readers as the protagonists of the reading. In the case of the study of Vittorio Brunori, the depreciation of the reading capacity of the popular classes is explicit. The popular public is merely a 'public willing to let itself be drawn in', a public that dreams only of forgetting the monotonous drudgery of its daily life (1980: 22, 28).

The dialectics between writing and reading, although not always the same as what occurred with the *Mysteries*, are the key to how the serial functioned and the best perspective from which to understand the new genre. These dialectics drew in the public and it reveals how the world of the reader penetrated the process of writing and left footprints in the text. When the reading public which actively incorporates itself – and does not simply allow itself to be incorporated – is 'the mass of the people', it becomes doubly important to decipher the marks they leave on the text.

The first level on which it is possible to detect the footprints of the cultural universe of the masses is in the organization of the text and the layout of the type. The size of the type is big and there is much blank space, which suggests 'a reader for whom reading is an effort, a greater tension than that of more experienced readers, and who finds in the white spaces momentary rest . . . the big type is a great help for readers who do not enjoy the best lighting either by day or by night' (Botrel, 1971: 119). A narrow, mechanical analysis sees the large type simply as a strategy to sell more pages and make more money, but, if we draw closer to the conditions of reading, we discover something which not only has more cultural meaning but greater historical 'veracity'. The selection of the type size, the distance between the lines, the size of the margins and the format all speak much more about the conditions of the public to which it is directed than the intentions of the business entrepreneur. This is a reader still immersed in an oral cultural universe and for whom, Michelet would say, 'it is not enough to teach how to read, but it is necessary to stimulate a desire to read' (cited in Ragon, 1974). The typographical design and the materials of composition played an important role in this desire to read.

A second level that reveals the cultural universe of the reader is the fragmentation of the reading. Most basic is the division into episodes, something to be analysed in detail later. But sustaining this episodic structure are elements of design somewhere in between the simple typographical selection and the rules of the genre, namely, the length of the sentences and the paragraphs or even the division of the episode in parts, chapters and subchapters. These later divisions of the material, headed by subtitles, are the key units of reading because, while they articulate the narrative discourse, they also enable the reader to follow a series of successive events without losing a sense of the unity of the whole story. Such a division goes back to the reading habits of the public and the limited capacity to read large amounts of continuous text. Much of the success of the serials was due to the fragmentation of the text with the breaks necessary for the unskilled reader. For this reason, perhaps, the serial ended up breaking away from the daily newspaper as a vehicle of distribution and developed into the 'novels delivered by instalments' which in their weekly time frame are especially well adapted to the fragmentation of time in the life of the popular classes. For the working classes with their leisure, their salaries, habits of consumption and time for reading all organized on a weekly basis, the weekly episodic organization is the best.

The commercial operation involved in the massification of reading was a complete success in both France and Spain. Two folds of eight pages each cost less than a loaf of bread or about the same as three eggs. Even at this rate, the editorial houses rapidly expanded their business. The total cost of an average serial in booklet form came to about the equivalent of three days' work of the bricklayer or carpenter which made it possible to buy, not a 650 page novel in quarto, but five 300 page booklets in octavo (Botrel, 1971: 116).

A third level of influence of popular culture on the format of the serial is what might be called the forms of seduction of the reader: the organization in episodes and the 'open' structure of the serial. The organization of episodes works through mechanisms of timing and suspense. It was the sense of duration of time – like life itself! – which allowed the reader to move from the story to the novel format, that is, to have time to identify oneself with the new type of characters, become immersed in the incidents and twists of the plot without getting lost. It is the management of the sense of duration that enables the serial to achieve its 'blending with real life', causing the reader to enter into the narrative and to identify himself with the action through the guideposts which orient the development of the story. The essentially open structure of the plot, which comes from writing day by day, allows the writer to be influenced by the

reactions of the readers and enters into the confusion of the story with life that has its foundation in the sense of duration mentioned above. This structure makes the story porous, letting the current events of the city become part of the narrative. Indeed, this is one of the key aspects of the contemporary Latin American *telenovela* as a genre and explains much of its success. We know that this form of feedback from readers, by creating the sensation of participation, increases the number of readers and also the sales. But there is something else operative in this interaction with the writer: a kind of aberrant, distorted relation of the popular classes with the story format which influences the bourgeois form of narration in the novel.

Another facet of the organization by episodes is suspense. Each episode has sufficient information to satisfy just enough of the interest and curiosity to attract the reader, but limited so that questions are raised and there is a keen desire to discover more in the next instalment. There is a carefully calculated amount of redundancy and a continual appeal to the memory of the reader. Each episode must be able to capture the attention of the new reader who is just getting involved with the serial story, but must also, at the same time, sustain the interest of those who have been following the story for months. The style must continually surprise without becoming confusing. Each instalment has moments of breathtaking suspense, but all takes place within a familiar cast of characters.

Suspense thus introduces another element which differentiates the serial from the novel, in that the serial has not one major plot but several subplots maintained in a story line that is unstable, difficult to define and interminable. J. Tortel rightly accuses these suspense mechanisms, which make the story so fascinating, of 'precipitating writing toward its own vacuum' (1968: 24). Suspense is, indeed, an effect, not of writing, but of *narration*, that is, a language extended outside of itself toward its capacity to communicate – something quite different from a style of writing which is more conscious of the text itself.

As was noted above, the serial brings a new relationship of writing to language in that it breaks writing away from the canons of the text and opens it to popular narrative, a logic of oral 'telling *to* someone' directly present. Popular narration lives on both surprise and repetition. The periodicity of the episode and its structure mediates between the senses of time as cycle and time as linear progress, extending a bridge which permits access to the latter without leaving behind the former. The serial is a form of narration

which is no longer folktale but has not yet become the novel. It is neither literary nor pure journalism, but a 'confusion' of current facts with fiction. Between the language of news and that of the serial there is more than one subterranean current which will come to the surface when there appears that form of the press called sensationalist or 'popular' to distinguish it from the 'serious' press.

The characteristics of the serial which enable it to bring elements of the popular narrative memory into the imaginative sphere of the urban mass culture cannot be understood if they are looked upon as simply literary conventions or as a form of a much despised commercial craftiness. The serial created a new type of communication, the story genre. I am not referring to a type of story, but a 'story genre' in contrast to an 'authored story'. The concept of 'story genre' is somewhat different from the literary category of genre and would more easily find its home in the sociology of culture since it designates the social function of story. It has a function of differentiating social classes and indicating the sociocultural class distinctions operative in the conditions of both production and consumption. I am speaking of genre as a place outside of the 'work' itself, as the place of those who produce and consume this product. In contrast to the function of the 'literary work' in high culture, the reading and comprehending of the story becomes 'a unit of analysis of mass culture' (Fabri, 1973: 77). I see in the serial the first 'story genre', in the sociological sense indicated by P. Fabri and comparable to the way Hoggart refers to the cultural conventions that permit people to relate direct experience with archetypes.

The fourth level of analysis of the serial involves the mechanisms of *recognition*, that is, what produces the identification of the world of the story with the world of the reader. All levels of the art of the serial contribute to this in some way, but here we are dealing primarily with content, with the message, but keeping in mind that the effects of the message have their roots in the way the message is formulated. Recognition does not operate at the level of mechanisms of narration, that is, being able to identify the different characters of the story, but at the level of communication, the processes by which the reader identifies *with* the characters. Eco thinks that in the serial this second meaning of recognition occurs on the basis of a degradation of the first, a degradation in the sense that the dramatic force of the story is transformed into the capacity for consolation. At every point in the story, the reader is faced with a given reality that may be accepted passively or modified superficially but that can never be simply rejected (Eco, 1978: 27ff).

The serial offers the possibility of recognition because it speaks to the people about what the people are themselves saying. This may

have been more true in the early stages of the serial, but later as well. Recognition operates through the invention of a new type of hero who no longer moves in the realm of the supernatural but rather in the space of the real and possible. This hero is also the mediation between the hero of the myth and that of the novel (Eco, 1965; Gubern, 1974). Emerging in a world in which faith has been replaced by sentiments, the new hero who comes to undo injustices suffers no 'crisis' because his conflict with reality is primordially moral.

As in folktales, the development of the story follows the course of the adventures of the hero, but as in the novel the action becomes dispersed, complex and involved in the web of relationships that run through and sustain the action. There are two story lines in the serial. One, moving forward, tells of the hero's action to bring about justice. The other, moving backward, reconstructs the history of the characters who appear in the story.[23] This double storyline, however, has only one direction, similar to that which provides the forward movement of melodrama: from the point at which the evil villains are enjoying a good life and have the reputation for honesty while the good suffer and are seen as evil, to the point where the tables are turned and good triumphs. In contrast to melodrama, however, the inversion of the situation and the revelation of the true villains in the serial does not happen instantaneously and completely, but gradually and progressively in a long path winding backwards until it reaches the 'primordial scene' where the secret of evil, social hypocrisy and the shameful crime of the family lies hidden.

As Peter Brooks affirms, there is an elemental and essential link between conflict and dramatic art, between action and narration. The adventures, unforeseen twists of fortune, and dramatic surprises are not external to moral acts. Dramatic effects are the expression of a moral necessity (1974). Aesthetics are in direct continuity with ethics, a perspective which is a crucial characteristic of the aesthetics of the popular classes. This aesthetics is fundamental in the processes of recognition of one's life in the story, connecting the reader with the plot to the point of feeding it with the details of one's own life.

Another mechanism of recognition and identification comes to us from the crime novel.[24] The story's movement backward is, in reality, a movement down to the depths of society to meet face to face the two modern monstrosities: the grinding poverty of the masses and the evil hypocrisy of the elite. The serial opens up a passageway which leads from the dungeons of the gothic castle to the slums of the modern city. Here the reader from the popular

classes once more has an encounter with a fundamental emotion: *fear*, both in the experience of violence, which is a permanent threat to victims – something which these readers know so directly and closely – and in the resentful desire for revenge and vengeance.[25]

This brings us to the terrain where the 'enunciation' becomes the 'enunciated', that is, the process of expression becomes the content or message; and what the story says becomes the experience of the reader.

Dimensions of the enunciated statement

Our analysis of the message of the serial is directed firstly to an understanding of the subject matter that it is speaking about; later, we return to an ideological reading of this.

The evidence

How to stop the compulsive temptation to analyse, and let the story speak for itself? Only if we can do that, however, can we discover in the voice of the serial what is absent or repressed in the official discourses of our culture and politics. It is a voice which is sensationalist, sentimental, moralizing and often reactionary, but in the end it is the voice through which is expressed the narrative force of romantic literature, a raucous underworld that is of little interest to either the cultured right or the political left. The former finds it obscure, dangerous and culturally aberrant. The latter finds it confusing, mystified and politically useless.

Specifically, I refer to the underworld of urban terror[26] and the brutal violence that is endemic throughout the city, a violence which is not just police control in the streets nor the discipline of the factories. It is the aggression of men against women – especially in the slums – women against children and hopeless poverty against all in every home. Observations of this mixture of fear, resentment and vice enabled the writer to explore the limits of the forbidden while arousing the interest of the reader. The serial cut to ribbons the romantic and folkloric image of popular culture, and spoke of the *urban* forms of the popular: the dirty, violent life that geographically extended from the slums to the prisons and passed through the brothels and asylums for the insane.

Victor Hugo and Eugène Sue were the first to bring to light the inhuman conditions of the prisons that later became the key in the popular novel. They wrote of the horror of the asylums, filled with the insane or those who stood in the way of family ambition, where society's cruelty to its victims had a special refinement. Although sentimentalized, the serial's version of the struggles of women and children, obliged to work in the worst conditions, reflected a true

situation. The serial explored the relationship between prostitutes and poverty and the prejudices that condemned many women to a marriage of slavery and sorrow. The serials presented a very different picture of the condition of women than that of the romantic novels of the day (Olivier-Martin, 1968: 177–94; 1974: 86–94). In addition to divorce and adultery, the serials showed a world of incest, abortion, single mothers and workers seduced by their bosses, against whom their revenge was cruel and fatal. There was a certain moralism, but also an attempt to link sexual repression to the social evils of life. The world of the working class, as it was portrayed in the serials, was that of a proletariat without class consciousness,[27] but, compared with the novels of an earlier period, the themes of the universe of poverty, fear and the struggle to survive were much more central.

Mechanisms of compensation

Most of the studies of the serial agree in denouncing it as a 'populist snare'. What made the serial even more reactionary was the image it presented of the popular classes: 'that they have all even though they have nothing and that they are free by not being rich'. Or, as the trite moralization would put it, there are more important things in life than money so everybody should remain in the status where they are (Brunori, 1980: 58). The snare in the serial, however, is not so evident and its ideological effectiveness not as direct as some contemporary criticism supposes. Often this conclusion is based on an anachronistic interpretation that permits critics to ignore the contradictions of the historical moment in which the serial emerges and the mark that these contradictions left on its structure.[28] Overcoming this requires a different reading which does not focus just on the contents. This is the proposal of Gramsci, distancing himself from the interpretation of Marx given in *The Holy Family*.

What Marx read in *The Mysteries of Paris* is the hypocrisy of Rodolfo, the religiously based alienation of Fleur de Marie, the moralism of the reform of the penal colonies, etc. and from this he reached his conclusions about the insuperable limitations of the petit bourgeois consciousness of the author.

Gramsci took another tack. Instead of going from the text to the author, he went from the situation of the popular classes to the text. And he examines the text not from the perspective of content themes, but of questions about the text. Why did this literature have such success with the popular classes? What hopes did it give to the people? What popular fantasies did it stir up? Following this road leads Gramsci to recognize in the serial a form of encounter between the intellectual and the people, the embryo of 'popular nationalism' that he found lacking in Italy (Gramsci, 1977). Gramsci became so interested in the serial as a *cultural* phenomenon that he planned to carry out a study of the different types of heroes, subgenres and types of popular readings.

With interests close to those of Gramsci, Eco explores the mechanisms that link together ideology and intrigue, recognition and industry. He is convinced that it is the connection between writing and reading and between narrative structure and the market that turned the popular novel into 'an assembly line of continuous gratifications' where the events end up in the order that popular tastes desired and in accordance with conventional moral principles continually being driven home. Eco has been able to dismantle the veils covering over the processes of recognition in popular reading. This reveals the role that the story exercises in creating a mirror image that is in accordance with the expectations of the reading public. It is an appearance of agreement, however, that masks the distance between the image and the real situations of life, the reality of problems and the unrealistic solutions that are offered. The surprise and the unexpectedness of intrigue invades the field of solutions without any discontinuity with reality, thus making the fantasies seem natural and producing a sense of progress which covers over the lack of any real change.

> The equilibrium and order disturbed by the violence of the scene are reestablished on the same emotional foundations as existed before. The characters do not change. What seems to have been converted was, in fact, just as good before. The villains always die impenitent. . . . the reader is consoled either because hundreds of extraordinary things happen or because those events do not really change the cyclical movement of reality. (Eco, 1970: 36)

And it is in the inherent linkage between intrigue and conventional morality that ideology has its effect and the reader finds consolation – not in the reactionary and reformist positions of the characters. The reader looks for solutions which can be relished as innovations but which are, in the final analysis, only momentarily tranquillizing. It is in these dynamics of provocation–pacification that the originality of the serial converges with the secret effectiveness of ideology. The serial stirs people up and denounces the atrocious contradictions of society, but in the same process tries to resolve these problems without moving people to action. The solution responds to whatever the reader hopes for, but above all gives back to the reader peace. While the classical novel puts the reader in a moral or philosophical dilemma and at war with himself, the 'popular serial novel tends to spread an atmosphere of peace' (Eco, 1978: 19).

Format and symbol

Underlying much of the discussion of the serial in these pages is a question that we must finally return to, 'In what sense is the serial part of *popular culture* if it is already an aspect of *mass culture*? As a first step toward answering this question, we would say that the serial is 'popular' at least to the extent that it is a literary experience accessible to people who can read but with a minimal ability to use written language. This by no means confuses the popular with 'what pleases ignorant, savage people'. Elitism has a secret tendency to identify good literature with seriousness and literary value with a lack of emotion. The literature liked by the common people may be most entertaining, but never true literature. The reaction of the elites, the 'guardians of good taste', is not far from the opinion of some who feel indignant that sexual pleasures should be at the disposition of the common people since 'such pleasures are too good for them'.

By defining popular for what it is and not for what it is not, popular could mean the cultural matrix in which is expressed what Northrop Frye calls 'primitive narration'. Frye refers to that kind of narration in which narrative structure is so strongly codified that it produces a ritualization of action (1976). It is a story telling constructed on the basis of the 'and then' instead of the 'in consequence' based on logical continuity. It is a form of narrative with a vertical perspective that clearly separates the heroes from the villains, abolishing ambiguity and forcing the reader to takes sides. The separation of heroes and villains symbolizes a topography of experience taken from two contrasting worlds: a world above the daily experience of life – a world of happiness, light, security and peace – and a world below, the world of the demoniacal, darkness, terror and the forces of evil. The ritualization of action is found linked not just with narrative 'techniques' but with specific archetypes which, as Roman Gubern points out, go back to the totality of our daily experience, born in the sufferings and joys of daily life (1977). The ritualization of action also indicates to us that the 'primitive narration' belongs to a family of stories which situates this narration in a pattern of logic totally different from the literary work with its originality. This logic we have referred to in describing the serial as the structure of genre.

Seen in this perspective, the technical resources of the serial do not go back only to certain industrial formats or to commercial strategies but to another mode of narrating. This does not imply a denial of the influence of these formats and commercial abilities, but it does refuse to attribute to them an effectiveness at the symbolic level which they can in no way explain. No doubt, the

rapid movement of the plot and the gratuitous excess of parallel adventures are related to the interest of both the producer and the reader in prolonging the story, but these techniques cannot be fully explained except in relation to the logic of the 'and then' and the priority of action over psychology. Likewise, the redundancy which slows down the pace from one episode to the next takes us back to the logic of repetition and duration, and the tendency towards overly schematic structure is related to the processes of identification and recognition.

As we have noted, Morin emphasized the role of the serial in promoting a kind of cultural osmosis between bourgeois currents and the popular imagination. Along with the mysteries of birth, the substitution of children, the false identities, the serial introduces a search for social success and for sentimental conflicts. At the same time the characters portrayed in situations of daily life are drawn into amazing adventures and the life of the city is invaded by mysterious happenings, 'the underground currents of dreams pouring over the prosaic cities' (Morin, 1962: 78).

Continuity and ruptures in the era of the media

To speak of 'mass culture' ordinarily refers to what is communicated through the mass media. The historical perspective which has been sketched out here attempts to break with this conception and to show that cultural processes associated with the emergence of the masses cannot be explained unless they are seen to be closely linked to the new forms of hegemony that, from the nineteenth century, make culture a strategic space for the reconciliation of the classes and reabsorption of social differences. It is in these processes that the technical inventions in the area of communication found the specific aspects of their form: the meaning their mediations took on, the transformation of purely technical inventions into powerful institutions of social communication. We are not attempting to reduce the specificity of media institutions and the modes of communication introduced by the media to a fatalistic 'commercial logic' or to that vague category of 'dominant ideology'. We are affirming that the modes of communication which appear in and with the media are possible only to the degree that the technology materializes changes that come from society and that give meaning to new relationships and uses. We are placing the media in the field of *mediations*, that is, in a process of cultural transformation that does not start with or flow from the media but in which they play an important role, especially after 1920.

It is also evident today that the importance of the media has been

historically determined by the fact they found their greatest development precisely in the United States, the country which, from about 1920 on, was achieving worldwide political and cultural power. Thus, mass culture comes into existence when its production begins to take on the form of a world market, and this becomes possible only when the economy of the United States, linking the freedom of information to free enterprise and the free market, takes upon itself an imperial vocation (Schiller, 1969). Only then could the 'American way of life' raise itself to the level of a paradigm of culture synonymous with progress and modernity. Before examining how culture was moulded by the mass media it is necessary to describe the society that gave the media their character.

Daniel Bell states that 'The society that once lacked well-defined national institutions and a ruling class aware of its role came together through the mass media' (1969: 14). Bell's observation, though less optimistic, fits perfectly with the description of US society sketched out by Tocqueville more than one hundred years earlier. The absence of an aristocracy favoured the primacy of industrial activity and the absence of tradition supported a taste for striving, experimentation and innovation. People in the United States were more attached to custom than to legal prescriptions and found in the family the nucleus and base of religion, wealth, organization of work and productivity. At the same time, US society was the social formation which achieved the most egalitarian conditions of life and the most decentralized political system. The 'isolation of people in families' clearly was a factor in the development of a more individualistic society, equality of opportunity and greater uniformity in life styles. Power, weakened at its centre, extended its influence into the most private spheres of life.[29] Thus, the United States of the nineteenth century laid the cultural foundations that in the twentieth century would provide the raw materials for the imaginative sphere of the mass media.

At the end of the First World War, the United States entered a period of tremendous economic prosperity, 'the roaring twenties'. The combination of technological progress with the abundance of easy consumer credit made possible the massive production of a wide range of household furnishings. This lowered costs, opened the floodgates of consumer items to the masses, and formally inaugurated the 'society of mass consumption'. At the outset, however, the type of consumption required by the new patterns of production had not yet become a social habit. On the contrary, many recently urbanized people had a stronger compulsion to save than to spend. The 'system' needed to teach the masses to buy. In 1919, A Boston businessman stated, 'Mass production requires the

education of the masses; the masses must learn to behave like human beings in a world of mass production. They must learn not only how to read and write, but also how to acquire culture' (Buxton, 1982: 179). With the economic crisis of 1929 and then the Second World War, it was only in the 1950s that a consumer style of life became more generalized and the key to the mass culture of the United States.

The best indication of how consumption became a part of the culture is the radical change in advertising in these decades of US history. The ubiquity of advertising tended to transform all communication into persuasion. Information about the product ceased to be the primary aspect of advertising. The focus changed to forming consuming objects and creating a psychology of demand, the raw material of which was increasingly not a sense of need but the desires, ambitions and frustrations of the targets of advertising (Berger, 1972). The process of secularization that had begun centuries before only now began to penetrate the masses. The ideal of salvation was 'converted' into one of material well-being, an *objective* indicator of happiness since happiness could now be verified and measured only in terms of objects. This secular democratic ideal had been stated in the American Declaration of Independence itself: 'all men have the right to pursuit of happiness'. Advertising not only became the major source of funding for mass culture,[30] but also its power of enchantment (McLuhan, 1987).

The mass media provided for US society its cohesiveness and forged a culture created in the image of the mass media, an image with very special characteristics. The strong presence of the middle class symbols stamped the media with an individualism, an incessant search for gratification, with the tendency to give social relations a psychological value and to reduce social problems to psychological ones. Sennett has observed that, 'It is now a familiar topic of discussion that the North American psychomorphic vision of society tends to reduce questions of class, race and history to questions of the character and motivation of individuals' (1980: 51). However, the image of this culture produced and reproduced by the media makes this tendency noted by Sennett much more than a topic of conversation. The media imagery reveals the desocialization that results from the extremely high value attributed by that culture to individual experience. The heroes of the new mythology represent, not the community which they incarnate, but their own career and their efforts to be self-made individuals. In the mass publications of the 1920s, the great hero of fiction is the businessman and the compensating goal of life is upward social mobility (Johns-Heine and Gerth, 1984: 266).

The relationship between the media and culture in the United States has to be approached on two interrelated levels: that which the media reproduce – the particular style of life itself – and that which they produce – the grammar of production through which the media universalize a style of life. This style is a Westernized universal culture which is basically an economic force invading and controlling other markets of the world. But the US economic expansion in this century also implies much more: the shift of the geopolitical axis of hegemony from a Europe embroiled in its fascist adventurers to a US dominated space of vigorous democratic development. The culture of mass mediation has been forged in the tension between two dynamics: on the one hand, the economic interests of a increasingly monopolistic capitalism taking advantage of a weak state[31] and, on the other, a powerful civil society which defends and seeks to expand the limits of its liberty.

Although the European press took advantage of new technology and entrepreneurial organization to expand its publics, it was in the United States where the press reached a truly mass audience. Contributing to the growth of the press in the US was the absence of a strong centralized state, the abolition of the heavy 'taxes on knowledge' that burdened the European press, the emphasis on communications at all levels in the building of nationhood, and a commercial competition which stimulated the breakdown of the traditional guild-like control of newspaper production. In the United States press there developed a metalanguage of communication that had a special code, determined by the selection of typeface, the size of the headlines, the location of information in different areas of the page and a hierarchy of pagination. It created a hierarchy of news. It was a new format for a new concept of news, a format that consecrated the exchange value of news as both merchandise and public communication, a horizontal form of communication defying any authoritarian control. As a 'product', news acquired the right to penetrate everywhere, 'progressively widening the definition of what was public, absorbing and attenuating all social class differences and conflicts, stopping only at the extreme limit of tolerance with the widest public possible' (Colombo, 1976: 54).

The removal of political 'hobbles' placed the development of the US press outside of all limits except economic competition, a factor in the birth of the yellow press at the end of the nineteenth century. The fight between the two great press empires of Pulitzer and Hearst brought the commercialization of the press to its most cynical strategies in the search for a public. Most of the studies on the yellow press have focused on the 'slavish submission to capital'[32] with a skewed, fatalistic vision of this press as a completely manipulatory use of the codes of popular culture. By popular I refer to the tradition of sensationalism and terror that goes back to the gothic stories in England, the Spanish *cordel* and the French *canards*. It is a tradition that continues in the reporters who disguise themselves as prisoners in the jails, as the insane in the asylums or are present at the scene of a crime or accident in order to report live the emotion of the event.[33]

Another aspect of this continuity is the primacy of the image, from the visual impact of dramatic headlines and the central role of the photograph to the development of that modern form of iconography, the comic strip. The comic strip in the US press illustrates both the continuity of the old popular expressions and the break with what had gone before. The break occurred through the pressure brought by the syndicators who mediated the work of the individual authors, stereotyping the characters, simplifying the plots and the drawings. This reduced the rich imaginativeness of the narrative and took much of the action of it. But there is continuity in the production of a folklore which recovered the old forms of anonymity of more symbolic personages, in the repetition which cultivates a household familiarity and in the appeal to the collective unconscious which lives in the figures of the heroes and in the language of the adages and proverbs. This facilitates an easy memorization and the insertion of the story into the imagery which is part of everyday life.[34]

In films, even more than in the press, the 'universality' of the grammar of production of mass culture by Americans becomes apparent. Film is the 'plebeian and nomadic art' born in the country fair and in the music hall. The development of film from the melodrama of the 1800s and from the circus to the present forms deserves a study of its own. One aspect of this development, however, is especially important for understanding the development of popular entertainment: the rupture which the music hall introduced in relation to the circus.[35] The music hall took much from the circus, but, in contrast to the circus the music hall is 'open'. While one is born in the circus and professional secrets are passed from father to son, artists can move in and out of the music hall without dynasties or inheritances. In the music hall, the family is replaced by the company. The open ring of the circus, surrounded by spectators like the old theatres in the round with the actors mixing with the public, was replaced with the separate stage of the music hall. The mixture of animal and human acts, the diversity of the circus was reduced in the music hall, not only because of the size of the theatre – there were theatres of 1,000 seats in nineteenth century London –

but because of the new tastes of the public that included only magicians, mimics, dancers and musicians.

Finally, in the circus there were no *vedettes*, no hierarchical separation of professions. The circus artists were the same workmen who put up the tent and took care of the animals. They constantly moved from place to place. The music hall hired one or two stars around whom it organized its presentations. It hired artists just for their specific talents and rapidly brought them into the commercial circuit. Although these changes occurred slowly, by the turn of the century the differences marking the shift from popular to mass were quite evident.

With the First World War, European films began to decline and the growing US film industry took their place.

> Foreign films were taken out of the 20,000 theatres in the United States. In the rest of the world, US films accounted for between 60 and 90 per cent of all films shown. Each year, 200 million dollars were spent to produce over 800 films. An investment of 1,500 million dollars put the film industry on the same scale as the automobile, cigarette or petroleum industries. (Sadoul, 1979: 189)

Film production had always been motivated by profit as was demonstrated by the early French pioneers of the industry, Pathé and Gaumont. But it is in the United States that film making ceased to regularly ruin its financial entrepreneurs and where the take off of the specialized movie theatres developed into a new entertainment expression, separating itself from its origins in the stage performance. The financial success was based on smooth-running machinery which enabled the producers to 'communicate' with their public through distributors and local movie houses. The decisions on what to produce were based, therefore, on an unbending system of controls from above and a tight network of collaborative interests. 'The artists were controlled by what the producers thought; the distributors were controlled by what they believed the owners of the theatres wanted; the theatre owners were controlled by what they thought the public wanted' (Jarvie, 1974: 74).

The system worked. It made money as it moulded the public to the new styles of entertainment. The star system and the development of different genres were decisive in forming a movie-going public, and both of these factors helped set up a commercial structure on the basis of popular understanding of the new genres and their recognition of themselves in these genres.

Most of the movie public came from the popular classes, many from the large immigrant groups coming to the United States in

these years. The passion of the masses for film was anchored in the imperceptible cultivation of identity inherent in the film experience.

> When the public shouted 'bravo' or whistled, it was not to express approval, but to demonstrate identification with the character they saw on the screen . . . With little critical judgement entering in, they made part of their own life the adventures of the characters who seemed to be endowed with a kind of reality that transcended the representation on the screen. (García Riera, 1974: 16)

The magic of the dark theatre brought to its 'fullness' the new way of looking on the world which, from the days of the melodrama of 1800, tended to shift away from re-presentation of characters toward fusion of the character and the actor. It was that secret complicity between film and its public, all the fanatical attachment of the popular classes that the elites so depreciated and rejected, which was activated and exploited by the star system. The lack of distinction between the actor and the character produced a new type of mediation between the spectator and myth. The first locus of this mediation was the large screen which brought the faces and actions of stars close to the spectator in a seemingly mysterious and fascinating way and at the same time provided the publicly diffused popular image of the actor. A second locus of mediation worked through the press accounts about the lives of the stars which translated the mythical image into values and models of everyday behaviour (Rositi, 1980: 120)

This myth-creating ideology was then bartered for economic gain. It was the sense of identification and desire mobilized by the 'star' which made films so profitable. And in this process of reconciling the *sensorium* of the masses with the art of film, the masses were brought into a new experience of subjectivity, 'The desire to live their life to the full, that is, to live their dreams and to dream of their life . . . The bourgeois transformation of the imagery of the cinema corresponded to the bourgeois transformation of the popular psychology' (Morin, 1964: 23). Hegemony strengthened its access to the masses through the affective functioning of bourgeois subjectivity. The identification with the star was the point at which hegemony could catch hold of the popular affectivity because it was in this that a fascination with a dream in the movie house became the realization of values and behaviours outside the theatre and in daily life.

The creation of familiar genres of film was another key instrument that the American movie industry used to anchor itself deep within the perceptive mechanisms of the masses. Again, although the European film makers knew of the significance of genre, it was Hollywood that broke with the practice of merely transposing

traditional stage themes or novels into film and created new genres more responsive both to a new medium and to new audience interests. If, as we argued in the case of the newspaper serial, the genre is not just the quality of the story line in itself, but a mechanism through which is produced recognition, this is far more true with the new film genres. In film, genre is the key to interpretation, deciphering meaning and entering into another 'world'. Once the producers of film became aware of the importance of the public's recognition of genre as the 'condition for reading a film', they began to exploit this systematically. The genre became not just the subject matter, the repertoire of images, the codes of action and forms of representing reality, but the proof of the film producers' competence and the areas of specialization of the big studios.[36] In the heyday of Hollywood, Warner Brothers specialized in war and gangster films, Universal in horror movies, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in psychological dramas and romances.

Two genres of film were an especially important expression of the universality of US films: the invention of the western and the re-creation of melodrama. In the western, the United States provided itself a history and a mythology, transforming the struggle of the pioneers into visual epic. As a cinema of pure action, the western became the genre with the highest degree of conventions. Ironically, however, the genre with the greatest rigour in its codification was that in which Hollywood produced some of its most original films. And the originality of a genre with classics such as *Train Robbery* and *Stagecoach* is based not only on a system of production but on a new mode of narration.

The movie industry inherited the melodrama from the newspaper serial, but then reinvented melodrama by transforming it into a great popular spectacle which invited the strong spectator participation of the masses. Film and melodrama have many points of convergence: in the conventional narrative and dramatic staging, in the moralistic demands and use of mythic archetypes, and in the ideological effectiveness. More than just one among various film genres, melodrama has been the soul of film as well as its basic aesthetic and political orientation. This explains, in large part, its popular success, but also the long-standing disdain of film by elites. In the circles of high culture the terms melodrama and melodramatic in their most pejorative and shameful sense were reserved to characterize the vulgarity of popular aesthetics and, specifically, the aesthetics of popular film.

It was the western which especially developed for popular film the direct language, the elemental but effective aesthetic, and techniques such as parallel narration and setting. Film melodrama, on

the other hand, contributed the expressive forms of editing and the dramatic use of close-up shots. These were the elements of a cinematographic grammar through which Hollywood made film a 'universal' language and the first mass medium of a transnational culture.

PART III

Modernization and Mass Mediation in Latin America

> The crisis of 1930 visibly united the destiny of Latin America. It began a time of scarcity. This scarcity might mean hunger and death, but it was also the force unleashing profound and widely varying social changes. Suddenly, it seemed as though people were moving about much more and shouting much more. The cities had begun to grow and to form a great mass.
>
> J.L. Romero

> The country needed a common foundation, collective ties. Film and radio took shape as the irreplaceable factors of national unity. The public was surprised to find itself sharing the same enthusiasms and the same catharses, integrated as one nation.
>
> C. Monsiváis

So far we have traced some of the major milestones that mark the evolution of the debate on popular culture and we have surveyed briefly the historical foundations of mass mediation. Now, in this third part, we will attempt to tie together the various strands, taking Latin America as a site revealing the major issues of debate and of continuing conflict. At this point, however, we will invert the process and begin with an analysis of the social processes through which mass society is constituted in order to later examine the theoretical and methodological shifts in Latin American analysis of media and culture that stem from these social processes. We are thus making explicit two aspects of a new method of analysis which has recently emerged in Latin America: an attention to the historical factors which have produced domination but also the social reality that is constructed through the *mestizaje* of the races, tempos of life and of cultures. The articulation of these two dimensions makes socially visible the contradictory sense of modernity in Latin America: the steady, predictable tempo of homogenizing development upset by the counter-tempo of profound differences and cultural discontinuities.

8

The Processes: From Nationalisms to Transnationals

A difference that is more than underdevelopment

Any reference to a 'Latin America' beyond the original unity imposed by the Spanish conquest and domination lies necessarily in the other 'visible unification' that J.L. Romero speaks of in his study of the region's incorporation into the processes of industrial modernization and international trade. Dispersion and fragmentation were the main forces at work in Latin America from the time of the struggles for independence to the reorganization of imperialism in the twentieth century. Because of internal conflicts and the stratagems of division encouraged by the new centres of empire, the fragile national formations were in a state of almost continual break-up. If it is true that the different Latin American nationalisms took different routes and rates of development, starting in the 1930s, this diversity of patterns, as a whole, began to undergo a profound transformation.

After the 1930s the possibility of 'becoming a nation' in the *modern* sense of this term hinged on establishing a national market, something that, in turn, depended on adjusting to the needs and requirements of the international market. The fact that Latin America's access to modernization was through political-economic dependency revealed its processes of 'unequal development', the basic inequality on which capitalist development rests. This dependency also revealed the contradictions of its 'simultaneous discontinuities' in which Latin America lives and carries out its modernization (Lechner, 1981: 12). These discontinuities occur at three levels: firstly, the processes of becoming a state and a nation are often out of phase with each other so that some states become nations much later and some nations delay a long time in becoming a state; secondly, the 'deviant' way in which the popular classes enter the political system and become part of the process of forming the nation state – more as the result of the general crisis of the system, setting the popular classes in confrontation with the state, than as a product of the autonomous development of their own organizations; and, thirdly, the fact that the mass media play not just an ideological but a *political* role in the incorporation of the masses into the nation.

Before examining each of these levels in further detail, it is important to clarify the concept of discontinuity, that is, the nature of a 'modernity which is not contemporary', in order to free the concept from misunderstandings that frequently limit its usefulness. The 'non-contemporary' of which we speak must be clearly separated from the notion of constitutive backwardness, that is, the backwardness which is made the explanation of cultural differences. There are two versions of this conception of discontinuity as backwardness. One suggests that the originality of the Latin American countries and of Latin America as a whole has been constituted by factors which lie outside the logic of capitalist development. Another thinks of modernization as the recovery of lost time and therefore identifies development with the definitive leaving behind of what Latin America once was in order to become, at last, modern.

The conception of discontinuity which we propose implies a quite different line of thinking which allows us to break with both an ahistorical and culturalist model and with the paradigm of accumulative rationality with its pretensions of unifying and subsuming all cultural histories in one linear timeline. Our perspective enables us, firstly, to think of historical differences and backwardness not as lost time but as a backwardness which is *produced by historical circumstances* – children who are dying every day because of malnutrition or dysentery, the millions of illiterate people, the caloric deficit in the nutrition of the great majority, the low level of life expectancy, etc. Secondly, we are able to take into consideration cultural differences which are not related to backwardness: the multiplicity of cultural histories of the native Americans, the Afro-Americans, people of European descent and, above all, the cultural history which emerges from the *mestizaje* of all these races and their histories.

Only in the tensions of discontinuities are we able to conceive of a modernity which is not reduced to imitation and of cultural differences which are not identified with backwardness. This was the aim of Bolivar's struggle: to apply the political doctrines of his time to the 'grammar of racial, geographical, and cultural diversity' of the Latin American countries; to adjust liberal ideals to the requirements of a new society where liberalism in the name of equality usually meant the rule of the mighty (Bolivar, 1972). Bolivar did not propose a type of nation based on the model of the European nation, but a type of state, which, in abolishing absolute

power, would still be strong enough to defend the weak against the wealthy classes.

Martí continued Bolivar's line of thought and his struggle, arguing that the main obstacle in the construction of the Latin American nations is the lack of understanding 'of the disorganized mix of elements from which the new nations were so hurriedly formed' (Martí, 1971). Mariátegui also resolutely insisted that the task of these nations was not to catch up with Europe but to rediscover the value of and the meaning of the Latin American myth. Latin America 'must let loose its fantasies, liberate its storytelling capacities from old chains in order to discover its reality' (Mariátegui, 1978).

The discontinuity between the state and the nation

Beginning in the 1920s, most Latin American countries launched a process of reorganizing their economies and transforming their political institutions. Industrialization was carried out on the basis of import substitution, the formation of an internal market, and bringing manpower into an employed sector. Various forms of supportive intervention of the state and the state's investment in the transportation and communication infrastructure were crucial in this. Thus, even though the take off of industrialization responded to the general conditions of the international market, there were significant differences depending on the model and maturity of the 'national project' formulated by the bourgeoisie of each country in the second half of the nineteenth century.

There is much debate as to whether we can speak of a 'national bourgeoisie' existing in Latin America in the last century, and there is also a debate about their contradictory role in the formation of the nation states. But, as Malcolm Deas stated, 'How could there have been a national politics and a national economy without the articulation of class interests at a national level' (Deas, 1983: 150). Certainly, the national bourgeoisie have had different degrees of power and capacity for strategic influence in countries as different, for example, as Brazil and Ecuador. These differences, however, were not at the level of the Darwinist, evolutionary conceptions that oriented modernization and national development but, rather, in the size of the countries which provided greater scope for action. All countries, however, shared similar experiences of urban growth and erosion of the traditional society. The explosive urbanization of Latin America was the result of population growth and migration from the countryside, augmented, in some countries such as Argentina, by the waves of immigration. These processes produced

mass societies with classes and social groups in conflict with the dominant, normative sector of society.

Whether or not the hegemonic groups that appeared were, strictly speaking, a 'national bourgeoisie', certainly there were in the various countries new bourgeoisie sectors which controlled both the worlds of business enterprise and politics, and these sectors were responsible for the growing interdependence of these two worlds (Romero, 1976: 268). What stimulated this interweaving of business and politics was not just the new economic take off, but the assumption by these bourgeoisie sectors in Latin America that modernization implied the unavoidable necessity of incorporating their countries into the way of life of the 'modern countries'. They believed that only one model of transformation could bring their countries out of the morass of backwardness: the path toward a Europeanized urban society. Therefore, the social philosophers and men of science thought it was quite legitimate, indeed, inevitable, to marginalize and exploit the 'passive masses' and any other social group that constituted a delay or obstacle. Otherwise the very existence of the nation was in danger.

The new bourgeoisie profited from the old national project of the creoles, changing the meaning of this project even as they sought to carry it to completion.[1] It was through a process of elaborating and moving ahead this national project that the creole classes took on attributes of national scope and became national themselves. 'This continuing, prolonged enterprise of the creole class to construct the state and the nation came to be known as the national project' (Palacios, 1983: 16). The project failed in the nineteenth century, but the new project of constructing a modern nation was built upon the foundations of the old project and took on the same structure of internal power relations.

A new nationalism emerged, based on the idea of national culture which would be the synthesis of different cultural realities and a political unity bringing together cultural, ethnic and regional differences. The nation absorbed the people, 'transforming the multiplicity of the diverse cultures into a single aspiration, namely the feeling of nationhood'. Thus, the diversity legitimated the irreplaceable unity of the nation. To work for the nation means, above all, to work for unification, overcoming the fragmentation that generated the regional and federal wars of the nineteenth century. Unification through roads, railways, telegraph networks, telephones and radio broadcasting made possible communication between regions, but above all between the regions and the centre, the capital.

There were two schools of thought in this effort, although they shared many elements. One school identified national progress with

the advance of the governing social class and with efforts toward rapid industrialization. Another, present in those countries with the sociocultural formation that Darcy Ribeiro has called 'peoples of witness' (Ribeiro, 1971), attempted to fuse the new sense of nationhood with the conception which existed before and which comes from below. The goal of the first school of thought was to industrialize in order to join the ranks of civilized nations; in the second there was tension between the compulsive desire to industrialize and the awareness of their uniqueness as a nation. This tension gave rise to the debate in Peru at the end of the 1920s that brought into open confrontation the project of 'the national problem' argued by Haya de la Torre and the project of 'the indigenous problem' put forward by José Carlos Mariátegui.[2]

In Latin America as a whole, the idea of modernization which oriented the processes of change and which provided the nationalisms with a concrete agenda of action was more a movement of economic and cultural *adaptation* than a reinforcement of independence. E. Squeff, referring to Brazilian nationalism, affirms, 'We were able to achieve our modernization only by translating our raw materials into an expression that would gain recognition abroad' (Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 55). Thus, the dynamics of cultural policies began to take shape around economic policies. This, however, did not mean the development of an internal market, but rather the introduction into national institutions of a dynamic of conformity to demands which came from outside. Latin American countries wanted to be nations in order to at last define their identities, but the achievement of that identity implied the translation of these identities into the modernizing discourse of the hegemonic countries, for only in terms of that discourse could the efforts and achievements of nationhood be evaluated and validated. The logic of developmentist ideology could not be otherwise for the fundamental orientations were already contained in the modernizing nationalisms of the 1930s – the prior and indispensable stage of later development.

The political structure required for the modernizing project emerged out of the centralizing and initiating role of the state. It was impossible to conceive of national unity without strengthening the 'centre', that is, organizing the administration of the country around a central point of decision making. In some countries this centralization would have as its plan of action and justification the establishment of the basic mechanisms of a still non-existent state administration with the organization of systems of national accounts, taxation, and public records.[3] In other countries, where a public administration already existed, centralism meant not simply

unification but introducing a homogenizing uniformity of rhythms of life, gestures and ways of speaking. The heterogeneous traditions from which the Latin American countries are composed became merely external ritual functions. Where there have been significant, unavoidable regional cultural differences, this local originality and uniqueness was projected upon the whole nation. Where the differences were not sufficiently great to constitute a national tradition, these were transformed into folklore and offered to foreigners as a curiosity. However, neither the national absorption of the differences nor the transformation into folklore were simply functional strategies of the centralizing policies. For a time, at least, as the prominence of the Indian nativist genre of novels indicates, these cultural differences were used as a means of manifesting 'the consciousness of a new country', a form of affirming a national identity still in the process of formation.

Another pivotal point of nationalism in the 1930s is the protagonist role of the state. Although this will be treated in greater detail later when we analyse populism as a way of incorporating the masses into the nation, it is important to point out its significance. In some countries, such as Mexico, the initiative of the state was so strong that it made the state the 'hegemonic agent par excellence' (S. Zermeño, in Lechner, 1981: 75). Contributing to this state hegemony in Mexico was the continually erupting 'plebeian volcano', the country's civil and external wars, and the constant erosion of the power of the upper classes, requiring a strong state. All this tended to demand of the state an interventionism that translated into a paradox of overpoliticization and desocialization.

In Chile the strengthening of the protagonistic role of the state, at the expense of the institutions and class organizations of civil society, eventually made politics an autonomous process and led to an instrumentalist conception of democracy.[4] And it could not have been otherwise in Chile since the path to industrialization was considered to be the exclusive work of the state.

> In Latin America, the 'spirit of enterprise' that defines certain basic characteristics of the industrial bourgeoisie in developed capitalist countries was a characteristic of the state, especially in these decisive periods. Instead of the social class for which history clamored with small success, it was the government of the populist *caudillos* that embodied the nation and gave the masses political and economic access to the benefits of industrialization. (Galeano, 1973: 230)

And something similar happened in the cultural sphere. Coming back to the case of Mexico, for Vasconcelos the Revolution, rather than being the moment when the masses marched onto the stage of history, was the opportunity to civilize the masses under the

direction of the state, the great educator. His conception was portrayed in the murals 'Exalting the armies of Zapata and the international proletariat, but on the walls of government buildings'.[5] The muralists added peasant armies and the international proletariat to the humanist and culturalist project of Vasconcelos, but 'the state dictated the rules of nationhood and monopolized the historical sentiments and the national heritage of art and culture' (Monsiváis, 1981: 38).

Paradoxically, the growth of the Mexican state was a 'conquest by the people', a popular revolution against the creole castes, private corporations and foreign threats. In this paradox lies the strength of the national culture in Mexico, a strength that continued even when the state abandoned its patronage in great part and passed this role to the culture industry. Even then, nationhood is not only what the state has identified and brought into existence but the way in which the masses have experienced once again the social legitimacy of their aspirations. If no other Latin American country has as strong a sense of nationalism as Mexico, the reasons for this must be sought in the fact that other countries have not had the kind of revolution which conferred on the Mexican state a popular representativeness that is not just formal. The absence of a revolution in other Latin American countries, even those with a strong state, explains why the national culture continues to be so disconnected from the real culture and why the concern of the state for cultural identity continues to sound like empty rhetoric.

Massification, social movements and populism

If the 1930s were important years in Latin America for the economic processes of industrialization and modernization, politically they were even more important for the 'irruption' of the masses in the cities. Just at the time that the cities begin to fill with people due to both the demographic increase and the rural exodus, there was a crisis of hegemony produced by the absence of a class which could assume the direction of society. This brought the state in many countries to seek its *national* legitimacy in the masses. The maintenance of power was impossible without assuming in some way the vindication of the demands of the urban masses. Populism became the form of a state which sought to strengthen its legitimacy by taking upon itself the popular aspirations. This was not a strategy from a position of power, but rather an organization of power which expressed concretely the contract between the masses and the state. The ambiguousness of this contract resulted both from the vacuum of power which the state was supposed to fill – with the paternalistic

authoritarianism which this produces – and from the political reformism which the masses demanded. If we wish, however, to avoid the extremes of attributing to populism an effectiveness which it never had or on the other hand perceiving the masses as in a state of passive manipulation, which is also false, it is important to clarify the implications of the social presence of the masses and the process of massification which came into existence.

Migration and the new sources and types of work nurtured the hybridization of the popular classes, a new form of becoming present in the city. 'There was a kind of explosion among the people, and it was impossible to measure exactly how much was due to their larger numbers and how much was the result of the decision of many to make themselves known and their presence felt'.[6] The crisis of the 1930s unleashed an offensive of the country against the city and a recomposition of social groups. There was a quantitative and qualitative change in the popular classes as a result of the appearance of a *mass* which could no longer be defined within the traditional social structure and that 'dismantled the traditional forms of participation and representation' (Falleto et al., 1982: 109). The presence of that mass would soon affect the whole of urban society, its way of life and thinking, and, eventually, the physiognomy of the city itself.

With the formation of the urban masses, not only was there a quantitative growth of the popular classes, but the appearance of a new mode of existence of the popular: 'The disarticulation of the popular world, (constituting it) as the space of the Other, the space of the forces negating the mode of capitalist production' (Sunkel, 1985: 16). The insertion of the popular classes in the conditions of existence of a 'mass society' pushed the popular movement toward a new strategy of alliances. The new social experience fashioned a new vision, a new conception of action less openly confrontational. 'It was the vision of a society which could be reformed little by little, a society which could come to be more just' (Gutiérrez and Romero, 1981: 8).

For a time, the masses were marginal. Compared with the mainstream of society, the mass was heterogeneous and *mestizo*. The people coming from the country had to learn to cope with a host of strange ways. It was necessary to learn how to catch a bus, how to find one's way through the streets, how to apply for identification papers. The old society responded to the immigrants with a disdain that covered over not just repugnance but fear. More than an assault, the appearance of the masses meant that it was now impossible to continue maintaining the rigid hierarchical organization of differences that constituted the society. For this reason, the

aggressiveness of the masses seemed non-violent yet equally dangerous; it was not the uprising of a social class but the freeing of an uncontrollable energy. The 'proletariat formed a massive flood' (Romero, 1982: 54) which did not find its political expression in the traditional parties and organizations of the working class but whose manifestations of violence revealed the force of which it was capable.

The presence of the masses in the city slowly acquired more specific characteristics. The sheer numbers meant a shortage of housing, a transportation problem, a new way of living in the city, a different pattern of walking the streets, a distinct way of behaving. On the peripheries of the city there sprang up the *barrios* created by invasions, and in the centre there was a visible breakdown of the organization of urban planning. The city began to lose its centre. In the face of the formless spreading out of the city that the invasions on the periphery implied – the *favelas*, the *villas miseria*, the *callampas* – the rich responded by moving out to still another periphery. But the mass continued invading everywhere. For in the midst of the ignorance of the masses regarding the norms of the city and the way that their mere presence was challenging the order of this environment, there was a secret desire to get possession of the good life that the city represented. The masses wanted work, health, education and entertainment. But they could not claim their right to these goods without massifying everything. The revolution of expectations drove home the meaning of the paradox – subversion lies embedded in integration. Massification meant simultaneously the integration of the popular classes in society and the acceptance by society of the masses' right to everything, a right to the goods and services which, until then, were the privilege of a few. This society could not accept the newcomers without a profound transformation. This transformation, however, did not follow the patterns nor the directions that revolutionaries expected, and therefore the revolutionaries thought that no transformation had occurred.

Massification affected everyone, but not all perceived and experienced it in the same way. The upper classes quickly learned to separate the demands of the masses – with their measure of political threat but also the potential for stimulating economic growth – from the massive supply of material and cultural goods 'without differentiating style'. For this latter, the upper classes felt only disdain. Massification was especially painful for the middle classes, the petit bourgeoisie, who, as much as they desired, could not distance themselves from the masses. Massification 'threatened their dream of interiority that was their characteristic, their jealously guarded

individuality and their condition as differentiated persons' (Romero, 1976: 374).

For the popular classes, however, although they were more defenceless in the face of the new conditions, massification implied more gain than loss. Not only did they find better conditions for physical survival, but also the possibility of cultural access and ascent. The new mass culture began not only as a culture directed to the popular classes but a culture in which the masses found synthesized in the music and in the narratives of radio and film some of the basic forms of their own way of perceiving, experiencing and expressing their world.

We are indebted to José Luis Romero not only for one of the most original terms for mass culture, 'alluvial folklore', but also for the first sociological and phenomenological characterization of this culture in Latin America (1982: 67ff). Like Benjamin, Romero views mass culture from the perspective of experiences that provide access to forms of expression rather than as simply manipulation. Romero, following the path of Arguedas, has been interested in the analysis of the culture of *mestizaje*, the process of cultural hybridization and the re-elaboration of various cultural sources in a new synthesis. It is an approach that destroys the myth of cultural purity and has no repugnance in using modern instruments in the rendition of traditional indigenous music or in broadcasting such music over the radio. It is a study of the transition from the folkloric to the popular (Arguedas, 1977: 124–5).

Mass culture is the hybrid of foreign and national, of popular informality and bourgeois concern with upward mobility. It is the hybrid of two classic types: those who try to look rich without the means to do so, 'who imitate the eternal forms that characterize those "better" than they are', and the opposite, those crushed by the hopelessness of the slums on the edges of the cities and in the underworld. Mass culture is essentially an urban culture which compensates its open materialism – the supreme values are economic success and social ascent – with a superabundance of the sentimental and the passionate.

From the perspective of the 'official policies' of both the left and the right, the masses and mass culture are looked upon with suspicion. The right takes a defensive position, seeing in the masses a threat to their established social privileges and to the sacredness of the cultural borders that separate them from those without taste. The left sees in the masses a dead weight, a proletariat without class consciousness or vocation for social struggle. The mass is a cultural fact that does not fit into their social conceptions. It is a challenge

and an obstacle to their essentially Enlightenment frame of reference. Only for the populists does the presence of the urban mass seem to offer a significant new political reality. The populists 'drafted the principles of a new ideology that channelled the explosive tendencies of the masses within norms that ensured the preservation of the basic social structures' (Romero, 1976: 381).

Between 1930 and 1960, populism was the political strategy that characterized, with varying degrees of intensity, the social struggle in virtually all Latin American societies. 'It was the first strategy that attempted to resolve the crisis of the state which began in the 1930s in much of the region' (Lechner, 1981: 304). Among the first of the great populist leaders was Getulio Vargas, who orchestrated the process that led to the destruction of the 'oligarchic state' and the organization of the 'New State'. Beginning in 1930 the socio-economie conditions of mass society – the rapid industrial growth and the inability of the oligarehy to control it, the liberal-democratic aspirations of the urban middle classes, and the pressures from below of the immigrants pouring into the cities from the rural areas – created the setting for a politieal pact between the masses and the state that was the root of populism (Weffort, 1978). The state, assuming the role of referee between conflicting class interests, set aside the aspirations of the popular masses, and, through a dietatorship in the name of the people, exercised a direct manipulation of the masses and their economic ambitions. Only in 1945 were democratic tendencies finally able to introduce intermediaries between the state and the masses.

In 1934, Lázaro Cárdenas assumed the presidency of Mexico and proposed a programme of government which took up once again the objeetives of the Revolution and attempted to give back to the masses their role as protagonists in the national politieal process. Supported by the achievements of the Revolution already legislated and legitimated, Cárdenas set forth for the first time a model of economic development based on a 'third way' which made the capitalist class responsible for the increase in production and the popular classes the movers of social progress. The role of the state was to reconcile these two sets of interests. Evidence of Cárdenas' socially advaneed conception of populism was his defence of the workers' right to strike and refusal of the capitalists' right to close their factories (Cordova, 1974). At the same time, the state, committed to an expensive programme of public works, assumed the burden of the high-risk industries, leaving the most lucrative activities for the private sector.

In Argentina, the outcries of the masses freed Perón from prison in Argentina in 1945 and elected him president in 1946, initiating

the classic paradigm of populist government in Latin America. But it was also the regime that generated the most intense debate. Like the earlier populist leaders, Perón proposed a policy of economic development directed by the state, the only institution that could reconcile conflicting interests. By 1946, however, social conflicts had grown to such an extent that it became necessary to transform the nexus between the state and the masses into an 'organic' relationship, and in this originated both the strength and the ambiguous role of the labour unions. Perón's populism also contained a larger measure of the symbolic force of the *caudillo* – and of a charismatic wife, Evita – than occurred with any other leader of these years. The mythic symbolism of Perón resided not just in his dramatic 'gestures' but in the discourse he created and his capacity to re-semanticize the disparate themes of various social movements, thereby drawing their symbols into the official language. O. Landi has studied this cultural process basic to all Latin American populisms – an appeal to the working class masses, proposing 'a new system of acknowledgement of the charaeteristies of the workers, giving a name to the worker in another form' (Landi, 1983: 30; see also de Ipola, 1982).

For a long period, social analysis cancelled the theme of populism from the subjects of current debate, and an overly simplistic Marxism identified populism as, in practice, the same as fascism. The 1980s, however, opened up the topic again, and suggested that the Marxist conceptions be reexamined. Here, we can only briefly point to three examples of this new line of thought. In the text of Ernest Laclau (1977), which has gained acceptance in the region as one of the most balanced in the Marxist renewal, a new understanding of the role of populism is central. In the 1980 seminar organized by the communication research institute, Desco, in Lima on the theme, 'Democracy and Popular Movements', with some of the most representative social science researchers of Latin America present, populism was one of the key issues of the diseussions (Moulian et al., 1981). The same year, 'Populism and Communication' was the theme of the annual meeting of the Brazilian Association of Communieation Researchers (Marquez de Melo, 1981).

What is important in this renewal of interest in populism is a profound change of historical perspective. The political processes from 1930 to 1960 now appear to have been greatly oversimplified by the dependency theory that considered the state to be merely a conduit for the interests of the hegemonic countries. This made it diffieult to conceive of the 'national problem' in terms of class relationships. Another evidence of how current events have a

'contaminating' influence on developments of social theory is the interest in the energetic presence of popular movments. This change of perspective has been particularly well documented by J.C. Portantiero who sees the need to accept within social theory what can be called 'The Latin American deviation'. This is the view that the popular classes have become social actors, not by the classic route, but through the political crisis that accompanied the processes of industrialization in the 1930s, placing the popular classes in direct relation with the state and making them part of the political process before they became constituted as a social class and protagonists of the social transformations (Portantiero, 1981: 217–40).

This suggestion that the Latin American process was different has had two important consequenees for the established schemas of social theory. The first is the development of a politicized labour movement that defines itself and its actions in relation to the state rather than in relation to industry because its fate is determined largely by government economic policy. That this is a deviation from the classical schema becomes even more clear when we note the insistence on defining the relationship between the 'social process' and the 'political process' not in terms of unions and political parties but as a relation of the labour movement with the movement toward nationhood. A second difference is to attribute to populism 'an experience of social class which nationalizes the masses and gives them citizenship' (Portantiero, 1981: 234). This implies that even though populism as a state project might be a thing of the past, its influence as a 'phase in which the popular sectors are established as a political force' persists.

Historical memory sometimes tricks the analyst, showing that the relation between the subordinated classes and the people is not always clear. There is a space of conflict that does not coincide entirely with the relationships of class and production. It is a different and specific form of contradiction situated at the level of social formations that put the people in confliet with those in power (Laclau, 1977). This is a 'popular democratic' struggle which is characterized precisely by the historical continuity of popular traditions in contrast with the discontinuity which characterizes the struetures of class.

The peculiarities of the way in which the Latin American masses have made themselves present as actors on the social scene are related, in the final analysis, with the double form of appeal which motivated the masses from the moment of the urban explosion: an appeal to a sense of class which is perceived only by a small minority and the popular-nationalistic appeal which affects the great majority. But, could this mass mobilization have been merely a manipulation of the people by the state with the aid of the mass media? Today we know that this was not the case. Populism's appeal to the 'popular classes' did contain elements of manipulation – higher salaries, the right to organize, etc. – but, when projected through the mass media, this appeal was transformed into a discourse constituting the worker as a citizen in a national social formation. Here, with all its ambiguity, lay the effectiveness of the appeal to popular traditions and the construction of a national culture. Here also we find the specific role of the mass media, especially film and radio, that constructed their discourse on the continuous link of the imagination of the masses from the old narrative memory, with its vivid *mise-en-scène* and popular iconography, to the proposal of new images charged with nationalistic sensibility.

The mass media in the formation of national cultures

If we are to understand the discontinuities between the state and the nation and the twisted, tortured path by which the masses burst into and became part of Latin American politics we must accept a profound change of perspective regarding the history of the mass media. For, although the social and political demands of the underclasses made themselves heard through the national-popular movements, it was through the discourse of the mass society that the national-popular became a recognizable identity for the great majority of people. With some exceptions, historians of the mass media have studied only the economic structure and the ideological content of the mass media; few have given close attention to the mediations through which the media have acquired a concrete institutional form and become a reflection of the culture. Studies have oscillated between attributing to the media the dynamics of profound historical ehanges in Latin Ameriea or reducing the media to mere passive instruments in the hands of powerful elass interests acting with almost absolute autonomy.

If the cultural and political mediations have not been recognized in the history of the mass media, it is without doubt due to the fact that mueh of the general history leaves out culture or reduces it to high culture in its manifestations of art and literature. In the same way, the political history of Latin America consists of the great moments and important figures and almost never the events and politieal culture of the popular classes. It was left to an English historian to ask the following kind of questions about Colombian history: 'What was the popular impact of independence? What do

we know about the political practices of the illiterate? What do we know about informal communication in politics or how local ideas about national politics are formed?' (see Deas, 1983: 151ff).

To introduce the analysis of the cultural sphere does not mean, however, that we add a new and separate theme, but that we focus on those aspects of the social process that articulate the *meaning* of the economic and the political. This would mean writing the history of the mass media from the perspective of cultural processes as articulators of the communication practices – hegemonic and subaltern – of social movements. Some studies have begun to work from this perspective, and their findings provide a starting point for understanding the mediations from which, for example, information technologies become the media of communication.

The focus on mediations and social movements has shown the necessity of distinguishing two quite different stages in the introduction of media institutions and the constitution of mass culture in Latin America. In the first stage, which stretches from the 1930s to the end of the 1950s, the efficacy and social significance of the mass media do not lie primarily in the industrial organization and the ideological content, but rather in the way the popular masses have appropriated the mass media and the way the masses have recognized their identity in the mass media. Of course, economics and ideology influence how the media functioned, but to discover the meaning and ideology of economic structure we must go deeper to the conflict which in that historical moment gave structure and dynamism to the social movements, namely, the conflict between the masses and the state and the resolution of this conflict in the nationalist populisms and populist nationalisms.

During this first stage, the decisive role of the mass media was their ability to convey the challenge and the appeal of populism, which transformed the mass into the people and the people into the nation.

This appeal came from the state, but it was effective only to the extent that the masses perceived in it some of their basic demands and forms of expression. The function of the *caudillos* and the mass media was to re-semanticize the masses' demands and expressions. This occurred not only in those countries that experienced the 'dramatization' of populism, but also in other countries which, under forms, names and rhythms other than populism, experienced the crisis of hegemony, the birth of nationality and the beginnings of modernity. Film in many countries and radio in virtually all countries gave the people of the different regions and provinces their first taste of nation.[7]

This function of the media is acknowledged, although unfortunately only in the conclusions, by a recent history of radio in Colombia.

> Before the appearance and growth of radio, the country was a patchwork of regions, each separate and isolated. Before 1940, Colombia could very well call itself a country of countries rather than a nation. Hyperbole aside, radio allowed the country to experience an invisible national unity, a cultural identity shared simultaneously by the people of the coast, Antioquia, Pasto, Santander and Bogota. (Pareja, 1984: 177)

This observation puts us on the trail of another dimension of the formation of mass culture: transforming the political 'idea' of nationhood into the daily experience and feeling of nationhood.

The second stage in the constitution of mass culture in Latin America began after 1960. When the model of import substitution 'reached the limits of its coexistence with the archaic sectors of society' and populism could no longer be sustained without radicalizing the first social reforms, the myth and strategies of *development* with its technocratic solutions and encouragement of a consumer society began to replace the worn out populist policies (Intercom, 1981: 21). At this point, the political function of the media was removed and the economic function took over. The state continued to maintain the rhetoric that the air waves were a public, social service – as rhetorical as the social function of property – but, in fact, the state handed over the management of education and culture to the private sector. Ideology became the backbone of a mass discourse whose function was to make the poor dream the same dreams as the rich. As Galeano has said, 'The system spoke a surrealist language'. Not only was the wealth of the land transformed into the poverty of mankind, but scarcity and mankind's basic aspirations were converted into consumerism. The logic of this transformation would not become fully apparent until some years later when the economic crisis of the 1980s revealed the worldwide crisis of capitalism. The crisis could be solved only by making the model and decisions of production transnational and by standardizing, or, at least, pretending to standardize world culture. But by then mass culture would be riddled with new tensions that had their origins in the different national representations of popular culture, the multiplicity of cultural matrices and the new conflicts and resistances mobilized by transnationalization.

A cinema in the image of the people

Let us begin our analysis of the role of media in the period from 1930 to the late 1950s with that media experience which is the clearest and most easily identifiable expression of Latin American nationalism and mass, popular culture: the cinema of Mexico.

According to Edgar Morin, until 1950, film was the backbone of mass culture (1977); and Mexican film performed this function in a special way for the mass culture of Latin America. Film was the centre of gravity of the new culture because

> the Mexican and the Latin American public in general did not experience cinema as a specific artistic or industrial phenomenon. The fundamental reason for the success of film was structural and touched the centre of life. In films this public saw the possibility of experimenting, of adopting new habits and of seeing codes of daily life reiterated and dramatized by the voices they would like to have or hear. They did not go to the movies to dream; they went to learn. Watching the styles and fashions of the actors, the public learned to recognize and transform itself, finding solace, comfort and, secretly, exaltation. (Monsiváis, 1976b: 446)[8]

Note carefully this quote because it synthesizes so well our argument. A first interesting aspect is how the great majority of the public perceived and experienced these films. This experience, more than the talent of the actors or the commercial strategies of the entrepreneurs, was responsible for the success of films. Going to the movies was not a purely psychological event, but the point of encounter between the collective lived experience generated by the Revolution and the mediation which, even though it deformed this experience, gave it social legitimacy. Freud has made clear that there is no access to language without passing through the shaping structures of symbolism, and Gramsci has explained that there is no social legitimation without re-semantization through the hegemonic code. Cinema was the living, social mediation that constituted the new cultural experience, and cinema became the first language of the popular urban culture. Beyond the reactionary subject matter and the rigidity of its forms, film connected with the yearnings of the masses to make themselves socially visible. Film became part of the movement to give 'national identity' an image and a voice. People went to the movies more to see themselves in a sequence of images that gave them gestures, faces, manners of speaking and walking, landscapes and colours than to identify with the plots.

In the process of permitting people to see themselves, film formed them into a national body; not in the sense of giving them a nationality but in the way they experienced being a single nation. Along with all of its mystifications and chauvinistic attitudes, film provided an identity for the urban masses which diminished the impact of cultural conflicts and enabled them for the first time to conceive of the country in their own image. Monsiváis sums up the ambiguity and force of this national image in five verbs: people *recognize* themselves in film with a recognition that is not passive but that *transforms* them; for a people coming from the Revolution,

this meant to *pacify* and *resign* oneself, but also to secretly *move upwards*. In other words, it was an experience not only of consolation but of revenge.

Three mechanisms were at work in the new experience of nationalism that film provided. The first was theatrical – film as the dramatic staging and legitimation of peculiarly Mexican models of gestures, linguistic expressions and feeling. It was film which taught the people how to be Mexican in the national sense. The second mechanism was degradation. That is, in order for the people to recognize themselves, it was necessary to place nationhood within their reach. From then on, the national image is one of 'being irresponsible, being filled with filial affection for one's mother, to be an idler, the drunk, the sentimental slob . . . the programmed humiliation of women, the religious fanaticism, the obsessive respect for private property' (Monsiváis, 1976a: 86). The third mechanism was modernization. Often the mixture of images contradicted the traditional plots and brought up to date old myths, introduced customs and new models of moral behaviour and gave public access to the new rebelliousness and forms of speaking. 'Without an explicit message, film could not have entered where it did. Without the visible subversion, it could not have found the acceptanee it did among a public that was at once so eager and so repressed. Film was the apparent guardian of the traditions it subverted' (Monsiváis, 1983: 29). Examples of this are the coherent incoherence which intertwines the bodily expressions of Cantinflas with his labyrinthine verbal locutions or the eroticism of prostitutes cutting across a message defending monogamy.

The keys to film's seduction, however, were the melodrama and the stars. The melodrama was the dramatic backbone of all the plots, bringing together social impotency and heroic aspirations, appealing to the popular world from a 'familiar understanding of reality'. The melodrama made it possible for film to weave together national epics and intimate drama, display eroticism under the pretext of condemning incest, and dissolve tragedy in a pool of tears, depoliticizing the social contradictions of daily life. The stars – María Félix, Dolores del Río, Pedro Armendariz, Jorge Negrete, Ninón Sevilla – provided the faces, bodies, voices and tones of expression for a people eager to see and hear themselves. Above and beyond the make-up and the commercial star industry, the movie stars who were truly stars for the people gathered their force from a secret pact that bonded their faces with the desires and obsessions of their publics.

Mexican film had three stages of development. Between 1920 and 1940 movies rewrote the popular legends. Pancho Villa was passed

through the traditional models and myths of banditry which made cruelty a form of generosity. The Revolution appeared more as a backdrop than a storyline – the heroic death of the rebel, the assault on the rich hacienda, the march of the soldiers – appear again and again as the scene of the film action. The struggle against injustice was transformed from a fight for an ideal into a fight motivated by loyalty to the leader. This melodramatic transformation stripped the Revolution of its political meaning, but did not become reactionary until the second stage, after the 1930s, when the *ranchero* appeared, making *machismo* the expression of a nationalism that by now had become folklore. This was a *machismo* that was no longer a way that the people could understand and confront death but a compensatory mechanism for social inferiority. *Machismo* becomes the 'excess that redeemed the original sin of poverty . . . a plaintive cry for recognition' (Monsiváis, 1977: 31–2).

After the 1940s, Mexican films began to diversify their subject matter. We find now the urban comedy in which the neighbourhood replaced the countryside as the place where the old values found refuge and where the personal relations cut off by the city could be re-created. Other films about the lives of show girls and prostitutes depicted the 'adventures' and eroticism that challenged the traditional family. Both types of films were a bridge between a rural past and an urban present, films in which the city was essentially a place of confusion where memories were lost. In some ways the people projected on to and re-created memories in films that simultaneously degraded and elevated them, capitalizing on their weaknesses and their search for new signs of identity.

From the creole circus to radio theatre

In Latin America the Argentinians became the masters of radio drama. Mario Vargas Llosa describes this so vividly in his novel about radio and the people working in it in the years when radio was first launched in Latin America. Why Argentina? Perhaps it is due to the fact of the pioneering forms of radio there, as recent studies show. Another factor may have been the early commercial organization of radio with the creation of networks and the extremely rapid popular access to radio – from 1,000 receivers in 1922 to a million and a half in 1936. In 1928 there were already weekly magazines devoted to the world of radio (see Rivera, 1981; Terrero, 1981; Ford et al., 1985).

But the early development of a technical infrastructure in Argentina tells only half of the story. It attributes to the medium alone something that must be traced back to a sociocultural process and

'connects' radio with the country's long tradition of popular cultural expressions. In Argentina, the 'literary' country of Latin America *par excellence*, the disdain of writers for radio lasted many years and marked the 'distance between a media filled with possibilities and a cultural structure riddled with surprising paradoxes' (Rivera, 1980c: 383). Radio became the domain of the popular, the realm of the oral. The world of minstrels and travelling circuses helped to build a bridge between gaucho novels, wandering comedians and the radio. From the beginning, radio in Argentina was filled with popular music, readings of poetry, football matches, and, starting in 1931, radio was above all drama. Argentine radio did not receive any 'cultural recognition' until much later. In 1947, Peronism placed radio on the same level as other literary forms, awarding radio prizes and giving the medium other forms of recognition through the National Commission of Culture (Rivera, 1980c: 587).

The true importance of radio theatre in Argentina was its bridging role between the cultural traditions of the people and mass culture. Patricia Terrero views the function of Argentine radio theatre in terms of its continuity, examining 'its proximity to certain expressions of the national, popular imagination and its relationship to mythification, popular beliefs, and the formation of the social and cultural identity of the popular sectors' (1983: 5). Terrero's analysis looks beyond the radio medium itself to the experiences of listeners and the strategies of reception. It means taking into consideration the presence of the audiences in the studios where the radio dramas were transmitted, the provincial road tours of theatre groups presenting summaries of the broadcast dramas, listeners' letters, etc. This approach to analysis of radio brings to the fore once again the relation of the forms of listening to radio and the way people collectively listened to reading which, for so long, was customary in the popular culture. Fernando Ortiz makes this relationship explicit in his study of the evolution from collective reading to radio listening in the tobacco factories (Ortiz, 1947).

The spill-over of the study of the media into the surrounding cultural context brings into relief the importance of the 'creole circus', that unusual kind of circus that combines circus rings and the stage, acrobats and dramatic plays under the same tent (Seibel, 1984; Franco, 1981). When we examined the melodrama of the 1800s, it became clear that the roots of the modern popular spectacle of melodrama were in the circus and the travelling road shows. We find that, in Argentina, it was in the circus that a tradition of popular theatre was formed, gathering the memories of the minstrels and gaucho myths in the 'histories' of *Juan Moreira*, *Juan Cuello*, *Hormiga Negra*, *Santos Vega* and *Martín Fierro*. The

creole circus was the first to build a bridge between the narrative tradition of the serial and the road show. The pantomime of *Juan Moreira* in the Podestá Circus (1884) adapted the serials of Eduardo Gutiérrez, published between 1879 and 1880, to the stage. The mixture of circus comedy and popular drama gave birth to a radio theatre with the same actors and the same relationship with the public. 'Without asking anyone's permission, the popular theatre was born in the circus of the Podestá, grew up in the tours of the creole circus tents, and came of age in the theatre companies of the radio dramas' (Seibel, 1982: 12). This gave the Argentine radio theatre its particular characteristics and justified its name. In other countries without this tradition it was called the *radionovela*. The serial novel that became the theatre of the creole circus, later, in radio, continued to have strong ties with the theatre, not only because of radio's transmission of the play before a public in the studio, but because the theater companies of the radio dramas travelled throughout the provinces, allowing the people to 'see what they heard'. The radio theatres' success owed less to the medium, radio, than to the mediation already established with a cultural tradition.

If the creole circus was the place of osmosis, the gaucho serials were the place of 'origin' of the popular mythology that eventually found its way into radio. Of all the serials, those by Gutiérrez had the most prestige, shocking literary critics by bringing together the urban and rural worlds, popular and mass cultures, but providing for the people the key to their access to national sentiments. The characters of the serials stepped out of the verses of the troubadours that had circulated in printed sheets, booklets and magazines, but they also stepped out of police files. The serials presented a new dramatic universe, 'a frontier world' that, in its own way, registered the changes and the crises brought by the modernization of Argentina beginning at the end of the nineteenth century. 'Eduardo Gutiérrez basically worked with a popular audience that began to form with the modernization of Argentine society' (Rivera, 1982: 9). He established a fundamental complicity with his audience, countering the heroes who broke with 'a reinterpretation in the mass of readers and spectators that made possible the acknowledgement of the crisis and the discord it brought to society and their own lives' (Rivera, 1980b: 222).

The Argentine radio theatre had several stages of development.[9] In the first stage, dialogue was minimal, and presentations were built around songs, ballads and country music. In a second stage, beginning after 1935, the radio theatre found its own form. The theatrical companies came together, music was used dramatically and as a function of the plot, and the plots used themes from the gaucho tradition or from history. Gaucho literature was represented mainly in the works of González Pulido who collected the legends, verses and stories in a mythology of the outlaw, with their models of social protest and demands. The historical themes, the work of Héctor Pedro Blomberg, were based on archetypal characters among which the *Amores célebres de América Latina*, portraying the lives of the heroines of the independence movement, were especially popular with the public. The production of the radio theatre diversified after the mid-1940s in a way similar to what occurred with Mexican films. Although the gaucho legends continued to be important, two new themes entered the repertoires: detective stories and children's stories, most of which were adaptations. 'Love stories' appeared with enormous popular success. Most of these were produced in Argentina, but they already contain some of the characteristic stereotypes that would be used in the melodramas of the culture industry. An important aspect of this subgenre is that many of the producers were women. Studies carried out with women on the significance of radio theatre for its audience have revealed to what extent the interpretation by the public activates the keys to meaning which connect radio theatre with expressions of culture and elements of popular life. Before becoming Peronism, Argentine populism was a way of plugging mass culture into a wide family of existing expressions of popular culture. How significant it is that Evita became much more than just an actress through her role in a radio theatre company!

The urban legitimation of black music

'To firmly stabilize a music expression from a popular background as a means of getting control of a language that reconciles a nation horizontally across geography and vertically across classes'.[10] With this phrase Mario de Andrade described the role of music in the nationalizing project of Brazil in the 1930s. Perhaps in no other country of Latin America did music express so strongly the secret link between the integrating 'ethos' and the 'pathos' in the universe of feeling as it did in Brazil. This link made music especially appropriate for populist uses. What happened in Brazil with black music, especially its aberrant, off-course path to social and cultural legitimation, reveals the inability of both intellectual and populist currents of thought to comprehend the web of contradictions and seductions forming the relationship between popular and mass, the urban beginnings of populism.

The path that led Brazilian music from the samba chorus – with this ritual space: the *terreiro de candomblé* – to the radio and to

records, passes through a multiplicity of manifestations that can be organized in terms of two historical moments: the social incorporation of the productive physical 'gestural style' of the black people and the cultural legitimation of the musical rhythm that this gesture contained. National populism accompanied and in some ways made possible the passage from one stage to the next. Populism, however, was overwhelmed by a process that was too big for its political framework, that defied both the authoritarian pedantry of the Enlightenment tradition and purist idealism of Romanticism.

At the historical point when political independence was attempting to gather strength by radically changing the economy, slave labour began to be less productive and less of an economic advantage than free labour. The opening up of the national market to the whole population broke down the traditional isolation of the plantation, revealing the productivity of the physical gestural style of the blacks at the social and national level. The conclusion was reached that if black people produce as much as the immigrant, then let us encourage their productivity by giving them what they are worth. The physical gesture of the blacks, however, was not just an external manifestation. The social incorporation of the black gestural style set in motion a process at another level. 'To the extent that the blacks survived exclusively by physical labour, it was in the "gesture", in the physical manifestation of their humanity, that they imposed their culture' (Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 43).

A link, unknown to whites, emerged between the gestures of physical work and the rhythm of the dance, the symbiosis of work and rhythm that was the survival strategy of the slave. Black people, using an almost hypnotic cadence, were able to survive backbreaking work; fatigue and effort became less painful when trapped in a frenetic rhythm. It was an intoxication without alcohol but heavy with fantasy and dreams. This does not attempt to reduce all meaning of the dance to work, but tries to reveal in the 'indecency' of black gestures and movements not just an 'unabashed' relationship with sex but a process of work that is at the heart of the dance, in its rhythm. The dialectic of this double indecency is what truly scandalized 'society'. It did not, however, prevent this society from accepting the profitable productivity of blacks, but this acceptance was kept on the economic level. For an acceptance of blacks at a cultural level, a political crisis would be necessary.

In this analysis of the relationship between populism and the creation of mass culture, it is important to note that the national crises of Latin America in these years, especially in Brazil, were not simply a result of the worldwide economic depression of 1929. It was also a crisis of internal hegemony that placed the masses in

conflict with the state. The state attempted to resolve this crisis by taking upon itself the title of defender of the popular classes and, at the same time, the motor of the modernization of the country. But this strategy led the state into a series of contradictions: the state attempted to achieve the independence of the nation by imitating the nations it now depended on; and the state tried to respond to democratic demands with authoritarian policies. The same contradictions that tore populism apart at the political level revealed themselves even more forcefully in the cultural expressions. The development of music reveals with striking clarity these cultural contradictions.

The nationalistic project in musical expression operated at an internal and external level. Internally, a quarantine was placed around 'good' popular music – folk music from the rural areas – to separate and protect it from the 'bad' popular music, that is, the commercialized and foreign-influenced music made in the cities. The strategy looking to the external image of the country determined that only the music resulting from the synthesis of the best of Brazilian folk and the best of classical European music could be offered to the civilized world, a music that, while it clearly reflected national characteristics, could be listened to without seeming strange or unusual. The music of Villa-Lobos would be considered a splendid achievement of this project.

Nevertheless, this internal–external strategy turned out to be part of an ambiguous process and a cultural policy full of contradictions. 'In an attempt to benefit the whole nation, the policy stirred up the aspirations of popular culture while at the same time it tried to control these aspirations' (Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 173). In the end, this limited legitimation of popular music proved to be equally disconcerting to two quite opposed vanguards of cultural nationalism. For those in the elitist, more rationalistic Enlightenment tradition, it was a degrading remnant of the illiterate, superstitious and indolent masses. For the purists of the Romantic tradition, it awakened political aspirations, caused strikes and incited dirty tastes. The appeal of a unifying national sentiment was not able to cover over all of these tensions and social wounds that were brought into the open.

Nevertheless, populist nationalism was an essential stage of development because in this process 'the state sought legitimation in the image of the popular masses and the popular masses sought citizenship in the official recognition of the state' (Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 175). This mutual need made possible the emergence of a culture that was both urban and popular. By this time, however, the process was no longer led by the state but by the

dynamics of the market for records, radio and the leaders of foreign tastes.

In order to become urban, black music had to cross two ideological barriers. The first of these barriers was the populist concept of culture which insisted that the only authentically popular culture was that which could be traced back in its essence and roots, not to the actual historically verified origins, but to an idealized origin in a rural, peasant context.[11] Because of this illusion, populism could never resolve the contradiction between its romantic notion of the people and the reality of the urban masses – rootless, politicized, bitterly resentful, with degraded tastes, cosmopolitan – characteristics and aspirations which populism was somehow supposed to assume as its own. A second quite contrary ideological barrier for black music was the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment which identified culture with fine arts, an art which emphasized its distance and distinction, careful social limits and discipline to dramatize its difference from the new, undisciplined and unclassifiable musical manifestations of the city. Popular music could became art only when it was elevated, distanced from its immediate environment and put into the form, for example, of a sonata. The incorporation of popular culture is always dangerous for an 'intelligentsia' who feel the permanent threat of confusion, the abolition of forms and rules defining the distances. For these reasons, it was the 'dirty' culture industry and the dangerous artistic vanguard that ended up incorporating the black rhythms in the culture of the city and legitimating urban popular culture as culture – a new culture 'which was created by polymorphous appropriation and the establishment of a musical market where popular music in transformation lived side-by-side with elements of international music and the influences of urban daily life' (Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 148).

The black physical gesture, tearing itself loose from the myth of origins, became the base of the new culture. It was a culture which no longer merely supplied the roots the city dweller lacks, the same lack revealed in the urban use of folkcrafts 'in which the nostalgic feelings of the past are evoked in order to provide greater depth to domestic intimacy stereotyped by industrially produced household appliances' (García Canclini, 1982: 156). The black physical gesture became the heart of popular, mass culture, that is, a field of contradictory affirmations of work and leisure, sex, religion and politics. The passage which started from the *candomblé* and, followed a winding path, twisted and overlaid with other meanings, finally brought music to the record and the radio. It was a journey marked by the conflicts, subterfuges and strategies that have always filled the path to social recognition followed by the downtrodden. It was like the form of fighting which the Brazilian blacks call *capoeira*, the fusion of combat and play, combat and dance, charged with *mandinga*, with seduction and malice capable of 'throwing the enemy off his chosen path' (Muñiz Sodré, 1983: 205). It was another kind of logic that would find its highest point of recognition, dislocation, and parody in the carnival (Da Matta, 1981). Black music had to achieve its citizenship, 'sideways', so to speak, and 'the contradictions contained in this voyage were considerable, but the voyage generalized and consummated one of the most important Brazilian cultural events, the modern, urban development of black music' (Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 161).

The birth of the popular mass press

The media which we have examined so far – film, radio and especially music – were born 'popular' precisely because they were accessible to illiterate and uneducated publics. The press, however, also played a role in granting citizenship to the urban masses. This occurred after the changes which dislodged the press from the circle of the literate and learned and tore it loose from the matrix of the dominant culture.

Of all the media the press has the most written history, not only because it is the oldest, but because it is where those who write about history receive cultural acknowledgement. The history of the press looks mainly at the 'serious press'. When it examines the sensationalist press, it does so almost exclusively in economic terms: the growth of circulation and advertising. According to this type of journalism history, it is impossible to speak of politics, much less of culture, when one is dealing with newspapers that are nothing more than a business and scandal-mongering, exploiting the ignorance and low passions of the masses. In contrast to this concept that denies the sensationalist press any political meaning, another type of historical analysis has begun to introduce questions from the sociology of culture and political science. In Europe, this line of research, represented by Raymond Williams and Theodore Zeldin, has acquired a certain importance.[12] In Latin America, Guillermo Sunkel has carried out a pioneering study on the mass popular media in Chile. The subtitle of his recent book reveals the new approach: *A Study of the Relationship between Popular Culture, Mass Culture and Political Culture* (Sunkel, 1985).

Sunkel begins his study with a historical event – the bringing together, beginning in the 1930s, of the life and struggle of the people with the conditions of existence of mass society. This has been accompanied by a profound theoretical reconceptualization of

the people in the political culture of the Marxist left. We will leave the analysis of this theoretical and methodological proposal until later and turn now to the map of mediations that shaped the development of the popular mass press in Chile.

A process of political change beginning in the 1920s culminated in 1938 with the formation of the Popular Front and the participation of the parties of the left in the government. During these years the Chilean press changed radically. The workers' press became the left-wing newspapers, and the sensationalist daily papers appeared. The first change was basically a shift in the workers' papers from a purely local setting to an interest in national topics or a presentation of local topics in a national language. This implied at least a potential new group of followers for the left-wing discourse: the mass public. The form of discourse of these newspapers, however, remained within the constraining matrix of the rationalistic Enlightenment, performing a function of popular educational formation and political propaganda. The objectives continued to be the education of the populace – raising their political consciousness – and to represent the interests of the masses in relation to the state. But that representation was limited to those issues that the Marxist left considered political or potentially political. Their concept of politics – and therefore of popular representation – did not include other actors than the working class and employers. Such a political press was concerned only with the conflicts that emerged out of the relationships of production – the clash between labour and capital – and only with the factory and labour union. It was a heroic vision that ignored daily life, personal subjectivity and sexuality as well as the cultural practices of the people such as their story telling, their religious customs and the fund of knowledge of the people. All this was ignored or, worse still, stigmatized as sources of alienation and obstacles in political struggle.

Thus, the transformation of the left-wing press was largely the adoption of national-level themes and language as well as a concentration in a smaller number of papers. Of the more than one hundred labour newspapers which existed at one time or another between 1900 and 1920 – with their diversity of ideological positions along socialist, anarchist or radical lines – in 1929 only five continued to be published regularly. The official paper of the Communist Party, *El Siglo*, appeared in 1940, culminating a process beginning with the newspaper, *Frente Unico*, which circulated between 1934 and 1936, and *Frente Popular*, from 1936 to 1940.

In the United States and Europe the appearance of the sensationalist press is normally 'explained' as a function of the development of printing technology and the competition between the big newspapers. In Latin America, when the sensationalist press is studied, it is to provide a clear example of the penetration of North American models that, by putting profits ahead of any other criteria, have corrupted the region's tradition of serious journalism. Sunkel looks at the history of the sensationalist press from another angle, and he finds within Chile itself the antecedent press discourses and forms that evolved into the Chilean sensationalist press.

Chile, like many other Latin American countries since the second half of the nineteenth century, has had a great many popular publications which, like the *gacetas* in Argentina (Rivera, 1980a) or the literature of the *cordel* in Brazil (Luyten, 1981), mixed together news, poetry, and popular narratives. In Chile, these were called *liras populares*, and after the First World War they began to gain in news value what they lost in the quality of their poetry. Thus, they began to 'assume the functions of journalism at a historical moment when the experiences of popular culture were on the threshold of mass culture' (Sunkel, 1985: 80). In this prototype of popular journalism, written mainly for oral distribution, that is, to be read, declaimed or sung in public places such as the markets, the railway station or in the street, we find the beginnings of the sensationalist press. Already they have the large headlines calling attention to the main story, the prominent graphics illustrating the story, the melodramatization of a discourse gripped by violence and the macabre, and the exaggerated fascination with the stars of sports and entertainment.

From the 1920s, Chile had newspapers that began to adopt and develop the forms of the *liras populares*. In 1922, *Los Tiempos*, already in tabloid form, introduced a new style of journalism. Some years earlier, *Crítica* in Argentina had revolutionized journalism, breaking the solemnity and pomposity of the 'serious press' and introducing new elements that explicitly employed manners of popular expression: the graphic reconstruction of the scene of the crime; a short verse commenting on the episode that appeared with the story; a street scene or description of local customs; and a phrase taken from the vocabulary of the thieves (Rivera, 1980c). The Chilean newspaper, *Los Tiempos*, was also characterized by its lively style and use of scandal and humour in reporting the news. *Las Noticias Gráficas* appeared in 1944, presenting itself as 'the paper of the people' and printing the demands of people from the popular classes that were normally not represented or were ignored in the traditional political discourse: the interests of women, the retired people, the world of the jails and the reformatories, the problems of alcoholism and prostitution. This type of press put more emphasis on the police chronicles and took a more irreverent

and scandalous tone, with a frequent use of local slang from popular ways of speaking. The new journalism found its best expression in *Clarin*, founded in 1954, where commercial criteria were always tied to and determined by political and cultural criteria. In *Clarin* it was clear that the change in journalistic language was not only a question of attracting the public but of searching out and incorporating other languages circulating at the margins of society. It is in this light that one must interpret the caricature of the forms of speech of different social groups and the transposition of the discourse of crime to political discussion.

The issue of sensationalism calls attention to traces in the discourse of the press of another cultural matrix, much more symbolic and dramatic, which have their origins in the practices and moulds of popular culture. This matrix does not operate on the basis of concepts and generalizations but expresses itself in images and concrete situations. Rejected by the world of official education and serious politics, it survives in the world of the culture industry, and from this base it continues to exercise a powerful appeal to the popular. It is, of course, much easier and less dangerous to continue to reduce sensationalism to a 'bourgeois tool' of manipulation and alienation. It took courage to affirm that 'behind the notion of sensationalism as the commercial exploitation of crime, pornography and vulgar language lies a purist vision of the popular world' (Sunkel, 1985: 115). Only by taking this risk, however, was it possible to discover the *cultural* connection between the melodramatic aesthetic and the forms of survival and revenge in the matrix pervading popular cultures. The melodramatic aesthetic dared to violate the rationalistic division between serious and frivolous themes, to treat political events as dramatic events, and break with 'objectivity' by observing the situation from the perspective that appeals to the subjectivity of the readers.

Developmentalism and transnationalization

The first Latin American version of modernity had at its centre the idea of the *Nation* – to become a modern nation. The second version, beginning in the 1960s, was associated with development, a new understanding of the idea of progress. Development was taken as an objective step forward that could be quantified both in terms of economic growth and in its 'natural' consequence, political democratization. The flow of democratization from economic growth was considered natural because an increase in production

would increase consumption, redistribute goods and thereby strengthen democracy. In this way, democracy was a 'spin-off of modernization' (Faletto, 1982: 119); it depended on economic growth, the fruit of a reform of society in which the state was conceived 'no longer as the incarnation of the personalized vote for a social contract but as a neutral technical body carrying out the directives of development' (Lechner, 1981: 306).

During the 1960s, the majority of the Latin American countries experienced a rapid growth and diversification of industry and an expansion of internal markets. But this was accompanied by the rise of almost insoluble contradictions. For the left, these contradictions simply made visible the incompatibility between capitalist accumulation and social change. For the right, the contradictions demonstrated the incompatibility of economic development with democracy. Brazil, the first to experience a right-wing coup, followed by Chile's election of a socialist government, raised misgivings about the 'naturalness' of development. Within a few years, the takeover by military regimes in a majority of Latin American countries showed clearly that the interests of capital were the only truly quantifiable objective of development. Developmentalism also illustrated something even more fundamental to the model: 'the failure of the political principle of generalized modernization' (Mendes, 1977: 139). Clear testimony to this failure were the spread of government by force in the 1970s, the oppressive growth of foreign debt in the 1980s, and, above all, the new meaning of transnationalization that 'jumped' from an economic model to the internationalization of a political model in response to the crisis of hegemony. 'What allows us to speak of a transnational phase is its political nature. The rupture of the dike of national borders in the face of capitalist concentration radically changed the nature and function of the state by diminishing its ability to play a role in the economy and the historical development of a country' (Roncagliolo, 1982: 27).

What is the role of the mass media in the new phase of Latin American modernization? What changes have occurred in the role media plays in the creation of a mass society and in relation to the masses themselves? To answer these questions it is necessary to differentiate between what happened during the years of euphoria, the years of the 'miracles of development' in the early 1960s (and in some countries up to the mid-1970s), and what happened in the 1980s when the world crisis heightened the contradiction between the national character of the political structure and the transnational character of the economic structure.

A new meaning of massification
In contrast to what happened during the period of the populisms, when the 'mass' meant the ambiguous political weight of the masses in the city and their explosive charge of social realism, in the years of developmentalism, mass came to connote exclusively the means for homogenization and control of the masses. Massification was felt even where there were no masses. The media, which formerly were mediators between the state and the masses, between the rural and the urban, between tradition and modernity, increasingly tended to become only a simulation or even the instrument of deactivation of these relationships. Although the media continued to 'mediate', and although simulation was already at the root of their social role, something was beginning to change. It was not an abstract change in the sense that the media became the message. It was a change in the same direction as development, the schizophrenic growth of a society whose reality did not coincide with its demands. Only with such changes in meaning could communication be measured in the quantitative circulation of newspapers and the number of radio and television receivers. Indeed, measurement became the cornerstone of development. The experts of the Organization of American States could proclaim, 'Without communication there is no development'. Now the radio dial became saturated with stations in cities with no running water, and slums sprouted TV aerials. Indeed, the TV aerials were symptomatic of changes that had occurred in the concept of mass.

Marching hand in hand with the diffusion of innovations as the 'motor' of development were two key dimensions of the new field of communications: the hegemonic role of television and the functional diversification of radio.

Television implied not only an escalation of the economic investment and complexity of industrial organization of the media, but also a qualitative refinement of the ideological influences. In the model of democratizing development in its most complete form, television achieves its central role in so far as there is unification of consumer demand, the only way to expand the hegemony of the market without subsidiaries resenting the expansion. If we are able to consume the same things that developed peoples consume, then, clearly, we have finally achieved development.[13] Looking beyond the percentages of programming imported from the United States and even the imitations of US programme formats, what most influenced Latin America was the importation of the North American *model* of television. This does mean simply the privatization of the networks. There are some countries, such as Colombia, where television belongs to and is administered by the state in a way that is quite compatible with the dominant model. Rather, the heart of the model lies in the tendency to constitute, through television, a single public,[14] and to reabsorb the sociocultural differences of a country to the point that one can confuse a higher degree of communicability with a higher degree of economic profitability. Within a few years after the introduction of television the audience rating systems became standardized among the world's television systems, and something the model already logically implied became explicit: the tendency for television to constitute a discourse that, in order to speak to the largest number of people, had to reduce the differences to the minimum. This required of the audiences the least possible effort in decodification and posed the least possible conflict with the sociocultural prejudices of the majority.

The press, even after it became a mass medium, always reflected cultural and political differences. This was not only its need for 'social distinction', but corresponded to the press's liberal model that attempted to give expression to the diversity of liberal society. Radio also, for the quite different reasons of its closeness to popular culture, placed an emphasis on social and cultural diversity from the very beginning. Television, on the other hand, tends to absorb differences as much as possible. I use the word 'absorb' because this best describes the way television attempts to deny differences: showing such differences with all implicit conflict stripped away. No other medium has the potential for providing access to such a wide variety of human experiences, countries, cultures and situations. But no other medium has channelled cultural perceptions to such a degree that, instead of encouraging a collapse of nationalistic ethnocentrism, reinforces it. As the spectacle of daily life is channelled into television,[15] the hegemonic model of television reconstructs reality with a paradoxical control of differences. Television's mechanisms of proximity and familiarization, by capitalizing on surface similarities, end up convincing viewers that if they get close enough to a reproduction of reality, the 'farthest away' in time and space is in fact no different from us. On the other hand, the mechanisms of distancing and making something exotic convert what is different into something totally and radically strange, without any relation to us and without any meaning in our world. Both sets of mechanisms make it impossible for differences to challenge the viewer and question or undermine the myth of development sustaining the world view that there is only one model of society compatible with progress and, therefore, with the future.

Radio experienced a transformation in the 1960s as a result of the complex changes imposed by developmentalism and the crisis of the radio medium set in motion by the domination of television. Radio

reacted to the competition from television by exploiting the stamp of popular culture which it bears, that is, its special way of 'capturing' the popular world, 'the way radio works with its following and its system of appeals' (Alfaro, 1985b: 53). Its closeness to popular culture is also implied in its technical characteristics: all you have to do is listen; its limitation to voice and music allowing it to develop a particular form of colloquial expression; and its non-exclusive form of use making it compatible with simultaneous activities and time frames (Gutiérrez and Munizaga, 1983: 15ff). These technical–discursive factors allowed radio to 'mediate with the popular' in a way no other medium could. They renewed radio as a privileged link between modernizing, informative–instrumental rationality and the expressive–symbolic mentality of the popular world. The modernization project becomes in radio an *educational project*, encouraging both the technical adaptation of the practices of the peasants to the requirements and objectives of development and an ideological readjustment – overcoming the religious superstitions hampering technological progress and the benefits of consumerism.[16]

On the other hand, radio responded to the hegemony of television by 'diversifying' and attracting more varied publics. Diversification was compatible with the demands of the market, but it spoke of something else: 'The homogenization of the consumer made it necessary to categorize the receiver producing a classification that transformed previous social identities into a society where the category of citizen broadened to include spectator, fan, youth, women, etc.' (Gutiérrez and Munizaga, 1983: 20). At first, the segmentation of publics corresponded to a diversification of programming types or specific programmes within a radio station. Later, it became a specialization of stations for groups of publics or listeners appealing to different cultural sectors or generations. The crisis of identity of the traditional political parties and the absence of an effective appeal to the popular world by the political left, made it easy for the mass media and especially radio to form new social identities that responded more to an economic model than to a renovation of politics. The transnationalization of mass culture in the 1980s was supported internally by this political vacuum and by the integrating diversification of radio counterbalancing the unifying tendencies of television.

The contradictions between technologies and uses

Since the end of the 1980s the 'new technologies' have been the protagonists of Latin American communications. Seen from the perspective of the technology-producing countries, the new communication technologies – satellites, cable, videotext, teletext, etc. – represent a new stage in the continuous process of the acceleration of modernity that now takes a qualitative leap from the industrial revolution to the electronic revolution. No country can afford, culturally or economically, not to be part of this leap ahead. The new technologies raise many questions in Latin America, questions that are not resolved by the old dilemma: a 'yes' or a 'no' to technology is a 'yes' or 'no' to development itself. For the questions shift the focus from the technologies themselves to the model of production which they imply and to the modes of access, acquisition and use of these technologies. The shift is from technology in the abstract to the processes of imposition, deformation and dependence the technologies imply, to domination but also to resistance, recycling and redesign. The appearance of new technologies in Latin America is part of the old schizophrenia between modernization and the likelihood of actually realizing the social and cultural appropriation of the tools with which to modernize. 'Adapt to the information technologies, or die', is the slogan of a capitalism in crisis and in dire need of expanding consumption of new information technologies.

Marks of schizophrenia are apparent at many levels, from the most mundane to decisions involving enormous investments and changes in national policies. There is a 'semantic hole' in the argument which pushes the daily consumption of technologies without any reference to the context in which they are produced, a hole most people end up filling with the language of magic or religion. Another sign of schizophrenic thinking about new technologies are decisions by governments or political parties to throw out of shape the existing policies of national investment and informatization with no reasonable consideration for the economic and social costs they imply. A recent study by Mattelart and Schmucler (1983) showed that the levels of technological expansion in the field of communications are very different in each country but the levels of fascination and seduction by the technologies are very similar. One finds an omnipresent compulsive need for microcomputers, VCRs, video games and videotext not only in the capital cities but in the provincial towns.

The new communication technologies in Latin America raise two questions from the perspective of culture. Firstly, as a result of the rationality they materialize and of the way they operate, these technologies produce a crisis in the 'fiction of identity' on which national cultures rest in these countries. Secondly, sophisticated technologies carry to the extreme the simulation of rationality – or, in Baudrillard's terms, the 'sham' of rationality – and make

visible that remnant of Latin American society which cannot be pushed into the simulation of rationality, that which, because of its cultural otherness, resists the generalized homogenization. This remnant is not something strange or mysterious; it is the conflictive and dynamic presence in Latin America of the popular cultures.

The questions which the new technologies raise regarding cultural identities operate at quite different levels that need to be clearly distinguished. One is the challenge to the attempts to seek refuge in the past, the old idealist temptation to postulate an identity whose meaning is in the remote origins, far back in history and out of sight, outside the historical dynamics of the present. Another challenge is the meaning new technologies acquire as the summit of human development (Muñiz Sodré, 1983: 32). This reactivation of evolutionist logic reduces, radically and without exception, all that lies outside a certain linear conception of history to the status of 'backwardness', making what remains of identity in the other cultures merely a 'reflective' identity, that is, an identity which has no value except to reflect the differences with hegemonic culture. This is a negative identity, defining what we are not, emphasizing our deficiencies. And the implied message is that what we 'lack', what we most need today is the technology produced by the industrialized countries, the technology that ultimately is going to allow us to make the definitive leap to modernity.

This is a fabulous paradox, if it were not so bloody. In the name of an electronic memory our countries are being asked to renounce the right to have and develop their own memory. In the dilemma of choice between underdevelopment and modernization, cultural memory does not count and has no place. It cannot be operationalized in terms of information and therefore it cannot be used. In contrast to instrumental memory, 'cultural memory' does not work with pure information or as a process of linear accumulation. It is articulated through experience and events. Instead of simply accumulating, it filters and weighs. It is not a memory we can *use*, but the memory of which we are made. Cultural memory has nothing to do with nostalgia; its function in the community is not to talk of the past but to give continuity to the ongoing construction of collective identity. The logic of cultural memory, however, operating for example in the popular narrative where the quality of communication is far from proportional to the quantity of information, resists analysis by the categories of informatics.

Equally tragic is the pillaging of this cultural memory, the narrative tradition of East and West, to give some 'substance' to the fetishistic form of representation of the new technologies. The new

technologies are made 'stars' by science fiction movies and television series (Gubern, 1982). As we enter into the playful mood of the most popular genres – the epics, the adventures, the tales of terror – we are shown a future that distorts and dissolves the present. Technology is made to appear spectacular and innocent at the same time. From the robot who is always so pleasant and good natured, or at least working with 'the good guys', we pass to the embellishment of war machines as beautiful as they are deadly. In the films with brilliant special effects and visual beauty or, in their cheapened version, in the thousand cartoons for television, the 'image of the new technologies' educates the popular classes of Latin America in a way that is most convenient for the producers of the technologies, a fascination with the new fetishism.

A central chapter in the research on new technologies is their effect on culture. Starting with the concept of 'effect', however, the relation between technology and culture brings us back to the old conception of media: one side has all the action and the other side is merely a passive receiver. The use of this concept is aggravated by the continuation of the idea of a single cultural identity at the base of all identity. Technologies are the many, culture is only one. In Latin America, at least, exactly the opposite is true. Technology, with its 'logo-tecnica' is one of the strongest and most profound sources of standardization, while the differences, the cultural pluralism, unmask this standardization by bringing to light the 'discontinuities' making up the cultural reality of the region. One of the novelties of the new communication technologies is the coordination between the tempo of production by the rich countries and the tempo of consumption by the poor. For the first time, we are not buying second-hand machinery! It is, however, a false coordination of tempos. It cloaks a lack of coordination between objects and practices, technologies and users, making it impossible to understand the historical meaning of the appropriation of technology.

This lack of contemporaneity occurs at the national level in the clash of tempos and the crisis which the technological transnationalization accelerates or sets in motion, for example, in the lack of cultural articulation in the national projects. It also occurs in popular culture, which, confronted by new technologies, feels forced to take refuge in concepts and practices rooted in nostalgia and a simplistic transparency of meaning. The view of technologies from the perspective of cultural differences has nothing to do with a yearning or restlessness in the face of technological complexity or the abstraction of the mass media. Nor does it have anything to do with a voluntarist overconfidence in the ultimate triumph of the good. Technologies are not transparent tools that can be used in any

manner. They are the materialization of the rationality of a culture and of a 'global model of organization of power' (Mattelart and Schmucler, 1983).

The redesign of technology, however, is possible, if not as a strategy, at least as a tactic in the definition given by de Certeau: a manner of fighting of the person who cannot fight on his own grounds and is obliged to fight on the grounds of his adversary (de Certeau, 1984). The key lies in taking the original imported technology as energy, as a potential to develop on the basis of the requirements of the national culture. This does not ignore the fact that at times the only way to actively take control of what is imposed on us is the tactic of the anti-design, a design which is a parody and involves technology in a game which denies it as a value in itself. In any event when the machinery itself cannot be redesigned, at least its function can.

In a poor slum of Lima, a group of women attempted to better organize the market place. In the market area, they found a tape recorder and some loudspeakers which were being used only occasionally by the administrator. With the help of a group from a communication centre, the women began to use the tape recorder to interview people of the neighbourhood as to what they thought about the market and to provide music and celebrations on festival days and other holidays. And so they continued until they were criticized by a person of higher status, a nun, who ridiculed the way they talked and condemned their audacity to speak over the loudspeakers 'without knowing how to talk properly'. This caused a crisis and for some weeks the women did not want to have anything more to do with the loudspeakers. But then some of the women went to the communication centre to announce dejectedly, 'We discovered that the nun was right. We don't know how to talk and in this society those who don't know how to talk do not have the least possibility of defending themselves or doing anything. But we also have understood that with the help of this little machine – the recorder – we can learn how to speak.' And from that day the women of the market decided to tell stories about their own lives. They no longer used the recorder just to listen to others but began to use it to learn how to speak (Alfaro, 1983).

9

The Methods: From Media to Mediations

The significance of the theoretical and methodological shift indicated in this chapter's title is already broadly illustrated in the description of the historical transformations outlined above. It is now the moment to narrow our analysis of this new theoretical perspective to the current Latin American scene and to spell out its implications in much more explicit detail.

Over the last few years a Latin American movement, dissolving pseudotheoretical issues and cutting through ideological inertias, has opened up a new way of thinking about the constitution of mass society, namely, from the perspective of transformations in subalternate cultures. Communication in Latin America has been profoundly affected by external transnationalization but also by the emergence of new social actors and new cultural identities. Thus, communication has become a strategic arena for the analysis of the obstacles and contradictions that move these societies, now at the crossroads between accelerated underdevelopment and compulsive modernization. Because communication is the meeting point of so many new conflicting and integrating forces, the centre of the debate has shifted from media to mediations. Here, mediations refer especially to the articulations between communication practices and social movements and the articulation of different tempos of development with the plurality of cultural matrices.

Critique of the dualistic logic and a proposal of a focus on the *mestizajes* that make us what we are

> I refer to a relational society, that is, to a system where the whole has a logic the parts can completely ignore. For me it is basic to study the '&' that ties the mansion to the slum dwelling and the enormous, terrible, fearsome space that relates the dominant to the dominated.
>
> Roberto da Matta

Over the past few years, the crisis of the social sciences has revealed a lack of a common meeting ground between method and situation. It is a lack of agreement that obliges us to rethink not only the boundaries between disciplines and practices but also the very

meaning of the questions we are asking. We need to reexamine the theoretical points of entry to problems and the web of political ambiguities that cut off or obscure the avenues towards solutions. The reasons for this gap go far beyond questions of theory to a fundamental lack of awareness of social processes that will not be resolved by more knowledge in a pure, one-dimensional logic of accumulation but which calls for an entirely new way of understanding following the logic of differences, of cultural truths and social subjects. The recognition of the *mestizaje* that constitutes Latin America does not refer to something that happened in the past, but what we are today. *Mestizaje* is not simply a racial fact, but the explanation of our existence, the web of times and places, memories and imagination which, until now, have been adequately expressed only at a literary level. Perhaps only in literature does *mestizaje* cease to be an abstract theme and become a living actor who speaks with a distinctive way of perceiving, narrating, and being aware of the world.[17]

The recognition of this obliviousness of social processes represents, both in theory and in practice, the appearance of a new political sensibility that is neither instrumental nor pragmatic. It is open to the institutions and realities of daily life, to the subjectivity of the social actors and the multiplicity of loyalties that are operating simultaneously in Latin America. It uses a new language to express the interweaving of the economics and politics of symbolic production in the culture without remaining at the level of dialectics for it blends the tastes and feelings, seductions and resistances that dialectics ignore. Once we take as the starting point of observation and analysis not the linear process of upward social progress but *mestizaje*, that is, *mestizaje* in the sense of continuities in discontinuity and reconciliations between rhythms of life that are mutually exclusive, then we can begin to understand the complex cultural forms and meanings that are coming into existence in Latin America: the mixture of the indigenous Indian in the rural peasant culture, the rural in the urban, the folk culture in the popular cultures and the popular in mass culture. In this we are not trying to avoid contradictions but move them out of established schemas so that we can take a fresh look at them in the process of their composition and decomposition. We are looking for the revealing gaps in the context and the context of the gaps.

The impossibility of a pure Indian identity

The debate about identity in Latin America continues to be a very lively and open one; positions in the debate have far more complex interpretations but the positions nevertheless remain entrenched ones. Although these positions are not held with the same passion as in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, they still continue to feed a dualistic logic of social analysis. On the one side stands a populist nationalism, obsessed with the hope of 'recovery of roots' and the search for a lost national identity in the rural Indians, even though the vast majority of the population now lives in the city. The urban masses would have no relation to such an identity because their cultural and political contamination would be the very negation of this romantic notion of popular culture. On the other side stands progressive rationalism with its origins in the Enlightenment and its tendency to see in the indolent and superstitious nature of the populace the fundamental obstacle to development. For these elites, culture is distance and distinction, boundaries and discipline, exactly the opposite of a popular culture which defines itself by desire to satisfy immediate needs. How are we to conceive of cultural identity as long as a dualistic reasoning continues to rule, trapped in a logic of clear distinctions that insists on raising barriers, a logic of exclusion and transparent clarity?

The question of the Indian population in Latin America is not simply a matter of the 26 million native Americans grouped in 400 ethnic groups. It also involves the *pueblos profundos* that, even in countries without Indian populations, become so deeply a part of and make so much more complex the political and cultural orientation of popular culture (Vidales, 1984). For many years, the Indian question was confined to a populist and romantic rhetoric that classified the Indian as 'native' and 'primitive'. In the search for national identity, the Indian has been seized upon as the only authentic thing left, the secret abode of the pure cultural roots. Everything else is contamination and loss of identity. In this way, the Indian became a symbol of all that is irreconcilable with modernity, all that today denies a positive existence. As Mirko Lauer observed: 'We are in the realm of non-history, the Indian as the most natural thing of this continent, the fixed point from which modernization is measured' (Lauer, 1982: 112). But if we begin to think of the Indian as part of history, we must then define the indigenous from the perspective of *mestizaje*, as part of the impurity of the relations between ethnicity and class, between domination and complicity. This is the purpose today of reconceptualizing the Indian within the theoretical and political realm of the 'popular', that is, cultures which are simultaneously subordinated and dominated, but which have also a positive existence with their own values and are capable of a dynamic process of development.

In contrast with an idealism which places the native in an external position outside of capitalist development or with a theory of

resistance that naively overestimates the ability of ethnic groups to protect their survival, the new concept opens a 'path between two abysses. Native cultures cannot exist with the autonomy some anthropologists and students of folklore postulate, but they are not merely atypical appendices of a capitalism that devours everything' (García Canclini, 1982: 104). The concept draws a new map of the native cultures as integrated parts of the productive structure of capitalism, but with a meaning that is broader than these structures. To ignore their integration in capitalist structure is to ignore history and to portray these cultures as myths without continuity in time, making it impossible to understand the profound changes that this identity has undergone. But to close one's eyes to the broader cultural meaning of Indian identities would mean falling into the trap of attributing to capitalist logic the ability to absorb all present reality. This is what we do when we deny native cultures the ability to develop as cultures, an ability often not recognized by purely economic explanations or by the immediate demands of a politicization strategy.

García Canclini's map of the function and meaning of the production of Indian crafts and Indian festivals poses an analytical differentiation at three levels:[18] the pressures from outside, the mediations from within, and the operations of ethnic affirmation. *Outside pressures* come basically from the progressive impoverishment of peasant, semi-subsistence farming existence as rapid population growth and weakening prices of agricultural products push the rural people into the city and encourage urban concentration. Under these conditions, the production of crafts is so important that in some communities it has become the principal source of income. Other outside pressures come from capitalist consumption. Paradoxically, the tendency toward the standardization of the products and homogenization of tastes demands that production find a way to respond to the market demand by renewing periodically the designs, innovating in the aspect of textures and providing continuous differences. Craft products contribute to this demand for continual renovation of design by their rarity, the variety of their idiosyncratic patterns and even their imperfections.

All this translates into nostalgia for the natural and the rustic, a fascination for the exotic, thus opening the way for tourism, an external pressure becoming ever stronger. Tourism converts indigenous cultures into an entertaining show, forcing the stereotyping of the ceremonies and costumes, mixing the primitive and modern, but in a process that always maintains the difference of the two and the subordination of the primitive to the modern.

Finally, there is the external pressure of the state, transforming

the crafts or the dances into the cultural patrimony of the nation. This exalts indigenous cultures as a common cultural capital, exploiting them ideologically in order to resolve the tendency toward the social and political fragmentation of the country.

In the framework we are adopting here, the *internal mediations* are constituted by the influences through which hegemony transforms from within the meaning of work and life in the community. For it is the very meaning of crafts and festivals that is modified in the process of that shift away from the ethnic and local uniqueness. This happens not only in response to the external influences of tourism but also within the community, erasing the cultural memory of the community in a two-phase operation of disconnection and recomposition. As the process of production is fragmented and individualized, at least through the separation of production and internal community exchange of products, the individual learns the importance of placing a personal signature on every piece, dissolving the social meaning of the work and separating the individual from the community. The products of the community become separated from the local culture, dispersed fragments that are reintegrated in a national-level typology of all the local cultures, a typology that becomes a patterned demand for the customs and industrial products from various cultures without which those local communities could not live. Thus, the modes of production of craft articles in indigenous communities are converted into mediating vehicles of disaggregation and individualization. There is a dislocation of the relationships between objects and uses, tempos of life and practices.

The dimension of *ethnic affirmation* is not so easy to perceive or to interpret as are the external pressures and mediations through which hegemony operates. Access to understanding ethnic affirmation is blocked by prejudice and by the presuppositions of ethnocentrism which penetrate with equal force the discourses of both the anthropologist and the political militants and provides support for the secret necessity of cultural security among both groups. Ethnocentrism does not allow us to understand the internal capacity for development in these cultures. An example is the distinction between art and crafts based on the identification of art with a 'unified concept' that Platonically makes the artistic object the reflection of an artistic ideal while 'crafts do not seem to have a demiurgic source of creative inspiration and have no significance beyond their material existence' (Lauer, 1982: 112).

Without a deconstruction of what the concept of art presupposes, it will be difficult to evaluate folk crafts without making differences a pretext on which to value 'true' arts, and thereby supporting not

just the evaluative intent but social and cultural domination. But we can begin to get an idea of cultural affirmation by examining the processes of 'appropriation' materialized in the crafts and festivals through the transformation of the residual meaning (in the sense which Raymond Williams has given this term) into an emergent and alternative meaning. For example, in the case of the devils made of clay by the people of Ocumicho, cultural creativity is a figurative appropriation in response to a 'given' situation, bringing together the most disparate elements of modern life from policemen to motor cycles to aeroplanes. The reasoning of the craftsman of Ocumicho is the following: 'The devils persecuted the people and made them sick and crazy. Someone thought we should give the devils a place to live where they would not bother anyone. That is why we made devils out of clay: so they would have a place to live' (García Canclini, 1982: 168). In this way the 'modern' devils – the new diseases, the stealing of land, and the disintegration of the community – are integrated into the cultural discourse of the community and, in this fashion, become more 'controlled' by the community. In the same way, Chicanos in the United States buy tape recorders and pay someone's trip home to their native Mexican villages to record the music and stories of the year's festivals and holidays and bring them back to the United States. 'Like so many ceremonial objects, the tape recorder becomes an instrument to appropriate and conserve symbols of identity. It is clear that the object used, the places from which they get it and where it is taken, all reveal how the identity is changing' (García Canclini, 1982: 86).

The Indian celebrations, even without the projective interpretations of the anthropologist, reveal a specific space of cultural affirmation, not so much in their break with daily life as in their transforming appropriation of community life. The festival is a space for an especially important production of symbols in which the rituals are the way of appropriating an economy which is injurious to the community but which the community has not been able to either suppress or replace with some other possibility. This is the meaning of the mediations between memory and utopia by sacred objects and rituals.

The political force of ethnic affirmation and the interweaving of memory and utopia are explicitly asserted by Guillermo Bonfil in what he has called 'The Indian Political Project'. The liberal tradition and a Napoleonic political conception were influential in the origin of a Latin American definition of the state at the time of independence which led to the denial of the political personality of the Indian civilizations (Bonfil Batalla, 1981, 1984). A concept of democracy based on universal citizenship and a homogeneous and centralized nation was incompatible with an acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity. New forms of degradation and integration of the natives followed, destroying ethnic identities that, nevertheless, survived. Their survival is confirmed not only in the objects and rituals, but also in the protests, the political movements within parties, or entry into the armed struggles that today make ethnicity an arena for social movements for land rights, forms of organization, employment, communal life and symbolic expression.

The mixing up of popular and mass culture in the urban context

If the strongest attitude towards Indian identity is to consider it as primitive and, therefore, as outside of a historical process, the most extensive conception of the popular sectors of the city is simply to deny that they have a distinct cultural existence. So tenacious is this myth that to say 'popular' automatically evokes images of rural life and the peasant. And along with peasant, there are always two identifying characteristics: the natural and the simple. A further presupposition is that these characteristics are irremediably lost or left behind in the city, a place which is identified as artificial and complex. With the addition to this myth of the fatalistic view of homogenization produced by the culture industry, the word urban came to mean the opposite of popular. This pessimism, held by both the left and the right, has strong and, at times, embarrassing ties with an 'intelligentsia' for whom popular has been secretly synonymous with that which is childish, naive and culturally and politically immature. This is the same kind of prejudice which for long refused to find any aesthetic value in films. When this elitist perspective saw that film was becoming enormously popular with the masses, film became suspect because it was so straightforward and therefore not a medium worthy of the complexities and artificialities of cultural creation. In addition to this residue of aristocratic elitism, the recognition of the importance of urban manifestations of popular culture has to overcome the romantic identification of popular with the colourfully dramatic surface characteristics so easily detectable. Today, this obstacle to deeper understanding is reinforced by a tendency to limit the meaning of popular to nothing more than instinctive, spontaneous resistance of subaltern cultures to the hegemonic.

In the past, these oversimplified, Manichaean identifications severely encumbered cultural analysis and criticism. A new perception of the popular has emerged which sees it as the interweaving of submission and resistance, opposition and complicity. Carlos Monsiváis in Mexico has carried out pioneering work in the clarification

of how this interweaving works, drawing a map of the historical landmarks in the profound transformation of popular urban culture since the beginning of the century.[19] His is an organization of the historical process indispensable for visualizing the construction of a new cultural synthesis. Although based on Mexico, it marks out the broad framework and fundamental characteristics of a similar historical development throughout Latin Ameriea.

Monsiváis identifies in Mexico a first stage from 1900 to 1930 influenced by the Revolution and its projection into daily life through a series of mechanisms, some of which were peculiar to that Revolution and others of a more general nature. Among the mechanisms specific to the Revolution, some of the most important were the Revolutionary theatre and the muralists who converted the masses into legendary archetypes by portraying them as 'the people'. This was a change of signification that transformed the picturesque customs of daily life into affirmations of Mexican nationalism. Although this was a shift loaded with ambiguity, it demonstrated the nationalistic solidarity set in motion by a Revolution that, in the dramatic scenes of the murals, made more visible and socially legitimated the gestures, customs and manners of speech, until then so widely rejected or repressed in Mexican society.

Among the influences from a more general Mexican cultural background were the popular songs blending elements of peasant nostalgia with new ways of experiencing citizenship, unabashedly conveying human passions without checks of moralism or urban refinement. Like the theatres, the huge dance 'tents' were another dimension of the popular world: crowds, laughter, disorder, whistles, rude sounds and obscenities expressing political rebellion and erotic energy. Monsiváis pays special attention to links between politics and the obscene in urban popular culture, referring to 'vulgar language as an essential grammar of social class' (Monsiváis, 1978: 101; also 1977: 319). Much more important than the 'expressions' of popular culture in different national contexts was the recognition of the *meaning* these expressions acquired – the masses making themselves socially visible, 'configuring their hunger to attain the visibility conferred by having a social space of their own' (Monsiváis, 1976a: 85).

A second stage in this evolution of popular culture becomes widely noticeable in the early 1930s, from one end of Latin America to the other. Major factors were the influences coming from dependent industrialization, populism, the beginnings of the massive migration to the cities from the rural areas and, with the introduction of radio and cinema, the increasing hegemony of the

culture industry. At the cultural level, populism became nationalism and found its best expression and means of diffusion in film, especially in the cinema of Mexico and Argentina. If to create a nation is, in a certain sense, to dramatize its existence in theatre, then the role of film was to put at the centre of the stage – a form of mythologizing symbolization – the gestures and patterns of life of national reality. Film gave national identity a face and a voice. The popular masses did not go to the movies simply to be entertained. They went to 'experiment with their daily life', to 'see their codes and customs represented on the screen'. Film created nationalism through the genre of melodrama, a genre capable of giving to any theme or situation a strong expression while, at the same time, it evokes myths and transforms all behaviour into mass culture. Beyond the chauvinistic themes, this identity would turn out to be of vital importance to the urban masses; it softened the cultural clashes, producing in its way a synthesis of the traditional culture with the impositions and demands of the city.

And, along with film, radio was the other medium which has facilitated a connection between the *campesino* cultures and the world of urban sensibilities. Conserving rural forms of speech, songs and much of its humour, radio mediated between tradition and modernity. Radio was also the most effective vehicle – until television appeared in the 1950s – for classist and racist values. It was a medium which could reduce culture to slogans, escalating the deforming melodic and ideological standardization of songs and propagating a nationalism which was externally picturesque but increasingly hollow. At the same time, however, film and radio were important influences toward a musical integration of Latin America constructed on the 'popularity' of certain rhythms – the bolero, the ranchera, the tango – and on the mythification of some of the idols of song. From the 1930s, football, along with music, became another great creator of idols and of popular, urban passions.

Beginning in the 1960s, the urban popular culture found itself more and more hemmed in by the culture industry that left very little outside its sphere of influence and introduced styles increasingly defined by the transnational market. The dominant cultural framework became a form of technological seduction and an incitement to consumption, a homogenization of desirable life styles, the destruction of what was national – now reealled as the brief 'limbo before technological development'. The traditional social, cultural and religious contents of culture were transformed into the culture of show business (Monsiváis, 1982). Advertising played a key role in this task: converting commercial products into

household institutions and advancing the myth of technological 'progress'. In the economic conditions of the popular classes, this translated into a continual draining away of the cultural identity and meaning of their everyday knowledge and practices. Television, the great communicator, was at the centre of the new cultural dynamic. Openly and thoroughly North American in its values and constructed around the logic of one and the same style of modern life for the whole country, television dissolved the past into a continual present. The same homogenization happened to the artefacts of daily life and to patterns of speech. If radio nationalized the language, it nevertheless conserved certain regional rhythms, accents and tones. Television has created a single language for the whole country and, as it singles out certain styles to be preserved as a folkloric remnant, has caused the disappearance of regional differences. With its obsession with the present – with the latest news – television has replaced distinct senses of time and rhythms with a discourse that attempts to make everything contemporary.

Television clearly has been responsible for the acceleration of modernization of the marginal 'backward' areas. But, at what cost? The answer does not come only from a focus on the dynamics of the media or from the logic of the industry feeding and programming the media because this denies – as has occurred for many years – the distance between what the industry offers and the manner of its appropriation and conduct. This is the second great lesson of the historical analysis of urban popular cultured offered by Monsiváis, namely, an attention to the dynamics of *uses*:

> How groups without political power or social representation assimilate what is offered them, making melodrama sexy, constructing satire out of bad jokes, amusing themselves and reacting without changing their ideology, persisting in political rebellion in spite of an enormous campaign to make them apolitical, revitalizing in their own way their daily lives and traditions, converting their deficiencies into techniques of identification . . . The underclasses 'take' – because they have no choice – a vulgar and pedantic industry and turn it into self-indulgence and degradation but also into an enjoyable and combative identity. (Monsiváis, 1981: 421)

A study of the uses of the media forces us to shift our focus from the media to the places where they are consumed and given meaning – to the social movements and especially to the neighbourhood context of the popular classes.

Today, not only sociologists, anthropologists and communicators are interested in the cultural processes of the popular neighbourhoods, but also the historians. Two Argentine historians, L.H. Gutiérrez and L.A. Romero, have carried out a pioneering study

reconstructing the history of the poor neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires (1985). They define the historical construction of these neighbourhoods as the result of two sociocultural vectors: the rapid and haphazard spatial and social spreading out of the city because of the 'migratory flood' from rural areas, and the movement of cultural and political fermentation which is creating a new popular identity. The neighbourhood recasts national or work-related loyalties and knits together new networks based on the city block, the café, the club, the self-help organizations and the political committee. On the basis of these networks, 'A new culture emerges specific to the popular neighborhoods, different from those of the heroic workers of the turn-of-the-century and different from the centre (of the city) which often provides a reference point for its definition' (Romero, 1984b: 4). At the root of the new culture is a political vision that is not based on the *workers*, that vision of the world so directly confrontational which the anarchists and socialists proposed, but another more reformist vision which looks upon society as something which can be improved. It sees society as something that may not become something radically different from the present but one that can at least become better organized and more just. It is a vision which comes from an image and the experience of social mobility and from a perception that society and the state have achieved a solid interpenetration that is difficult to challenge. As the popular classes have changed their perception of society and its conflicts, proposals for transformation become more complex and elaborate. Political representation moves from the model of anarchist radicalism to that of reformist labour unions.

Neighbourhood culture has been formed out of three different environmental influences: those coming from agencies external to the neighbourhood such as the school; those formed by agents from outside of the neighbourhood but nevertheless rooted within the community such as the cafés; and those institutions that are created quite independently by the popular classes on their own such as the libraries and clubs. The libraries, organized by local political committees and by consumer cooperatives, permit the predominantly oral cultures to have direct and active contact with books and magazines (Gutiérrez and Romero, 1985: 5–6; see also Sarlo, 1985: 19–51). It is an active contact because the library not only lends books, but is a centre of courses, conferences and public services (maternal-child care, alcoholics anonymous). The clubs, run by youth and young adults, organize athletic matches (especially football), film showings, theatre, dances and concerts. The other essential elements of this culture are the 'mediators' – political activists, some of whom are socialists – teachers, small business

people, and professionals who work in neighbourhood institutions. These mediators provide a link between the experiences of the popular sectors and the world of intellectuals and the progressive left. They transmit an external message, but at the same time are part of the neighbourhood network of popular culture.[20]

The flood of migrants into Latin American cities continues. And, in no other city in the region, perhaps, does migration have the social and cultural proportion that one finds in Lima. Almost half of the population of Peru is in Lima, and 70 per cent of Lima lives in popular settlements, the 'young neighbourhoods' constituted by the invasions of urban land which are now legalized or still under litigation. The social movements in the Lima neighbourhoods require a reconceptualization of the theories that until now have been used to analyse popular movements: 'The urban poor have invaded not only land and a series of typical urban activities, but also the organizing concepts interpreting these movements, forcing a complete rethinking of our ideas' (Frias and Romero, 1984: 9). As a result of the ecological and demographic changes in a country that in 1940 was 65 per cent rural and today is 65 per cent urban, the *barriada*, the popular neighbourhood, non-existent 30 years ago, is now the main protagonist of the 'new' Lima. 'By 1984 Lima had become a city of migrants. The crowds from the provinces, overflowing into the urban landscape, produced profound changes in urban life styles and gave the city a new face' (Matos Mar, 1984: 69). Not only the geography but the spirit of response of the city were rapidly overrun by the masses of people. The invasions of land on the outskirts of the city and the invasion of the city streets by vendors have generated a new source of demand for rights which are simply recognized or permitted by a government too overwhelmed to do anything else but acquiesce. Culturally, the 'weight of Andean tradition' brought by the migrants has transformed the coastal city with its Spanish, creole origins. Clearly, the new life in the city destroys many of the customs and loyalties of the people arriving from the countryside. But the underlying currents of these loyalties 'form and direct the social relationships in the new environment and become the core of a new pattern of solidarity' (Matos Mar, 1984: 78).

The neighbourhood is the key to this new solidarity. The neighbourhood associations and centres provide a space, a structure and a point of congregation bringing migrants together and enabling them to find a minimum level of representation before authorities and the government. The associations often link the perceptions and solutions of neighbourhood problems to broader concerns: struggles for housing, electricity, water, transportation and health

services – all of which are part of a wider reality, the struggle for cultural identity. In a social context with so few institutional structures, the popular associations – from the self-help organizations to the neighbourhood kitchens and schools – 'knit together a social fabric that develops a new institutionalization, strengthening civil society and providing new social relationships and collective protagonists in the life of the country' (Frias and Romero, 1984: 10). The new project of democracy emerging from these movements has raised questions about the political parties' monopoly of politics, not in the sense of the necessity of such parties, but the consciousness that politics are divorced from the daily life of the people and that politics are limited to attempts to take control of and preserve the state. Seen from the perspective of the daily life of the popular classes, democracy is not merely a question of majority rule but an articulation of a diversity of sociocultural interests, a question not of quantity but of complexity and pluralism. This is occurring, in part, because the popular world is so diverse and so full of diversity. The homogenization that crushes and dissolves this pluralism and complexity comes not just from the cultural imagination propagated by the mass media, but also from the narrow and Manichaean concept of politics that depoliticizes what Hugo Assman has so lucidly identified as the 'popular forms of hope' with their religiosity and melodramatic character.

An understanding of the daily life of the neighbourhood must necessarily recognize the central and protagonist role of women. They carry the rocks and the water, they participate in the mobilizations, they build, buy and sell. Women are the centre of neighbourhood life. Their power is based on the force of daily existence. They *are* the neighbourhood and define it. Women define the neighbourhoods from a perception of daily life for the most part configured on the basis of maternity. It is a social maternity that instead of closing in around the family connects the whole neighbourhood as its place of development and operation, because in this culture 'maternity is the explanatory and projective symbol of popular awareness of the family. The popular historical role is meaningful to the extent that the family functions in the interior of the social movement as the structure of organization and the motivational motor of hope' (Alfaro, 1985a: 110). The role of the family is especially clear in the process of migration from the countryside to the city and in the way the city receives the immigrants: tearing apart the fabric of social relations, providing little or no emotional support, and showing disdain for their life habits. Under these conditions, women 'become the re-creation of a primordial society' that is at the same time both an encounter and a

mediation. It is not a question of being a leader or being a mother but of being a leader because you are a wife and a mother. The women in the popular neighbourhoods of Lima hold up their maternity as a 'sign of the rural people's conquest of the city and the new identity of the provincial people living in the city' (Alfaro, 1985a: 113).

Here is a reality that is difficult to grasp from the perspective of a certain type of feminism because it challenges this feminism from top to bottom. The strength of women emerges from the context in which the image of both women and men is defined, namely, the *machismo* that the role of women paradoxically cloaks and protects. From the women's stories of their role in the establishment of the neighbourhood there emerges a new experience: a challenge to politics from the realities of daily life. This integrates the diverse dimensions of life normally separated and compartmentalized and it questions rarely mentioned dimensions of oppression. 'As witnesses to great social and cultural paradoxes, women hoist the banner of union between the social and the personal, between the problematics of life and belief in alternatives, between pain and hope' (Alfaro, 1985a: 146).

Another dimension of popular culture, so suggestive of the social and cultural density of this culture, is revealed in the life of the *barrio* as the 'place' of constitution of identities. In our society, the separation between work time and 'free' time or between work and life almost automatically functions to the detriment of the latter. Most of the critical sociological analyses of the life in popular neighbourhoods utilize the same depreciative categories: the neighbourhood as 'dormitory', restricted to the universe of the domestic and the family, a place for the 'reproduction' of the workforce. A new urban anthropology, however, is changing this vision of the neighbourhood without falling into the fallacies of the anthropology of poverty (Pires do Río, 1984: 118). That is, without denying a structural understanding of social differences and conflict, the new perspective has discovered that

> in the workplace a person is merely a worker without a name, face, age, sex or civil status. And although these identities – on which much of social existence is structured – can have meaning at the moment of the selling of the workforce, they are not constructed and transmitted in the workplace but in the family and in the neighbourhood where people live together as friends and neighbours. (1984: 118)

The neighbourhood is the great mediator between the private universe of the home and the public world of the city. It is a space structured on the basis of certain types of sociability and 'communication' between 'relatives' and 'neighbours'. The neighbourhood provides the individual with basic references for the construction of an 'us' of a 'wider society than that based on family ties and, at the same time, denser and more stable than the focused and individualized relationships imposed by society' (Cantor Magnani, 1984: 138). In a labour market offering such provisional and rapidly rotating forms of work which, especially in times of economic crisis, makes permanent human relationships more difficult, it is in the neighbourhood that the popular classes can establish lasting and personalized loyalties. In the neighbourhood, to be out of work does not automatically imply a loss of identity; that is, one does not cease to the son of José Martínez or the father of Juan González. In contrast to what happens in middle and upper class residential neighbourhoods, where relationships are established on the basis of professional qualifications rather than neighbourhood ties, belonging to a neighbourhood means, for the popular classes, to have a recognized identity under any circumstances.

Taking the neighbourhood as a place of recognition puts us on the track of the specificity of symbolic production of the popular sectors of the city. This is not limited to religious celebrations,[21] but is present also in aesthetic expressions. Although what is happening in the neighbourhood of Tepito in Mexico City is exceptional in some of its aspects, it is a good example of the capacity of the popular classes in urban contexts for cultural originality and of the role played by the neighbourhood as a place where creativity is displayed. In some ways the creativity and originality of Tepito come from its location. It is a lower-status neighbourhood located in the 'old centre' of the city, only eight blocks from the main square (El Zócalo). Under attack for many years by successive plans to demolish and 'clean up' the centre, its inhabitants made a cultural event and thus, culture, their main protection for the survival of the community.

Tepito became a neighbourhood that challenged commercial interests considering the area little more than a slum – the hideout of smugglers, thieves and crooks. They looked with disdain at the capacity of the people to survive on the sales of the objects produced from the pieces of materials collected in the garbage – what the community called 'the recycling of technological garbage'. Tepito, however, did not live only by these means, but through the permanent effort to become a community through artistic expression: 'We discovered purely by chance from the paintings on the walls – the murals – that various walls make up a house; various houses, a tenement; various tenements, a block; and various blocks, the city streets. Together they make up the neighbourhood.'[22] But Tepito is not a neighborhood limited to one function, it has at least

four: housing, workplace, warehouse and little stores. It is 'architecture for human beings', a space that instead of isolating and separating, facilitates communication and integrates the house with the street, the family with the neighbours, culture with life. 'Culture here is not official, it does not bring good or bad news, nobody owns it. Culture is a state of being, a way of life and of death.' And like the whole neighbourhood, each element within has various uses. The street is not just a place to get from one place to another, it is a place of meetings, work and play. The patio of the tenement with its washtubs and clothes lines is a place for gossip and sculpture. A sense of disorder and 'capacity for improvisation' are the secrets of a communal creativity that 'brings forth something new from something old'. This is what happens when an old sewing machine is combined with parts of other machines or when 'frescos' are painted on the walls, not to cover up the cracks, but along the lines of the cracks, 'where the plaster is mouldy, is falling off and begins to reveal a popular memory, without preparing the surface for painting, without sketching out the design before, directly on the wall, integrating rhythms provided by the spatial elements of the neighbourhood'. The same is done in preparing slide–sound shows that capture the visual and audio vitality of the neighbourhood, like some picture postcard, but as a means of giving existence and shape to the neighbourhood life.

The graffiti and murals, the decorations on the buses, the store fronts, the jokes, even the store windows are good examples of the popular aesthetic creativity of the city. The graffiti – the *mestizaje* of popular iconography and the political imagination of university students (Silva, 1985) – are perhaps the best symptom of the changes in urban popular culture. In graffiti, traditional political slogans escape the formal confines of the written text and the simplistic forms of the pamphlet, recovering the expressiveness and polysemy of the image. Popular 'paintings' escape the clandestinity of the public toilets and extend their obscene blasphemy over the walls of the city. Political slogans open up a space for poetry, and popular poetry is charged with the power of political protest. Different forms of rebellion come together and merge, 'tattooing their protests', in the words of Armando Silva, on the skin of the city.

Although less directly political than graffiti, a similar re-elaboration and assembly takes place in music, a major example of popular urban culture. It occurs from one end of the spectrum of musical tastes to the other, from the *chicha* or Peruvian *cumbia* to the *rock nacional* of Argentina.[23] Musical appropriation and re-elaboration is linked with or responds to movements forming new social identities: the migrant from the Andes in the capital or the youth looking for their own forms of expression. The new music does not forsake an old style but mixes and deforms it with a profound sense of the 'authentic'. Not surprisingly, this music is greeted with disgust by those of the left and the right who cultivate high and low authenticities. The mixture of rock and tango, *cumbia* and *huayno*, electric guitar and *quena* is more than any healthy ear can stand. What, however, could be more indicative of the social and cultural transformations occurring in the city than the fusion of Andean and black music with which the popular masses of Lima today recognize themselves?

In response to a complaint from the Indians that in the city they could not find the sugar cane with which to make their traditional music, José María Arguedes challenged their imagination, suggesting that they use plastic tubing, because

> it is no longer necessary that you go to look for flowers in the mountains for each festival or make your own musical instruments. You can find everything in the market. The Indian dances that are characteristic of the valley are now danced to the music of modern orchestras and professional musicians who compose new melodies for these dances. Folklore has become popular culture. (Arguedas, 1977: 124)

Communication from the perspective of culture

For many years in Latin America, the cultural reality of these countries was considered less important than the construction of theoretical certainties. And so we continued on, convinced that the theories had to tell us what communication is – sociological, semiotic or informational theories – for only from that perspective would it be possible to mark off the limits of the field and determine the specificity of its objects. But something in the realities of Latin America moved with such a strong jolt that it produced a collapse of the fragile structures, erasing the boundary lines that had delimited the geography of the field and that had given us a kind of psychological security. When the outlines of the 'proper object of study of the field' fell apart, we found ourselves standing face to face with the stormy confusion of the realities. But now we were not alone for along the way other people had begun to investigate, work and produce without calling it 'communication'. These were people from the arts and from politics, architecture and anthropology. We had to lose sight of the 'proper object' in order to find the way to the movement of the social in communication, to communication in process.

mation model was even more impoverished and left out too many things, and not just questions of meaning, but also the central issue of power. Untouched by information theory were the issues of information as a process of collective behaviour and the conflict of interests struggling to inform, produce, accumulate and deliver information. The consequence of passing over these issues was the failure to give attention to the problems of disinformation and control. By excluding from its analysis the social conditions of the production of meaning, the information model eliminates the study of the struggle for hegemony, that is, the struggle to define the discourses that 'articulate' the cultural meanings of a society.

The information model ended up excluding all of these central questions not as an explicit proposal but because of its assumptions. And it is at the level of these presuppositions that we find the complicity between the semiotic and information models. Both assumed that the two poles of the circuit of communication – sender and receiver – are on the same level and that the message circulates between equals. This conception of communication implies not only a presupposition of the idealist tradition, which has already been questioned by Lacan posing the question of the code as a space of domination disguised as an 'encounter', but also the presumptions that the greatest communication occurs with the largest amount of information and that there is a univocal discourse used by sender and receiver.[25] The model excludes any communication that cannot be reduced or compared to the transmission and measurement of information flow. Ignored is anything that does not fit into a schema of sender, message, receiver – for example, a dance or a religious ritual – and anything that introduces an asymmetry between the codes of the sender and the receiver, thus destroying the linearity on which the model is based.

Furthermore, this version of the hegemonic paradigm is based on a fragmentation of communication that is sought as a guarantee of scientific rigour and sure criterion of truth. The fragmentation compares or reduces everything to the transmission of information. This makes it methodologically correct to 'separate' the analysis of the message – content analysis, forms of expression, textual structure, operations of discourse – from the analysis of reception, and reception is conceived of simply as the study of effects or, with greater sophistication, the analysis of reactions. In either case, fragmentation is a form of control that reduces the range of questions asked, limiting what is considered worthy of study and valid approaches to analysis of problems.

But, the real theoretical confines of this rationalism based on information science reside in its notion of knowledge: 'accumulation of information plus classification'. This looks upon social contradictions as meaningless because they are considered not expressions of conflict but simply as the residues of ambiguity. We find ourselves facing a rationality that dissolves and eliminates the political dimension. For politics are precisely a coming to grips with the opaqueness of social reality as a conflictive and changing process, an attempt to increase the network of mediations, and a struggle for the construction of the meaning of social solidarity. Thus, if the first model concludes with an instrumental conception of the media, this second ends up in a technocratic dissolution of the political dimension.

> If social problems are transformed into technical ones, there is only one possible solution. Instead of a political decision between different possible social objectives, what occurs is a technical and scientific solution regarding the best means to achieve a pre-established end. A public debate is not necessary under these circumstances. You do not have to submit a technical question or a 'scientific' truth to a vote. The citizen is replaced by the expert. (Lechner, 1981: 311)

This is where the short circuit closes: the centrality of communication in society means, for rationalistic informatics, the dissolution of political reality.

Culture and politics: The constitutive mediations

It is not only the limits of the versions of the hegemonic model, however, that have made it necessary to look for a new paradigm. The events – the stubborn social process of Latin America – have, above all, forced us to change the 'object' of study in communication research. To perceive the growing pressure toward this shift, one has only to take a glance at the titles of seminars and congresses dealing with communication in Latin America over the last five years and observe the dominating presence of issues such as 'transnationalization', 'democratization', 'culture' and 'popular movements'. With the introduction of the transnational question, we are not dealing simply with the old problem of imperialism. It is a new phase in the development of capitalism in which communication plays a decisive role. What is now in play is not simply the imposition of an economic model, but a 'jump' to the internationalization of a *political model*. This change makes it necessary to abandon the old concept of the struggle against 'dependency', for 'the struggle for independence from a colonialist country in a direct confrontation with a geographically defined power is something very different from a struggle for identity within a transnational system that is diffuse with a complex form of global interrelations and interpenetrations' (García Canclini, 1984c). Because trans-

What neither ideology nor informationalism allows us to think

In Latin America, there have been two stages in the formation of the hegemonic paradigm of communication. The first stage came at the end of the 1960s when Lasswell's model from an epistemological background of pyschological behaviourism was poured into the theoretical mould of structuralist semiology, making possible its 'conversion', that is, its encounter with critical research. I call this stage 'ideologist' because its objective was centred on descriptive discovery and denunciation. It used epistemological matrices from a politically critical position to discover the strategies of the dominant ideology for penetrating communication, or, in its words, for permeating the message and producing specific effects. The omnipotence that the functionalist version attributed to the media was switched over to ideology, making ideology both the object and subject of research and the all-encompassing influence in the discourses of media analysis. This led to an ambiguous reduction of the scope of the field of communication, subsuming it within the study of ideology, but ending up defining its specificity by isolation. Both the mechanism of 'effects', in the psychological–behaviourist version, and the analysis of the message or text in the semiotic–structuralist version, eventually reduced the meaning of the processes of communication to something immanent to the process. But it was a meaning in a vacuum. When this vacuum was filled by 'ideology', we had a skeleton without any flesh – pure communicationism without any specific communication occurring. The best proof of this deficiency is that the political denunciation from the perspective of communication almost never went beyond accusations of 'exploitation by the system', 'manipulation', etc.

The amalgam of communicationism and denunciation produced a schizophrenia that turned into an instrumentalist conception of media, depriving the media of any cultural depth or institutional structure and making the media mere tools of ideological action. To make matters worse, once reduced to an instrumental role, a moral value was attributed to media according to the direction of their use. They were bad in the hands of reactionary oligarchies and good in the hands of the proletariat. This prevailing belief was carried to even further extremes in some militant circles where the media, because of their original sin of birth under capitalism, were seen as condemned forever to serve their masters. This apocalyptical vision was the only alternative to schizophrenia or, perhaps, it was simply its mirror image. In the end, the 'ideologization' made it impossible for the study of communication to be anything other than the study of the 'tracks of the dominator'. Of no interest were the communicative actions of the dominated and much less the conflict in communication. A 'theological' concept of power – because power was considered omnipotent and omnipresent – led to the belief that by studying the economic and ideological objectives of the mass media it would be possible to know the needs the media generated and how they controlled consumers. In the analysis of broadcasters–dominators and receivers–dominated there was no suggestion of seduction or resistance, only the passivity of consumption and the alienation detected as immanent within the message-text. And in the texts themselves there was no attempt to look for conflicts or contradictions, and, much less, signs of struggle.

In the mid-1970s another line of thought began to appear, with a discourse that might be summed up with the slogan, 'Enough ideology and denunciation! Let's get serious and be scientists'. We entered a second stage that might be called 'scientism'. Now the dominant paradigm was reformed on the basis of an information model, and a positivist revival prohibited calling anything a problem to be studied if it did not have a specific method. The crisis of Latin America after the military coups in the Southern Cone region and the confusion that followed provided a fertile chemical culture for the 'scientism' blackmail. The ensuing theoretical short-circuit can be described as follows: the processes of communication occupy an increasingly strategic place in our society because information has become a raw material input in production processes and not just an output in circulation. The study of these processes, however, is such a prisoner of scattered disciplinary and methodological approaches that it is impossible to determine with real objectivity what is happening. We are in urgent need, therefore, of a 'theory' to organize the field and define the objects of study. A theory of this nature is, in fact, right under our noses, but it is too far away from the ideological interests of critical researchers and goes undetected by the social critics. This theory lies in the field of engineering and is called 'information theory'. Defined as the 'transmission of information', communication finds in this theory a framework of precise concepts, clear methodological boundaries, and well-defined proposals for research operations – all strongly supported by the 'seriousness' of mathematics and the prestige of cybernetics. The information model was an aesthetically pleasing model that thereafter took possession of a field already fertilized by the functionalism surviving in the structuralist proposal and in certain forms of Marxism.[24]

If the semiotic model of analysis focusing on messages and codes lacked the concepts to embrace the field and establish boundaries without compromising amalgams, the boundaries set by the infor-

nationalization has a primordial incidence in the field of communication technologies such as satellites or computer networks, the question of nationality is located now, to a great extent, in issues of the field of communication. And because these communication issues involving the meaning of nation are so much a part of the processes not only of class conflicts but of ethnic and regional conflicts, the nation has become the focus of increasingly intense civil conflict. These conflicts often do not enter into the framework of traditional political formulas as valid social issues because the confrontations are giving birth to a series of new social actors whose existence questions the political cultures of both the right and the left.

To what sort of conflicts are we referring? Some of these conflicts are obvious, like the high social costs borne by the increasing impoverishment of the national economies and the increasing inequality of international economic relations. But we refer especially to other conflicts that new situations are producing or bringing to light, conflicts situated at the intersection of crisis between a new political culture and the new meaning of political cultures. We refer to a new perception of the problem of identity – as ambiguous and dangerous as the term seems to be today – of these Latin American countries. For identities are in confrontation not only with the blatant homogenization which comes from transnational expansion but with another more hidden process of homogenization of national identity that deforms and deactivates the complex mixtures and cultural pluralism that constitutes these countries.

The new perception of identity, in conflict with both transnationalization and the blackmail that national forces often exercise, is part of a movement for radical change in the political sphere that has brought the Latin American left not just to a tactical but a strategic concept of democratization, that is, democratization as the central process for social transformation.[26] Proposals today are very different from those behind the left-wing theories and actions up to the mid-1970s – organizations built exclusively around the proletariat, politics of total transformation of society, the denunciation of bourgeois parliaments as a trap (Casullo, 1983; de Ipola and Portantiero, 1984). In the early 1980s there has emerged another project closely tied to the 'rediscovery of the popular' and its new meaning, a reevaluation of the articulation and mediations of civil society, and attention to the social meaning of conflicts beyond their purely political formulation and synthesis. Most important, this project recognizes the political importance of collective experiences outside the traditional parties. What has changed is the conceptualization of 'political subjects'. The concept of social classes as self-sufficient entities is replaced by a vision of social conflict as a manifestation of the attributes of the actors. Otherwise, the 'political process in the strictest sense would not be productive and it would not generate anything substantially new' (Landi, 1983: 14). The relationships of power as they constitute each social formation, however, are not merely expressions of attributes but products of specific conflicts and battles in the economic and symbolic field. It is here that are articulated the interpellations that call into existence the new subjects and collective identities. 'How can you conceive of political practices,' Lechner asks, 'outside the ties of collective identity and belonging that we develop daily?' (1984: 26). Once the rationalist conception of social actors as self-subsisting entities is clearly revealed, we also become aware of the fatalistic vision of history that has veiled this instrumentalist conception of politics. Thus, the basic issue is that

> there does not exist 'an objective solution' to the contradictions of capitalistic society. Therefore we have to work out possible alternatives and select the most desirable option. Development is not guided by objective solutions. There is no other way than to continually spell out and decide upon the goals of society. This is what politics is all about. (Lechner, 1984: 19)

Out of the convergence of this new interpretation of transnationalization and the new conception of politics, there has emerged in Latin America a profoundly new evaluation of *culture*. Some, of course, suspect that this new cultural emphasis is an evasive tactic, covering up an inability to respond to the crisis of political institutions and parties. This suspicion is probably justified in those cases where 'one engages in cultural activities when it is not possible to engage in politics'. Something radically different occurs, however, when culture points to new dimensions of social conflict, the formation of new sociopolitical actors around regional, religious, sexual and generational identities, and new forms of resistance and rebellion. The reconceptualization of culture brings us face to face with that alternative cultural experience, popular culture, with its multiple forms of existence and its activity not just in memories of the past but in its conflictive and creative presence in the present.To conceive of communication from the perspective of its role in the formation of cultures implies that one cease to think of communication only in terms of particular disciplines and as a function of media. It marks the end of the security that came from reducing problems of communication to problems of technology.

We come from a field of communication research that for many years paid the price of theoretical legitimacy by being a subsidiary of

other disciplines such as psychology or cybernetics. Today the danger is that communications will pay an even higher price to free itself from its subsidiary position: seeing all social and cultural change as simply the result of technological innovation. This would drain communications of all historical specificity and replace it with a radically instrumental concept. The possibility of avoiding this virtual destruction of the field of communications depends on our ability to understand that the 'reconversions of the operations of the technological–institutional apparatus depend very largely on the parallel reconversion of the social uses of culture. A conflict until now thought to pertain to the superstructure will now be settled at the level of production institutions' (Martín Serrano, 1987: 7). Instead of a few simple 'communication policies' we need a new political culture capable of addressing what is at stake today in cultural policies. We understand cultural policies not as a question of administration of institutions and the distribution of cultural goods but rather as the 'principle of the organization of a culture, something internal to the constitution of the political sphere, the space for the production of the meaning of social order, and the principles of mutual recognition in society' (Landi, 1984: 19).

The history of the relationship between politics and culture is full of pitfalls attributable to both sides of the relationship. The problem may be a spiritualist conception of culture which sees politics as contamination or the intrusion of material interests or it may be a mechanical conception of politics that perceives culture as simply the reflection in the superstructure of what is really happening elsewhere. In both cases, the tendency is to make the relationship an instrumental one.

> The truth is that politics tends to suppress culture as a field of interest as soon as it accepts an instrumental vision of power. That is, political power is defined in terms of technical equipment, institutions, arms, control over the means and resources and organizations. Contributing to this vision of power is the inability of polities to take culture seriously, except when it finds culture in quite institutionalized forms. (Brunner, 1985a: 9; see also Brunner, 1985b; Brunner and Catalán, 1985)

From here, it is a logical step to convert cultural policy into a bureaucratic operation run by technocrats. In the last few years in Latin America, however, there is some indication of a new understanding of the relationship between politics and culture. According to José Joaquín Brunner, one of the Latin Americans who has contributed significantly to a new vision of cultural policies, there are three indicators of this new understanding. The first has

occurred especially in countries under authoritarian regimes where the modes of resistance and opposition arise mainly from groups quite different from those studied in traditional analysis, such as small Christian communities, artistic movements, and human rights groups. A second source of the new awareness of the role of culture is the perception that the most repressive authoritarianism is not simply brute force and a response to the interests of capitalism. It is also the attempt to change the meaning of everyday social life by modifying the cultural imagination and symbols. A third source is the awareness that, thanks to mass education and the mass media, culture is now at the centre of political and social debate.

This debate has opened up discussion of a series of new problems which redefine the meaning of both culture and politics. The problems of communication have become part of the debate not simply from a quantitative and topical view – the enormous economic strength of the communication industries – but in a qualitative sense, namely, that the processes of redefining a culture are the key to comprehending the communicative nature of culture. The importance of communication lies in its capacity to produce meanings and not simply to facilitate a circulation of information. Thus, the receiver in the communication process is not simply a decoder of what the sender has put into the message but is also a producer of meaning.

The awareness of the profound challenge of the culture industries arises from the intersection of these two lines of renovation – that which locates the cultural question at the heart of political processes and that which locates communication in culture. For if the return to authoritarian direction is not the answer, much less 'can the expansion of plurality of voices in a process of democratization be understood as simply the widening the clientele of cultural consumption' (Landi, 1985a: 11). What no longer has any meaning is to continue designating as cultural policies those activities which separate Culture, with a capital C, from what happens in the mass cultural industries and the mass media. Mass culture does not demand a separate cultural policy, for what happens culturally to the masses is fundamental for democracy if democracy is going to have something to do with the people.

A nocturnal map to explore a new field

> We know that struggles through cultural mediations do not yield immediate or spectacular results. But, it is the only way to ensure we do not go from the sham of hegemony to the sham of democracy; to block the reappearance of a defeated domination

installed by hegemony in the complicity of our thoughts and relationships.

N. García Canclini

Once the frontiers of our discipline were moved and we had lost the security set up by our theoretical inertia, we have had no alternative but to follow the advice of Raymond Williams and remake the map of our 'basic concepts'. I do not think that this is possible, however, without changing the point from which we begin to ask questions. This is the meaning of the recent tendency to formulate questions which transcend the 'daytime' logic[27] and demand a reorganization of the analytic terrain that moves the marginal issues to the centre of our concerns. This does not imply a 'carnivalization' of theory,[28] but the acceptance that these are not times for synthesis and that reason is barely able to understand the unexplored areas of reality that are so very near. As Laclau observes, 'Today we realize that social history is deeper than our instruments allow us to conceive and beyond what our political strategies can direct' (1981: 59). Not lacking, of course, are the tendencies toward an apocalyptic view of events and a return to the catechism. A silent but even more important tendency is moving in another direction: exploring in tentative almost groping fashion without a guiding map or with only an obscure, night-time map. This is a map which enables us to study domination, production and labour from the other side of the picture, the side of the cracks in domination, the consumption dimensions of economy and the pleasures of life. It is not a map for escape but, rather, to help us recognize our situation from the perspective of mediations and the subjects of action.

Daily life, consumption and an interpretative reading

'A market perspective permeates not only society but also the explanations of society' (Durham, 1980: 203). This explains why critical theories have privileged the image of the labourer–producer of merchandise not only at the moment of understanding the context of production but at the moment of trying to awaken a consciousness of the exploitation in this situation. This tendency of critical theories is not unlike the tendency of most organizations of the left truly concerned with the life of the popular classes: a preoccupation with actions of vindication of rights and movements which unite people for struggle. Everything else – the practices which make up the rhythm of daily life, the ways the popular classes exist and find meaning in life – has tended to be considered an obstacle to conscientization and mobilization for political action.

> Popular conceptions of family are considered conservative; popular traditions are looked upon as fragmentary remains of a rural and pre-capitalist cultural past; the tastes of the popular classes are molded by the corrupting influence of the mass media; their leisure pastimes are nothing more than escapism; their religiosity, a factor of alienation; and their life plans, no more than frustrated attempts at upward social mobility. (Cantor Magnani, 1984: 19)

Forms of daily existence not directly linked with structures of economic production are looked upon as depoliticized, irrelevant and insignificant. Nevertheless, the accounts which begin to describe what happens within the life of popular neighbourhoods, accounts which do not attempt to evaluate but simply to understand the functioning of popular social relations, open up to us another reality. Here – as 'scandalous' as it may seem – the attachment of the working classes to family does not appear to be necessarily or, at least, only linked to conservation of the past. Rather, as E. Durham lucidly explained, 'this is an attempt to overcome a generalized state of family disorganization associated with a much more brutal and direct exploitation of the forms of labour' (Durham, 1980: 202).

In the popular perception, the space of domestic activities is not limited to the tasks of the reproduction of the labour force. On the contrary, confronted with the monotonous and uncreative workplace, the family allows a minimum of freedom and initiative. In the same way, not all consumption is merely the acceptance of the values of other classes. In the popular sectors consumption expresses just aspirations to a more human and respectful life. Not all search for social betterment is a crass social climbing. It is also a form of protest and an expression of elemental rights. For this reason, it is important to develop a concept of consumption that moves beyond culturalist and reproductionist interpretations and offers a framework for research on communication and culture from the popular perspective. Such a framework would permit a comprehension of the different modes of cultural appropriation and the different social uses of communication.

In his various publications in recent years, García Canclini has brought together elements for such a new theoretical perspective (1984a, 1985, 1988). These approaches are close to the concepts of Bourdieu, but broaden them to allow a consideration of *praxis* and the forms of cultural production and transformation within the popular classes of Latin America. We must begin by identifying what we are looking for and by carefully pointing out our differences from functionalist theories of media reception. 'It is not just a matter of measuring the distance between the enunciation of messages and their effects, but rather of constructing an integral analysis of consumption, understood as the overall effect of the social processes of appropriation of products' (García Canclini,

1988: 493). Nor are we referring here to the much deplored 'compulsive consumption' or to the repertoire of attitudes and tastes collected and classified by commercial surveys. Even less do we want to move to the airy terrain of Baudrillard's simulation. Our reflection on consumption is located in daily practices in so far as these are an area of silent interiorization of social inequality (García Canclini, 1984b: 74). This is the area of each person's relationship to his or her body, use of time, habitat and awareness of the potentialities in his or her life. It is also an area of rejection of limits to what can be legitimately hoped for, an area for the expansion of desires, a realm where one can subvert the codes and express pleasures. Consumption is not just the reproduction of forces. It is a production of meanings and the site of a struggle that does not end with the possession of the object but extends to the uses, giving objects a social form in which are registered the demands and forms of action of different cultural competencies.

The proof of the new meaning of consumption is the political relevance of the 'new conflicts' centring on struggles against the forms of power which penetrate daily life and struggles over the appropriation of goods and services. The articulations between these two types of struggles become quite clear in the histories of the popular-urban culture which we have gathered.

Another theoretical stream which must be integrated into our analysis is the new conception of interpretative *reading* developed in Latin America, especially in the work of Beatriz Sarlo (1983b, 1985b, 1985c). Sarlo, carrying forward the analysis of H. Robert Jauss, proposes a study of the 'different possible social readings' understood as the 'activity by which meanings are organized in a unifying sense' (Sarlo, 1983a: 11). Thus, in an interpretative reading, as in consumption, there is not just reproduction but also production, a production which questions the centrality of the dominating text and the message understood as the source of truth which circulates in a process of communication. To bring the centrality of the text and messages into critical questioning implies that we assume as constitutive the asymmetry of demands and of competencies which meet and are *negotiated* in the text. The text is no longer the machine which unifies heterogeneity, no longer a finished product, but a comprehensive space crossed by different trajectories of meaning. This concept restores to reading the legitimacy of pleasure that applies not only to cultivated, erudite interpretative reading but to any and every reading – including popular readings with their pleasure of repetition and recognition (Sarlo, 1985a: 36). This concept of reading brings together both resistance and pleasure. The stubborn popular tastes that appear in a narrative are both the raw material for advertising and an activator of cultural abilities, where commercial logics and popular demand at times conflict and at times negotiate. What follows is a nocturnal map to explore this concept in the crossroads formed in Latin America by television and melodrama.

Television understood from the perspective of mediations

At a time when television is at the centre of technological transformations which emerge from informatics, satellites, optical fibre, etc., our proposal could appear to some as a bit anachronistic. We continue in this line, however, because, although the media in Latin America are experiencing many changes, the 'mediations'[29] through which the media operate socially and culturally are not undergoing significant modifications. Neither the thousands of VCRs invading the market each year nor the parabolic antennas that are sprouting from roofs everywhere nor the new cable networks are substantially affecting the model of production of television that we know. For most television viewers, not only in Latin America but in other parts of the world, changes in the supply, in spite of the propaganda regarding decentralization and pluralization, appear to be in the direction of making social stratification even more sharply defined, for the differentiated video products offered to the public are linked to buying capacities of individuals.[30] Producers and programmers of video technologies are mainly interested in marketing new products while the social application of technologies falls by the wayside (Richeri, 1985: 68). Paradoxically, the change that appears to affect television most deeply is along the lines of our interpretation: 'It is necessary to abandon *mediacentrism*, for the system of the media is losing its specificity and becoming an integral part of the economic, cultural and political system' (Richeri, 1985: 60).

In Latin America, however, the abdication of mediacentricism is less the result of an industrial reconversion of the media that puts the communication functions of the media in second place behind economic and industrial considerations and is more influenced by social movements making visible the mediations. Therefore, instead of starting our analysis from the logic of production and reception and studying their relationships with the logic of cultural imbrication and conflict, we propose to start with the mediations where the social materialization and the cultural expression of television are delimited and configured. As hypotheses to bring together and structure converging areas of theoretical interpretation, we propose to analyse three places of mediation, even though some do not take

television as the prime 'object': the daily life of the family, social temporality, and cultural competence.

The daily life of the family

If Latin American television still considers the family the 'basic audience unit', it is due to the fact that for the great majority family viewing is the prime context of recognition of sociocultural identity. It is not possible to understand the specific way television appeals to the family without analysing the daily life of the family as the social context of a fundamental appeal to the popular sectors. As we have noted earlier, this appeal is a scandal to the intellectuals who criticize the repressive aspects of family organization and for the political left which sees in the family nothing more than bourgeois ideological contamination. So far, critical analysis has been unable to understand the social mediation that the family constitutes. The family is an arena of social conflicts and tensions, but it is also 'one of the few places where individuals relate as persons and where they find some possibility of revealing their anxieties and frustrations' (Durham, 1980: 209).

A new conception of the family as one of the key areas of reading and of cultural codification of television is beginning to leave behind the trite moralistic conception of the relation of television and family – television as the corruptor of family traditions – and the philosophy which attributes to television nothing more than an entertainment function (see Fuenzalida, 1982, 1984b). The mediation the daily life of the family exerts on television is not, however, limited to reception. It is present in the discourse of television itself. Beginning with the family as the 'space of close relations', and 'proximity', television carries out two key actions: the simulation of contact and the rhetoric of direct communication.[31]

We would call 'simulation of contact' all those mechanisms through which television specifies its mode of communication organized around the 'phatic function' (Jacobson), that is, the maintenance of contact. This function of concentrating attention around interpersonal relations is important because of the dispersion of attention in the intimate daily life of the private home in contrast to the personal isolation and concentration of attention in the public atmosphere of the darkened cinema. Our emphasis here is not on the psychological dimensions of the experience but on the perspective of cultural anthropology, namely, the irruption of the world of fiction and the world of show business entertainment into the routine of daily life.[32] Given the contrast between these two worlds, intermediaries emerge in the formats of television to facilitate the transition from daily reality to the fictional world of the entertainment spectacle. Thus, television provides two basic models of intermediary: the personality who is somewhat distant from the fictional world of popular entertainment – the master of ceremonies, anchor person or host – and the colloquial tone of speaking which provides the right atmosphere. The anchor person is present in newscasts; the master of ceremonies is central in game shows, musicals, educational programming and even in the presentation of cultural events to emphasize their ritual solemnity. The function of this personality is not just to transmit information but rather to act as the intermediary who appeals to the family and becomes the spokesperson for the family. For this reason the tone is colloquial and there is a permanent simulation of dialogue which comes so close to being like the continual conversation in the family context.

For many years the 'predominance of the verbal' (in contrast to the visual) in Latin American television was criticized as a proof of its underdevelopment. It was simply radio with pictures added, they said. Today, as television in many Latin American countries is reaching a very high degree of technical and expressive development, this critique is no longer acceptable. We now begin to suspect that the predominance of the verbal is part of a need to overlay a visual logic with a logic of direct contact, something that television articulates on the basis of the immediate relationship and the predominance of the spoken word in a strongly oral culture.

The 'rhetoric of direct address', referred to above, includes all those mechanisms that organize the space of television around the axis of proximity and the magic of seeing, in opposition to the space of film art dominated by distance and the magic of the 'image'. The central communicative function of film is – quite intentionally – the poetic experience, even in low-budget films. Films are the archetypical transfiguration of reality. In spite of involvement in the plot of the film and the fascination of close-ups of personalities, the film spectator is kept at a distance. The subject matter, the actions and the faces in film are charged with a symbolic value. Speaking of the face of Greta Garbo, Barthes summarizes the magic and specific space of action of film. 'Her face was a sort of transformation of flesh into an absolute ideal which could never again be attained or lost again' (1972). In contrast to the space of film, so alluring precisely because of its distancing, the space of television is dominated by the magic of the intimacy of seeing, with a proximity constructed by means of a montage which is not so symbolic or expressive but functional and sustained on the basis of a real or simulated 'direct shot'. In television the experience of seeing which predominates is that produced by the sensation of immediacy which is one of the characteristics of daily life. This is especially true of

advertising which is, in many ways, the synthesis of the public show and daily life experience, in spite of the fact that advertising has that uneasy, aggressive presence which gives it the air of the invading transgressor. In television, gone are the mysterious and charming faces; the faces are close, friendly, with neither alluring nor awkward features. One gains a proximity to characters and events through a discourse that makes everything 'familiar' and transforms even the most strange or distant objects into something very 'close'. Even the most deeply rooted prejudices become impossible to confront because they are so much a part of us. It is a discourse which produces this familiarity even in the way that images are organized: for example, in the easy transparency of television imagery, the simplicity, clarity and economy of narrative elements.

In this immediacy and directness the stamp of hegemony is at work, precisely in the construction of an appeal that speaks to people out of the familiar conditions of daily life. This is not simply the subproduct of the poverty and artifices of ideology, but a space in which operate some of the most primordial human relations and life experiences, not made less central by the fact that they are so ambiguous.

Social temporality

In our society productive time, time valued by capital, is the time that marches on and is measured. The other time, the time of daily life, is a repetitive time that begins, ends and begins again. It is a time of fragments rather than measurable units (Pires do Río, 1984: 114ff). Is not the cultural matrix organized by television this type of time, the time of fragments and repetition? Does not television bring daily life into the marketplace by means of rituals and routines? The time by which television organizes its programming has a profit-generating commercial form and a systematic scheduling mixing many genres. Each programme, each televised text, traces its meaning back to the crossing of genres and times. A programme, as genre, belongs to a family of texts which are replicated and continually come back to their place within the hours of the day and the week. In so far as a programme is a moment of time 'occupied', each text goes back to the hourly sequence of what has preceded it and what comes after it or to what appears in the schedule on other days of the week at the same time.

From the perspective of television, leisure-time both hides and reveals the temporal rhythm work-time, the time of both fragmentation and the series. Foucault observes that power is articulated directly across time (1977). In television the movement of unification that pervades social diversity is one of the most evident

features. The 'time of the series' speaks the language of the system of production, a language of standardization. Underneath this language, other languages can be heard, the languages of popular story telling, songs, tales of adventure, repetitions 'that belong to an aesthetic sense where recognition is an important part of pleasure and where, in consequence, repetition is the norm of the value of symbolic goods' (Sarlo, 1983a: 5). Repetition, according to Benjamin, is what makes technical reproduction possible. It is the 'sensorium' or cultural experience of the new public born with the masses.

It is possible to talk of an 'aesthetic of repetition' that works through the variations of what is identical or what is similar in that which is different, that 'conjugates the discontinuity of the time of the story and the continuity of the time that is narrated'.[33] This brings us back to the important question of 'sensation of duration' that, beginning with the serial in the nineteenth century, allowed the reader of the popular classes to move between the story and the novel 'without getting lost'. Today, the series and the genres are the mediations between the time of capital and the time of daily experience.

Cultural competence

There are few misunderstandings as persistent and as complex as that which sustains and penetrates the relationship between television and culture. On the one hand, critics look at television in terms of the paradigm of art – the only paradigm that, in their view, deserves to be called culture – and, day after day, with the same worn out arguments, they criticize the 'cultural decadence' television represents and conveys. Those critics who dare to move beyond this denunciation of television to a more positive action propose a cultural elevation of television that usually results in unbearably didactic programmes. On the other hand, the folklorists, who attempt to situate 'true culture' in the people – the real people who conserve the truth without contamination and *mestizajes*, or, in other words, without history – propose to make television the 'patrimony' of native dances, music and costumes that preserve national icons. Still another set of approaches is represented in the opposition played out between a private sector using populist arguments to defend the 'demands' of the people manifest in audience ratings and a paternalistic public sector talking in the name of the true cultural 'needs' of the people.

The worst aspect of the confusion is that it hides a culturalism intrinsic to all the visions and proposals, situating them outside the social meaning of cultural differences and covering up the interests

that encumber their idea of culture. In no other place is the contradictory meaning of mass so explicitly challenging as it is in television. Here we find the perhaps unavoidable confluence of the deactivation of social differences – with the accompanying processes of ideological synthesis – and the presence in mass culture of the cultural matrix and a sensorium which is so nauseating to the elites. An ignorance of this tension, seeing in it only commercial interests and the efficiency of ideological mechanisms, has justified and continues to justify that, at the hour of developing cultural policies, neither governments nor the opposition take television into account. Television is not considered a question of culture but only a matter of 'communication'. To prove this they ask what works of lasting value television has produced. Perhaps the BBC versions of classics or the pseudohistorical melodramas of the US networks? Once again, as Benjamin observes in relation to photography, the mandarins of Culture continue to debate if television can be considered culture while, like it or not, the very notion of culture and its social meaning are changing as a result of *what* is reproduced in television and *how* it is reproduced.

An interesting path out of this confusion is revealed in the unusual and pioneering work of P. Fabri a few years back. He brought to the debate some keys to understanding the cultural specificity of mass culture which, without ignoring the characterization of Abraham Moles,[34] go beyond systemic functionalism. The basic position of Fabri is that

> While in high culture the work of art is in dialectic contradiction with its genre, in mass culture the aesthetic norms are a question of the closest approximation to its genre. One can affirm that the genre is the basic unit of the content of mass communication (at least at the level of fiction, though not exclusively) and that the public market demands placed on producers are precisely in terms of genre. It is through the perception of the genre that researchers gain access to the latent meaning of the mass media text. (Fabri, 1973: 77; see also p. 65)

A topography of culture elaborated by Yuri M. Lotman (1972a) is at the root of this proposal. Here we find the differentiation between a 'grammatical' culture – one that refers to the intellect and is the result of explicit rules of grammar of production – and a textual culture – where the sensation and the pleasure of the text always refer to another text and not to a specific set of rules of grammar. This is what occurs with folklore, popular culture and mass culture. Just as most people go to the movies to see films of cops and robbers, science fiction or a western, so also the cultural dynamics of television operate in terms of genres. Through its genres television stimulates cultural competence and the recognition of cultural differences. The genres, articulating the narration of the serials, constitute a fundamental mediation between the logic of the system of production and that of consumption, between the logic of the format and how that format is read and used.

The logics of production and use

Entering into the logic of television, that is, into the structure and dynamics of television production, does not mean falling into empty generalities as long as we stick to one basic criterion: what is important is that which structures the specific conditions of production and the ways the productive system leaves marks on the formats. Thus, the focus is on the ways in which the television industry, as a productive structure, semanticizes and recycles the demands coming from the various 'publics' and the uses of television by these publics. This approach reveals a series of instances and concrete mechanisms for our study. Industrial competence, for example, is the capacity for production expressed in the degree of technological development, capacity for financial risk for innovation and the degree of professional diversification–specialization of an enterprise. This competence should not be confused with communicative competence achieved through wider recognition and popularity of television among the publics at which it is aimed. Such competence is not based only on industrial competence nor is it measured simply in terms of audience ratings.

Another process important for our study are the levels and phases of decision in the production of genres. Who decides what is to be produced, when it is to be produced and with what production criteria? Professional ideologies are revealed in the fields of tension between the demands of the various components of the production system, the rules of a genre, the public demands and the initiative and creativity – itself a form of resistance – of different people in the productive process: directors, actors, scenery designers, camera operators, etc. There are the production routines, that is, the required repetitions of work habits in the use of time and budget; forms of acting and the ploys by which 'styles' are incorporated into practices of work. Finally, there are the 'strategies of commercialization' that are not added on 'later' to sell the product but are placed in the structure of the format to accommodate advertising, the position in the schedule, and the different ingredients introduced in a production that will be seen only 'within' a country or used for export.

We begin our analysis of the logics (plural) of uses by differentiating our proposal from those analyses called 'uses and gratifications'. We are attempting to take the study of reception out of communi-

cation defined as circulation of messages, effects and reactions, and put it into the field of culture: the conflicts which articulate culture, the *mestizajes* which weave it together and the anachronisms which sustain it. We want to examine the workings of hegemony and resistance and, therefore, the persistent functions of appropriation and repetition by the subaltern classes.There have been attempts to rethink the space of reception from the perspective of communication, relocating it, as Miguel de Moragas has lucidly proposed, within the area of the challenges to democratization of communication that technological transformations pose. De Moragas suggests a typology based on a 'field of reception' that allows us to conceive of the different types of communication competence in relation to 'the activation of or blocking of social participation, a key concept for democratic media policy, implying democratization of control as well as use' (De Moragas, 1985, vol. IV: 20).

The variety of logics of use are not limited only to social differences of class, but become articulated in other aspects of class. The 'habitus of classes' pervades the use of television and the modes of perceiving, becoming visible – ethnographically observable – in the daily organization of time and space. Where do people watch television? Is it a public or private space? Is it the home, the neighbourhood bar, or the local club? What place does the set occupy in the home? Is it a central or a marginal space? Does it rule over the living room which is the crossroads of social life in the family or does it take refuge in a bedroom or behind a cupboard from which it is removed only to watch special programmes. The geography of television viewing allows us to establish a symbolic topography of class usages. With the same methods it is possible to outline a social typology of the amount of time television occupies in the home, from a context where the set is turned on all day to one in which the set is on only to watch the news or a series produced by the BBC. There are uses that are not only a question of the amount of time spent watching television but the type and social significance of the time[35] and of the demands that different social classes place on time spent watching television. Some classes only demand information because their entertainment and cultural demands are met elsewhere – sports, the theatre, reading books, and in concerts – while other classes seek all this from television.

The different uses of television are not only a question of social class. Also important is the cultural competence of the groups that constitute the classes: the different levels of formal education, ethnic background, regional cultures, the local dialects with their peculiar social categorizations, and the urban *mestizajes* formed on the basis of the combination of all of these. Competence lives on in

'memories' – in their narrative, gestures and sounds – and in the pool of cultural images that nourish the growth of different social protagonist identities such as women or youth. A deeper understanding of these different modes of watching television means 'watching with the people'. This allows us to explain and confront the diverse forms of viewing and the competencies that those forms of viewing activate. It also allows us to examine the 'stories', the life stories, that people recount and that they recognize in their viewing of television.

The genres are the mediation between the logic of the productive system and the logics of use. The rules of the genres establish the basic pattern of the formats and anchor the cultural recognition of the different groups. Admittedly, the notion of genre we are using here has little to do with the literary notion of genre as 'a property of the text' or with funtionalism's reduction of the genre to a taxonomy.[36] Our use of the term genre is not something that happens *to* a text but something that happens *through* and *because of* a text, for it is less a question of the structure and combinations than of competence. Let us accept, therefore, the proposal of a group of Italian researchers who consider the genre first and foremost a 'strategy of communicability'. The genre becomes visible as the characteristic forms of this communicability and therefore can be analysed as a text (Wolf et al., 1980–1: (2) 147–90, (3) 11–119). The consideration of genres as purely literary and not as a cultural phenomenon, reducing them to a classification scheme or a set of recipes for production, has kept us from understanding their real function in the social process and their methodological significance. This methological role is of key importance in the analysis of texts of the mass media and especially television.

The study of genres as strategies of interaction or as ways in which senders and receivers organize and make their communicative abilities recognizable is impossible without reconceptualizing the meaning of communication. The function of the genres makes it obvious that the narrative, textual competence is not only a condition of the sender but also of the receiver. Any television viewer knows, when the text/story has been interrupted, the many ways that the story can be finished, and is capable of summarizing the work or of comparing and classifying it with other stories. As speakers of the 'language' of genres, the television viewer, like the natives of a culture with no written language, are unaware of the systematic rules of grammar, but are quite capable of speaking the language. This is a new way of looking at television texts. If seen as moments of *negotiation*, genres cannot be approached in terms of semantics or syntax. They require the construction of a communi-

cative pragmatics that can capture the operation of their recognition by a cultural community. The texts of a genre are a stock of meanings constituting an organization that is more of a complex of interrelations than a set of distinct molecules. Consequently a genre cannot be analysed by following a list of representative categories, but by searching for the architecture which links the different semantic contents of the diverse significant topics. A genre functions by constituting a 'world' in which no element has a fixed value and meaning. Even more so in the case of television where each genre is defined as much by its internal architecture as by its place in the programming, that is, in the organization of the time slots and the flow of the scheduling. From this is derived a further imperative in the study of genres: the necessity of being aware of how differently the system of genres is constructed in each country. For in each country the system of genres responds to the cultural configuration, to a set of juridical demands placed on television, to the level of development of the national television industry, and to different modes of articulation to the transnational system.

Some indicators of Latin American identity recognizable in the melodrama

> Seeing how we live in the midst of a melodrama – now that the melodrama is our daily bread – I have asked myself many times if our fear of the melodrama (as a symptom of bad taste) is not due to a deformation resulting from our having read too many turn-of-the-century French psychological novels. But, many of the writers we most admire were not afraid of the melodrama. Neither Sábato nor Onetti feared the melodrama. And when Borges himself approached the world of the gaucho, he willingly entered the world of Juan Moriera and the ill-bred tango.
>
> Alejo Carpentier

> A French melodrama is not the same as a Soviet or Spanish melodrama. There is, however, a unity in the Latin American melodrama from the Rio Grande to the Patagonia. The gestures, the blaming of the other, the drunken singing of the Mexican *rancheras* or Argentine tangos, in these the region is wholly identified.
>
> Hernando Salcedo

Two expressive quotes which introduce us to the genre in which all Latin Americans of a popular background – and even the elites when they are drunk – can recognize themselves. No other genre, not horror (Latin America certainly does not lack material for the horrific!) nor adventure (there are plenty of impenetrable forests and rampaging rivers!) has managed to take shape in the region as

the melodrama has. It is as if the melodrama reflected the mode of expression most open to the life style and feelings of the people. More than the endless critique and ideological analysis, more than fashion and intellectual revivals, the melodrama continues to be a fertile ground for studying the unmatched rhythms of historical development and *mestizajes* of which we are made. Like the public marketplaces, the melodrama mixes a little bit of everything, social structures and the structures of feeling. The melodrama is much of what we are – fatalists, inclined to *machismo*, superstitious – and what we dream of becoming – stealing the identities of others, nostalgia, righteous anger. In the form of a tango, a soap opera, a Mexican film or a cheap crime story, the melodrama taps into and stirs up a deep vein of collective cultural imagination. And there is no access to historical memory or projection of dreams into the future which does not pass through this cultural imagination.[37] This is where the matrix of cultural images feeding the popular recognition of itself in mass culture becomes most visible.

Of the two possible levels of meaning that are articulated in the notion of *recognition*, the dominant contemporary rationalism can make sense out of only one: the negative significance. For an epistemology operating at the level of cognition, re-cognition is nothing more than redundancy, useless effort. And if this dichotomous interpretation is projected onto the question of ideology, then the result is even more radical: the negative becomes alienation. Here, re-cognition is tantamount to being unaware and ignorant. There is another matrix, however, which gives re-cognition a very different meaning, one in which re-cognition means 'to appeal to', to interpellate. Here we are dealing with subjects of action and their specific manner of constituting themselves. These subjects of action are not just individuals but collectivities, social and political actors. All these protagonists constitute themselves and reconstitute themselves within the symbolic web of interpellations and recognitions. Every subject makes a subject of another and at the same time is a subject for another. This is the living dimension of society, running through and sustaining the institutions, the dimension of the 'social contract'.

We can now return to the melodrama and to what is at play there, the drama of recognition:[38] son by father, mother by son. What moves the plot along is always the unawareness of identities, the struggle against betwitching spells and false appearances, trying to cut through all that hides and disguises. In short, it is a struggle to make oneself recognized. Is perhaps the secret thread between the melodrama and the history of Latin America this constant search for recognition? In any case, the melodrama's ignorance of the

social contract speaks clearly of the weight that the other 'primordial society' of relatives, neighbourhoods and friendships holds for those who recognize themselves in the melodrama. Would it be inappropriate to ask to what extent the success of the melodrama in Latin America is a commentary on the failure of those political institutions that have developed with a unawareness of this 'other society' and are incapable of acknowledging its cultural density?

An understanding of this question brings us back to the realm of the social movements we referred to earlier as 'neighbourhood' movements, and the role of the daily life of the family in popular culture. These are cultures in which the rhythm of time of the family 'gives rise to the idea of social, a man who is first and foremost a member of a kin group . . . So family time joins up with community time' (Zonabend, 1984: 202). 'Family' time mediates between and makes possible communication between 'historical' time – the time of the nation and the world, the larger events that affect the community – and the time of an individual life – the time from birth to death, based on rites of passage from one age to another. Hoggart observed, referring not to backward peasants but to the poor working class sectors of the city, that events are not perceived except when they affect the life of the family group (1972). A war is perceived as 'the time when uncle died', the capital is 'where my sister-in-law lives'. As a result of the continuing massive waves of immigrants, the cultural uprooting and the chronic economic instability, the popular neighbourhoods of the big cities are a type of extended family. For the popular world, the family and the neighbourhood are, in spite of their contradictions and conflicts, the truest forms of sociability.

When this life experience in the context of family and neighbourhood is juxtaposed with a capitalism that transforms the workplace and leisure time and commercializes not only public and private time but also the most primary, intimate relationships, it might appear that that more primordial society has been abolished. In fact, capitalism has merely made it an *anachronism*. It is, however, a precious anachronism for it is this life of familial relations that, in the last analysis, gives meaning to the melodrama in Latin America – from the lasting impact of the romantic ballad to development of the *telenovela*. It is this anachronism that mediates between the time of the individual life – considered to be of no social significance, economically worthless, and a political unknown, but nevertheless culturally alive – and the time of the narrative which affirms this life and makes it possible for the popular classes to recognize themselves in this anachronism. This anachronistic perception of life, transforming into melodrama everything that it encounters, eventually gets revenge – in its own secret way – against the abstractions imposed on them by the commercialization of their lives, their political exclusion and their cultural dispossession.

Where does all this leave alienation, ideology and the schemes of the businessmen. They are still there, part of the web of recognitions and non-recognitions. They are at work not as some powerful outside force and much less as the 'true' protagonists of a drama in which the poor would be nothing more than a chorus echoing the main action. The chorus rebelled long ago.[39] The signs of rebellion are found in the disquieting pleasure the poor continue to find in the melodrama. Michele Mattelart asks herself, 'What mass masochism, what suicidal class behavior can explain this fascination?' She replies with another question: 'Is the power of the culture industry not also to be found outside the subjects with which it deals, the anecdotes it transmits, which are but epiphenomena of its real message?' (M. Mattelart, 1982: 142). We are beginning to suspect that this is the case. What gives the culture industry force and the stories meaning is not simply ideology but culture and the profound dynamics of memory and cultural imagination.

Just as in the heyday of the serial novel, so today the *telenovela* – a new and more Latin American version of magical realism – is the cultural product that Latin America has managed to export to Europe and North America. The *telenovela* is much closer to the 'narrative', in the sense given by Benjamin, than to the novel or book, and closer to the 'dialogue' literature, as understood by Bakhtin, than to the monologue. Both of these themes need to be explored further.

From the tradition of oral narrative, the televised melodrama conserves a strong tie with the culture of stories and legends,[40] the literature of the *cordel* in Brazil and the stories sung in the *corridos* and *vallenatos*.[41] It conserves characteristics of a story told to someone, implying the presence of a narrator who, day after day, establishes a dramatic continuity. It also conserves the story's lack of boundaries and openness to time – you know when it will begin but not when it will end – and its openness to what is happening around it as well as the conditions under which it is produced. In a Peruvian *telenovela*, for example, a taxi strike that prevented some scenes from being filmed was incorporated into the plot. This is a paradoxical way of working for a form that is produced following the strictest rules of the industry and with the most advanced technology. It is a response, however, to a logic quite the inverse to that which controls its production: the quality of the communication it achieves has little to do with the quantity of information it provides.

A second clue to how the melodrama works can be found in the concept of literature of dialogue. According to a Brazilian analysis that goes more deeply into the proposal of Bakhtin, it is a carnivalesque genre where 'the author, reader and characters constantly change places' (Da Matta, 1985: 96). It is an exchange, a confusion between story and real life, between what the actor does and what happens to the spectator. It is a literary experience open to the reactions, desires and motivations of the public. It does not, however, bring real life events to the story. 'It is not in the representation of the specific events and details that the sense of reality is created in fiction, but in a certain generality that looks in both directions and gives consistency to the specific events of reality as well as to the world of fiction' (Cantor Magnani, 1984: 175).

Within its openness and confusion lies a commercial logic; likewise, the strategies of ideology it contains are irrefutable. But, to reduce this crossroads of different logics to a question of marketing and to deny the existence of other cultural experiences of matrices is methodologically incorrect and politically flawed. Without doubt, another political culture is necessary in order to accept that the melodrama is, at the same time, a form of recovery of popular memory through the cultural images produced by the culture industry and a metaphor indicating the different presence of the people in the masses.

The exploration of how a people is emerging in mass culture is the subject of the final sections of this book, but we must again call attention to the fact that this is a 'nocturnal map'. This cannot be more than an indication of the new theoretical lines we are staking out and the account of some of the pioneering experiences of research along these lines in Latin America.

The popular that appeals to us from the mass

> A challenging and contradictory reality of mass society that – in the perverse logic of old-fashion savage capitalism or new capitalism with an old or new mask – makes coexist and come together, in a paradoxically natural form, the sophistication of the mass media and masses of sentiment brought by the most traditionally popular culture.
>
> Marlyse Meyer

If one persists in thinking of the phenomenon of mass society as something purely external to the popular – as something that devours popular culture parasitically like a vampire[42] – then this is possible only from one of two positions. The first position is that of the folklorists whose mission it is to preserve the authentic culture, whose paradigm is rural life, and for whom all change is the distortion of the original purity of an established form. The second position is that of a social domination incapable of considering the cultural production of the popular classes except in terms of a reaction to what is induced by the dominant classes. Both positions ignore history, its opacity and ambiguity, and they ignore, too, the struggle to construct meaning that this ambiguity covers over while at the same time it feeds it. These positions are also ahistorical in their attempts to jump from ethnography to militancy or from phenomenology to a grand political theory. Curiously, the staunch defenders of a purely external relationship between the popular and the mass are found less among those who approach mass culture from the perspective of art or literature and more among professional 'sociologists of communication'. The latter are still dominated by what José Nun calls 'the other reductionism'.

> In Latin America, in general, the literature about the mass media is committed to demonstrating their indisputable role as oligarchical, imperialist instruments of ideological penetration. It almost never examines reception or concrete effects. It is as if it were a condition of entry into the topic that the researcher, with a kind of hyperfunctionalism of the left, must ignore the undesired consequences of social action. (1982: 40)

The warnings of the historian Luis A. Romero regarding the use of the term 'popular culture' in his discussion of the culture of the popular sectors of Buenos Aires in the 1930s are highly relevant. He is concerned with a conception of the popular that carries a certain essentialist connotation, which alludes too frequently to a homogeneous subject thought of in terms of a well-integrated pole of resistance or 'as a mere product of manipulation, only a degraded version of the culture of the elites' (Romero, 1984b: 26). With the appearance of the urban masses, however, popular culture is not the same. And with these changes, we must either give up the effort to think of popular culture as a living active force or, if we think it still has meaning, it will not be in terms of defensive external norms or romantic reconstructions of a bygone era, but the messy conflictive interweaving with the phenomenon of mass culture and mass society.

If this proposition is to withstand misunderstandings, however, it must be interpreted not directly in terms of the media of massification but in relation to the phenomenon of massification itself, an intrinsic structural characteristic of society. Concretely, it is revealed in the impossibility of the masses to effectively realize their right to work, to health services, to education and to leisure activities without reducing everything to the same common denomi-

nator. The phenomenon of mass in this kind of society is not some isolated social mechanism or one aspect of the society but a new form of sociability. Everything bears the characteristic of 'mass': the educational system, the forms of political representation and participation, the organization of religious practice, the patterns of consumption, and the use of space. Nevertheless, to perceive popular culture from the perspective of mass does not necessarily imply alienation and manipulation. It is a new condition of existence and struggle. Mass society is a new mode of operation of hegemony. It is for this reason that one has the right to ask the critics of massification, as does A. Signorelli, whether they condemn the phenomenon of mass because it carries with it oppression and domination or because it involves new forms of social relations and social conflict (Signorelli et al., 1983: 5). More important than the condemnations is the attempt to understand how massification functions here and now and how it has taken on its historical characteristics in Latin America. This is what we have tried to do by posing the question of the relation of massification and populism and the question of the role of the mass media in the formation of national cultures, a role which is not just ideological but also political. The proposals of S. Micelli and G. Sunkel make important contributions to this line of inquiry. Micelli's analysis of the distinctions between the material and the symbolic market refers most directly to Brazil, but his observations are equally valid for the rest of the region. G. Sunkel emphasizes that within mass culture there continue to exist conflicting cultural matrices.

Micelli takes as his point of departure the evidence pointing to the presence in the culture industry of 'expressions of a peculiar symbolic demand which do not agree with the dominant cultural tastes' (1972: 210). In Micelli's view, it is difficult to comprehend the significance of this symbolic demand with an *outside* interpretation, that is, a reading that considers this industry purely and simply an instrument of domination. This is a reading which does not really know or understand the system of representations and images used by the popular classes to decodify the symbols produced in the mass media. It is a reading satisfied with the superficial public image which the industry projects regarding itself and its audience, a reading which takes as *given* what should be the object of its research, namely, what is the position of influence of this industry regarding the cultural symbolism emerging in Latin American countries. If this question is the starting point of research, then one soon discovers not only that mass culture does not have a univocal meaning as dominant ideology within the system of social classes but that within mass culture there are quite heterogeneous products, some consistent with the logic of the dominant cultural judgements and others following the logic of symbolic expectations coming from the dominated classes. We are confronted with a material and symbolic market which is not united in a single univocal pattern and that has a dispersion of meanings that arise in response to the dependent character of that market. It is unclear, however, in the study of Micelli, if the non-unification of the symbolic market is only the result of this market dependency or if it is also an expression of the plurality of cultures in Latin America. This takes us back to one of the questions that is passed over by an 'external' reading: to what extent does what happens in the market of symbols respond not just to the logic of the interests of the dominant class but also to the dynamic and complex cultural universe of the dominated?

This is precisely the question which guides the analysis of Sunkel: How much of what constitutes or forms part of the life of the popular classes and is rejected from the discourse of dominant culture, education and politics, ends up as an expression of the mass culture of the culture industry? (1985: 27–58). This expression may be deformed and recast as a functional support of the social system, but, nevertheless, it is still capable of activating a memory complicit with the imaginative universe of the masses. What activates memory has nothing to do with the content or even the codes. It is a question of 'cultural matrices'. Semiotics anchored in synchronic time is unable to understand the combinations of contemporaneity, profound anachronisms and conflicting rhythms of time that make up cultural modernity. Also handicapped is a cultural anthropology that, in its search for functional connections, dissolves the conflicts and freezes the fluid shifts which give life to the cultural matrices. To speak of matrices does not refer to what is archaic, but, in the interpretation of Raymond Williams, makes explicit the residual elements that are active in contemporary culture. We refer to that dimension of social subjects which is outside the objective boundaries of instrumental rationalism and the sacred battle lines established by Marxism. Some of the paths of entry to these other matrices which are part of the dominant culture but still independently creative are found in the baroque imaginative universe and in religious ritual dramatism, in oral narrative, in melodrama and in popular comedy. One can find many examples of this residual Latin America popular culture activated by mass culture, but let us illustrate this with a few particularly revealing cases.

In the neighbourhoods on the outskirts of São Paulo, the circus is a form of entertainment just as popular as football. There are now close to 200 of these circuses in the region of Sao Paulo, travelling

around the working class neighbourhoods throughout the year. Although one cannot describe this precisely as mass culture as one would the movies or football, the circus already has the organized structure of an industry with its subcontracted activities such as market research. Industrialization, however, has not deprived the circus of its special way of connecting with the people, and this, for us, is its most interesting aspect (Cantor Magnani, 1984: 23ff). What does the standardized and commercialized circus of today have to say to the inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods? Note carefully, however, that this is not an 'archaeological' question, a search for what survives from the time when the circus was truly 'authentic'. We want to analyse what makes the circus popular today and relates it to the contemporary way of life of these people.

Even the most sophisticated content analysis cannot answer these questions. They can be answered only by placing the circus in relation with cultural matrices and social uses. In his study, Cantor Magnani found that the circus, as it exists today, has a capacity to relate directly to the spectator – like the neighbourhood football matches and the annual fiestas – because it activates a special melodramatic thread connecting the popular taste for emphatic gestures, solemn postures and ritual. It is a mishmash of historical dramas, parodies of *telenovelas*, wrestling, magic and modern pop music. The people go to experience the emotional traumas of the victims, laugh with the clowns and see in person the actors and musical performers of radio and television. What connects such immensely diverse forms of entertainment is an experience that activates traces of a half-forgotten cultural history while, at the same time, it adapts these emotions to the present moment. What links the circus to the people is not, as the proponents of realism would think, the representation of fragments of daily struggles and conflicts, but

> a logic that articulates, in the performative world of the circus, the contradictions, incongruencies, and mismatches of daily life such as an idealization of family unity in the very moment that this unity is slipping away, the recognition of the need for legitimate authority combined with a deep distrust of the police, the dreams of success in the city mixed with the bitter frustrations of lack of essential urban services. (Cantor Magnani, 1984: 175)

The circus captures the strange logic that governs popular culture, a logic of contrasts with the mixture of modern medicine and folk cures, contractual agreements and barter, moving without problem between rationalistic theologies and magical cults. In the adaptation of this logic to the performative style of the circus, we find the meeting place of the serious – in drama – and the ability to make fun

of everything – the comic – a combination that throws off the path all the old dichotomous boundary markers of true and false, real and illusory that an ideological reading would like to apply to the circus.

In recent years, the 'fiestas' have taken on great interest for students of popular culture. Most of these descriptions, however, are the endless search for the 'authentic' fiestas, that is, those of more primitive communities, and, when they bother to look at more modern adaptations, it is only to see if they can discover some relic of a primitive tradition. A very different perspective, much closer to that which Cantor Magnani uses to study the circus, is the approach of Jorge González who has studied the 'urban festivals' in Mexico. It is not a question of trying to dig up ancestors, but a study of the annual city festival as a meeting place of cultural fronts, a space in which different social classes come in contact with each other and interchange meanings across the boundaries of cultural fronts. Cultural front also implies a struggle, not only to defend the integrity of one's own subculture and one's own interpretation of the meaning of the festival but, as far as possible, to extend this subcultural interpretation into every facet of meaning of the festival. Each cultural front is struggling 'not precisely to establish relations of domination or exploitation, but to emphasize certain values, practices and conceptions which are dramatized before the community in order to assert the cultural legitimacy of a particular subcultural front' (González, 1980: 8). The fiesta does not seem to be simply the result of a process of degradation and absorption of the festive celebration by commercial interests, but a place for displaying different cultural models of the 'playful dimension', a dimension of culture so frequently forgotten by a critical sociology that is interested only in the serious and 'productive'. Through these displays of different cultural fronts, the festival seeks the constitution of collective local, regional identities and the confrontation-link with national identity.

The festival is the result of several dynamics. Still apparent are the origins in the religious celebrations and market days. The dominance of the commercial dynamic is only part of a much more complex process that has other influences. Even a brief glance at the history of Mexico is enough to confirm that the cultural leadership in the *feria* has undergone profound changes. It has passed from the patronage of the church which used it as a channel for passions and fanaticisms set loose in games to the state which transformed it into an object of civic regimentation and display of the wealth and variety of the nation, until, finally the fiesta came under the ideological management of private enterprise. And something

similar happened to the spaces where the fiesta is held. The fiesta was born in the town square, in the very heart of the city, linking everybody with everybody else, turning the whole city into a celebration. Then, little by little, the fiesta began to distance itself from the centre of the city, occupying its own specialized site until finally it was outside the city limits in a completely separate place.

In spite of all of these changes the memory is preserved of the fiesta as an expression of popular practices and culture industry but, at the same time, the celebration of the regional identity and programmed entertainment. The fiesta continues to have its own peculiar games of popular origin: cock fights, the homemade fireworks as well as traditional features such as the haunted house and the lizard lady. Along with this now are modern diversions – the latest mechanical games and pop music singers – all of which are still part of popular culture. What the culture industry organizes, however, is not simply the presence of famous stars of film and television, but the distribution of spaces and tastes which is the key to the insertion of the commercial into culture. The best 'business sense' does not dare tinker with the entertainment itself, but gives the fiesta its form and organizing framework. With this organization of the entertainment according to the different tastes of each cultural group, all can go to the fiesta to entertain themselves according to their likes and each group attempts to take possession of this form in its own way.

In Latin America, the analysis of mass culture from the perspective of popular culture is not limited to the study of mass popular practices. It has also given new life to the analysis of the 'massifying' media. We will look first at the new understanding it has brought to radio and then turn to the modes of the popular in television.

Although we have already discussed the changes that occurred in radio in the 1960s, we take up again the research of G. Munizaga and P. Gutiérrez which, I believe, is where the new proposal can be found in its fullest extent and greatest degree of generality. Their study begins by showing the relation of radio in Chile to the period in which it appeared and to the legal structure that defined its regulation by the state, differentiated it from television and set it off from the press. The study explicitly identifies radio's special ability to 'mediate the popular world' both technically and discursively. This study puts us on a track that breaks the obsession with ideology and makes it possible to study how workers, using the radio, found directions on how to get along in the city, how migrants found ways to maintain ties with their home towns, and how housewives found access to the emotions that they were not allowed to admit existed. This has occurred because radio speaks their language, for an oral

language is not simply the product of illiteracy nor is sentiment the only subproduct of the life of the poor. The oral language of the radio is a bridge between symbolic–expressive rationality and instrumental informative rationality. Radio is much more than a place where people can find emotional sublimation. It is a medium that, for the popular classes, 'fills the vacuum left by the disappearance of the traditional institutions for the construction of meaning' (Gutiérrez and Munizaga, 1983: 22).

From a perspective close to that of the two Chilean researchers, but taking into account the cultural complexity of present-day Lima, Rosa M. Alfaro has drawn a map of the ways radio 'captures' the density and diversity of the popular world. Her analysis moves from the radio genre to the cultural mechanisms that tie together the territorial and the discursive, the senses of time and the identifying forms of 'who we are', memories and the places that these memories are anchored to. She studies 'the relevance of a new use of radio based on the conflictive characteristics of social relationships in our country that have driven social and cultural groups to take possession of their own territory of public existence, changing the uses, genres, and language of radio according to their own objectives and cultural matrices' (Alfaro, 1985b: 57).

Alfaro's map is organized in terms of three of the five basic types of radio in Lima. The *local* radio stations, functioning with an explicit territorial criterion, manage to make a highly commercial programming a medium that also publicizes the needs of that area of the city and invites the people to collective participation in movements supporting popular demands. This type of radio, basing itself on the neighbourhood-level discourse and interests, represents the achievements but also the limits of 'democratic uses' of radio in so far as it can be articulated in the marketplace with a balance of freedom of interests and the common good. The *popular urban radio stations* give popular culture a prominent place but under the 'populist' direction of other sectors which exert cautionary restraints from outside the popular world. Popular culture enters into this radio under the unifying identity symbols of the Peruvian creole culture. The station presents vivid scenes of the struggle against poverty and the ingenuity of the people in a language that attempts to bring to radio the sounds, vocabulary and syntax of the people. Participation is expressed in telephone calls, letters and visits to the station. Above all, there is a dominating presence of the music, *la chicha*, which shapes the urban *mestizaje* in Lima. These stations appeal to an 'us' in the popular world that, although constructed with a populist appeal, touches and activates dimensions of the cultural life of the country ignored or denied by the international-

style stations. The third type of station is oriented to people who come from *different Andean regions of Peru*. They begin broadcasting in the off-hours of programming – at 4.00 a.m. – and change from one radio network to another according to the competitive costs that are available. The content is regional music, birthday greetings, information about fiestas and events in the Andean regions, activities of the regional group in Lima and advertising about the products made by the people of the regions. Although these broadcasts have no professional announcers, use music recorded by amateur groups from the local immigrant communities from different Andean regions and speak with an often hard-to-understand colloquial language, thousands of immigrants in the city of Lima listen to these stations to provide themselves with an interval of identification which is not just the recall of common memories but a profound experience of solidarity. And they vie to show their regional loyalty, from the generosity of contributions to keep the stations going to the way they design advertising that not only sells products but gives orientation to those recently arrived in the city. These stations transform radio into a meeting place and promote solidarity by a little parallel 'culture industry' that stamps records of regional music and organizes fiestas or championship football contests among the people of the region.

Although each of the three types of radio is different and even contradictory in its relationship with the popular world, as a whole they make visible 'how the processes of cultural and ideological reproduction recover discourses of liberation and are susceptible to being subverted in the field of consumption itself' (Alfaro, 1985b: 71).

A few paragraphs above, we called attention to the relation between the popular dimension of radio and oral culture. A revealing example of this relationship is the case of the crime stories of the Brazilian radio stations, especially the programme of Gil Gómez. Since 1968, Gil Gómez has had every day an estimated audience of a million listeners.[43] Like the Spanish blind men who centuries ago related the day's events in poetry, Gil Gómez every morning on the radio tells a story taken from the crime pages of the weekly newspaper. In contrast with the discourse of the news story – its negation of the narrator and hiding of the discursive plot – the radio narrator makes the crime story a 'first hand experience' (Fadul et al., 1986: 3). The voice carries the vivid sound effects of the story, exploring with its tone and rhythm – speeding up, slowing down, quieting, shouting, whispering – the universe of emotions. It appeals to the experiences of listeners, bringing together the foreign and the familiar, exploring the crevices . . . how the mother – the loving mother! – who lived only for the family, was killed by her own child. By relating individual experiences to events of the world in the form of sayings and proverbs, providing folk wisdom and rules to classify events in an 'order' that allows the listener to face the unbearable incoherence of life. The stories of Gil Gómez' 'dramatization of reality' gave a face, a tangible existence and a daily life to the anonymous people of crime stories: 'These people have a home and a family, and, more important, a life history including love and friendship, hate and vengeance. It is a story of real people, not just of numbers. These programmes compensate the loss of identity of the rural immigrants' (Fadul, 1985: 12; see also Fadul, 1984).

That the classical conception of hegemony in television 'abhors differences' is now something that does not need much demonstrative argument. We have described earlier the mechanisms this model uses to dissolve distinctions. Television, however, also contains contradictions and the expression of diverse demands revealing that the symbolic field and market to which it responds is far from being a unitary system.

One of the few studies that has explored the contradictions and non-unification of television is the extensive analysis of humorous programmes of Peruvian television (Peirano and Sánchez de León, 1984). What dimensions, aspects and characteristics of Peruvian popular culture are present in these programmes and how is popular humour transformed as it is recast in the television medium? These authors found that the popular is represented in comical programmes above all in a continual play upon the racial mosaic of Peru. 'If you are of white European origin, it is inconceivable that you are person from the popular classes; necessarily, as a prior condition, one must be *cholo*, black or *zambo*. Whatever may be your real social class status, having these three ethnic components guarantees that you have some characteristics attributed to the popular classes' (Peirano and Sánchez de León, 1984: 48). And the races are defined essentially by physical typologies represented in different actors. The actors – most of whom have at least a popular origin – provide the anchor for popular identifications and recognition with their physical features, gestures, manners, accents and nicknames such as 'El cholo Tulio Loza', 'El Zambo Ferrando' or 'El Negro Gutapercha' . Only in humorous programmes does television dare to show 'the people', the 'ugly people' that the racist bourgeois world would like to hide. Only here does television betray itself and to the point of showing, without shame, the *faces of the people*. Once again the grotesque realism of humour opens a space for the expression of that which comes from 'those below'.

Here the anonymity of the common people is thrown away, their faces take on clearly defined features, and they can bring out their weapons: their capacity for parody and caricature. It is in these programmes that the higher classes, the oligarchies of Peru, are ridiculed, with the greatest ridicule reserved for those upwardly striving people who try to imitate them. The target of the most refined mockery are those of the newly arrived middle class. Those who have money . . . but who still eat with their fingers!

Another frequent image of the popular reflected in the humour of television is *criollismo*. This imagery moves on two levels. At one level, the creole is the 'grotesque and windy figure who epitomizes pretentious nationalism'. At another level, the creole suggests the way the popular sectors come to be 'true citizens', the way those from a popular origin learn to survive in the city, the painful transformation into a creole that the *cholo* undergoes. The term creole, leaving behind its connotations of nationalistic heritage and folklore, comes to signify the fundamental process of *mestizaje* in which is generated the urban popular culture, a culture created out of humiliations and anxieties, losses and reappropriations. In their own way, the humorous programmes of television acknowledge this process when they introduce in dramatic form the image of the creole exaggerating the evil designs of people trying to set traps, rage over rejections of requests for help, boredom with meaningless jobs and wilful deceptions. Here we find the visual 'expressions of failure sublimated, anger tamed, rebellion turned to laughter and determination falling into depression' (Peirano and Sánchez de León, 1984: 66).

The popular world enters into comedy through the re-creation of typical environments: the neighbourhood street corner, the lines of houses in little alleyways, the bar with its overtones of violence, interiors of homes, the little sitting rooms with plastic flowers – but above all the popular language spiced with typical slang. It is a language in which words are weapons and instruments of revenge, strategies to confuse the opponent and render him defenceless, a use of language exactly the opposite of 'information'. Meanings are changed, shifted with a verbal disorder that tries to throw the other off guard. It is a revenge against the order of a world that excludes and humiliates, against which the people can only react by mixing up the fabric of symbols that hold this order together. It is a de-articulation and deliberate confusion, spoken rapidly and maliciously. It is a transformation of a poverty of language into astuteness, seizing the occasion to parody the rhetoric of those who speak elegantly and impose an order out of the rich language of popular culture.

We end this story of presences of the popular and the mass in television with a look at that part of the media which is considered the epitome of the acclaimed manipulation, politics in television. We do this with an analysis that allows us to both deepen and synthesize the scope and meaning of our proposal. This analysis comes from accounts of the way the Brazilian people experienced the illness, death and burial of Tancredo Neves (Meyer and Montes, 1985). This alternative vision emerges from the breakdown of the official view of the affair presented in the mass media: a press that presses on with its attempts to give all the facts from an 'objective' perspective in the clinical language of the doctors. It is a press which blames radio and television for trying to manipulate the sentiments of an 'archaic past of the nation' and putting on a dirty, popular spectacle.

Confronted by this interpretation, two Brazilian researchers proposed to 'study the street spectacle from the perspective of the live "flesh and bone" actors who turned it into a civic festival'. Their aim was to 'reveal, in the logic of its own confusion, the narrative structure of this paradoxical spectacle and to put in perspective the role of the mass media' (Meyer and Montes, 1985: 29).

Going down to the streets, the researchers saw gathering before their eyes an enormous mobilization of four million people – young and old, rich and poor – brought together in the avenues of São Paulo and acting as one body, in a heart-felt hope that had nothing to do with staging. Something stronger than the manipulation of the mass media was needed to move so many people. The motivation was precisely what was revealed in the shouts of the crowd, 'Tancredo, don't die! Tancredo belongs to the people! Tancredo, some day there will be bread for all of us just like you wanted!' This was not a 'medieval country' that took to the streets, not a country of fanatics and miracle seekers. It was the same country that had filled these streets a few months earlier demanding direct elections. It was a people rediscovering their citizenship, a people who were reinventing their identity in a spectacle, fusing politics and carnival with the corporal presence and the movements of a crowd.

This movement was largely ignored by a press which had established itself as the depreciative critic of the masses and which was now unable to perceive 'the people who made up, formed and gave shape to the masses'. Radio and television, in contrast, took their microphones and cameras into the streets and became part of the movement. The press, entrenched in its defence of 'scientific' truth and objectivity, kept its distance from the mass and their mystifications. The price, however, was high: an ignorance of the 'political truth' constructed by the people and 'translated into a code

of hope'. This was a truth with a discourse based on the spectacle of a people that took on themselves the role of protagonists and transformed the spectacle into a civic celebration. They made it a 'performance that produced its own narrative in the act of producing the event' (Meyer and Montes, 1985: 43).

What was the narrative that radio and television, but not the press, were able to recognize? It was the narrative of popular romance and melodrama, the narrative of exaggeration and of the paradox of passion and emotion, the narrative mixing ethics and aesthetics that 'the history of good taste and bourgeois rationality taught us to ignore as popular and vulgar' (Meyer and Montes, 1985: 20).

What a scandal! Ignoring journalists' efforts to maintain the 'objective' truths of the illness and death of the president, the people assumed the codes of fiction and the imaginary to disentangle the political meaning from that public experience of death.

The lesson is there for all who want and are able to hear and see it: melodrama and television, by allowing the people as a mass to recognize themselves as the authors of their own history, provided a language for 'the popular forms of hope'. This is the challenge of our proposal and the best synthesis of what we have attempted to present in this volume.

Notes

Part I

[1] Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Book I. In *The Prince* the populace appears as a political actor when it finds a prince that provides a voice for its feelings and mobilizes its will.

[2] J.J. Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, Livre I, Cap. VII. See also Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973; Goldman, 1970.

[3] See Zavala, 1972.

[4] Morande, 1983: 18.

[5] Mouralis, 1975: 106ff; Burke, 1978: chapter 1.

[6] For further reading on the initiation and evolution of the notion of the anthropological project, see Kahn, 1975.

[7] Pitt Rivers, cited in Kaplan, 1977.

[8] See Olivé, 1978; Coob, 1981; Livak, 1981; Siguán Boehmer, 1981.

[9] We define the expression in the sense given by Reszler, in contrast to the 'undogmatic' Marxism of cultural analysis, in Reszler, 1976: 83.

[10] See the analysis of this point in Sartre, 1973: 27ff.

[11] We refer to Thompson, 1968.

[12] This topic is the subject of Part III of this book in the discussion of the relationship between the formation of the masses, national cultures, and populism.

[13] For a review of the debate in Spain, see Coob, 1981; in France, see Martinet, 1976.

[14] Swingewood, 1977.

[15] G. Jiménez, 'La cultura en la tradición marxista', 1982: 17 ff; de Ipola, 1978: 171–87.

[16] See L. Chevalier, 1973.

[17] This is the subject of *Democracy in America*, first published in 1835.

[18] Cited in Giner, 1976.

[19] English translation, Le Bon, 1896.

[20] W. Reich, 1970. Two years later he published *La Sexualidad en el Debate Cultural* in which he continued the analysis of the role played by sexuality in the formation of the masses by Nazism.

[21] Reich, 1967: 30.

[22] W. Reich in *Sexualidad: Libertad o Represión*, pp 100 and 102.

[23] Regarding this transformation, see Sennett, 1977.

[24] Ortega y Gasset, 1932. *La rebelión de las masas* (*The Revolt of the Masses*), began publication in a Madrid daily in 1926. Spengler, vol.1 1926; vol.2 1928.

[25] Later, Bell will admit the existence of contradictions in culture with his book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1978). We return to this point later.

[26] For a discussion of the identification of the origin of art with the arrival of the single concept see Lauer, 1982: 22ff.

[27] See *Revue d'Esthétique*, 1, 1981, dedicated to W. Benjamin, and the prologue of J. Aguirre to volume I of *Iluminaciones*, Madrid, 1980.

[28] Adorno wrote (1973: 124): 'His attention to specific details and fragmentary method never took fully into account the idea of universal mediation that in Hegel and Marx is the foundation of the systematic totality'.

[29] Cited by J. Aguirre in the prologue to *Discursos Interrumpidos* (Benjamin, 1982a: 11).

[30] For a criticism of this vision and of its consequences for theory and in political action, see: Mattelart and Piemme, 1982.

[31] A criticism of the Frankfurt School along this line can be found in Swingewood, 1977.

[32] We refer to the ideas developed in Morin, 1962.

[33] No. 18 of *Communications* in 1972 was entirely dedicated to the analysis of the contemporary historical situation. E. Morin served as editor for this number in which he published his essay, 'Le retour de l'événement' (Morin, 1972: 6–20).

[34] Literally, 'the society of spectacle', the title of a book by Guy Debord (1971).

[35] We refer to D. Bell, 1978; Sennett, 1977.

[36] Marcuse is dealing with this problem in his criticism of bourgeois rationality and in his analysis of the one-dimensional person. See Marcuse, 1968.

[37] This point is covered in the first chapter of Part II.

[38] E.P. Thompson follows the same transformed approaches to historical studies as Hobsbawm and G. Rudé. Thompson differs from these authors in the importance he attributes to the cultural experience of the popular classes over and above the ideological role of these cultures.

[39] García Canclini (1982: 69–70) provides an explicit criticism of the concept of 'cultural inequality'.

Part II

[1] Two works which investigate specific aspects of this world of popular culture are: Mandrou, 1968; Caro Baroja, 1964.

[2] The formation of this image is the subject of Castoriadis, 1987.

[3] This is the argument of Díez de Moral (1929) and G. Brenan (1962).

[4] See, in Part I of this book, the discussion of how the anarchist movements explicitly took up the cause of popular culture.

[5] This evolution is the subject of Marco, 1977; see also Marco, 1971.

[6] Here we are following Mandrou, 1964; also Bollème, 1969, 1971.

[7] Some writings do affirm the existence and characteristics of collective reading: Soriano, 1975: 481ff; Soboul, in Villar et al., 1977: 211; Robine, 1974: 219ff.

[8] The use of this term here has the same meaning as does 'secondary codes' for Panofski (1975: 16).

[9] Regarding the appearance and development of the engraving see Ivens, 1975; for a discussion of the cultural importance of the engraving in the transformation of artistic experience, see Benjamin, 'La obra de arte en la época de su reproductibilidad técnica' in 1982a.

[10] This is based on the information collected by J. Mistler, F. Blandez and A. Jacquemin (Mistler et al., 1961).

[11] Regarding the cultural process of the Catholic counter-reformation, see Burke, 1978.

[12] Muchembled, in 1985, provides a good description of this 'civic function' which the popular iconography of this period carried out.

[13] Regarding the evolution of the engravings on the sheets of the *cordel*, see Amades, 1948; Caro Baroja, 'Figura y relato' (1969: 430–40).

[14] This is reported by Remy (1965: 1499); Follain (1968: 36).

[15] These mimes gradually incorporated explanatory texts and dialogues, at least what was necessary to cover the insufficiencies of the pantomime in the development of complex intrigues (Gubern, 1974: 270).

[16] Regarding this 'complicity', see Goimard, 1980.

[17] This is described in the study which M.H. Winter dedicates to the performances in festivals in *Histoire des spectacles* (Remy, 1965: 1458); see also a related description of G. Sadoul in his *Historia del Cine Mundial* (1979: 26ff).

[18] This is studied by Gubern (1974: 234ff) as a key to the iconography of mass culture.

[19] In addition to the texts quoted here, further description important for understanding the dramatic structure of melodrama is found in Gubern's study, 'Teoría del melodrama' (1974), and in Bussière, 1974.

[20] For further historical information regarding the transformation of the press and the newspaper serial story, see the special issue of the journal *Europe*, 'Le Roman feuilleton' (1974); and Angenot, 1975.

[21] For a well-documented study of the industrial organization of the newspaper serial, see Ferreras, 1972, especially the chapter dealing with the publishers, pp. 37–75. Another important reference can be found in Romero Tobar, 1976.

[22] Escarpit affirms, 'In the last centuries, as literature formed an image of itself, the money the editor paid the author changed its nature and its meaning. . . . Somewhere between buying and renting, all metaphors are possible. An edition paid by the author is similar to a partnership. Through the play of clauses and advances, payment to the author became a veiled form of salary' (1974: 141).

[23] For an analysis of the double movement that sustains the story of the serial and its ideological meaning, see Angenot, 1975: 54–5.

[24] A key study regarding this relation is found in Zaccaria, 1977: 10ff.

[25] Gramsci affirms (1977: 174): 'Fantasy in the people depends on a social inferiority complex that is responsible for wide ranging fantasies around the idea of vengeance, the punishment of the guilty, of the burdens they must bear, etc.' Regarding the motive of vengeance as the narrative force of romantic literature, see Meyer, 1982a, especially the collected texts of A. Candido.

[26] One of the few studies of the presence of this world in the serial novel is that of Bussière (1974: 31–51).

[27] L. Romero Tobar (1976: 133ff) provides a detailed analysis of the social and work world of the poor in the Spanish serial.

[28] Two works which have brought out the fact of these contradictions are Meyer, 1982a, and Angenot, 1975.

[29] See in particular the chapter on individualism in the democratic countries in Bell, 1969.

[30] The first commercially financed radio station appeared in 1922. From the start, US legislation favoured the commercial development of the media.

[31] Regarding the 'freedom' which the state has allowed the media in the United States, see Richeri and Doglio, 1980.

[32] This is true not only of research on the sensationalist press, but of most sociological studies of the press. See Will, 1976.

[33] The 'literary' continuity of this tradition of journalism is found in the US press in the form of the short novel or the short story. See Coma, 1980.

[34] For a discussion of the relationship between the comic strip and folklore, see Renard, 1978, 1980; Gubern, 1972, 1981; see also Coma, 1978.

[35] This relationship has been studied by Hotier (1972, 1982) and Damase (1965).

[36] J. Collet et al. (1977) provide a good approximation to sociosemiotic analysis of the functioning of genres in film.

Part III

[1] Regarding the 'origins' of that project, using Guatemala as an example, see *La patria del criollo*, Costa Rica, 1972.

[2] For an analysis of this debate from a current perspective in Peru, see Cornejo et al., 1981.

[3] Colombia appears to be a typical case of this. See Uribe Celis, 1984.

[4] This is the conclusion reached by M.A. Garretón in his analysis of the crisis of 1973. See 'Prospecto nacional, una perspectiva socio-política', in Garretón et al., 1983.

[5] See Monsiváis, 1981: 35. Regarding the education project of Vasconcelos, see also Taboada, 1982.

[6] In these pages, the basic ideas are taken from Romero, 1976: 318.

[7] The media built on the groundwork laid by the education system in the provision of this daily experience of nationhood. A key text that provides a general framework for this process and some specific national case studies is Braslavsky and Tedesco, 1982.

[8] Monsiváis, 1976b: 446. This analysis is based on the work of Monsiváis.

[9] Here we are following studies cited by Terrero.

[10] Squeff and Wisnik, 1983: 148. In addition to this text, which seems basic, our analysis is based on the collective article, 'Questao popular' Chaui et al. (1980).

[11] This the biological–telluric paradigm mentioned by N. García Canclini (1984c).

[12] These two authors are discussed in Part f of this book.

[13] Beltrán and Fox (1980) provide data and measures of some of these changes.

[14] Muñiz Sodré (1981) is one of the best sources regarding this.

[15] The relationship between entertainment and daily life has been examined in detail in Part II.

[16] A model of this modernizing education project was Radio Sutatenza with its network of training centres. See Pareja, 1984.

[17] This reflection on the *mestizaje* in the sense we are referring to here is found in two publications of A. Rama: the Introduction to Arguedas, 1977; and Rama, 1982.

[18] The differentiation of the levels is found in the work of García Canclini, but we have given them an organization that corresponds with our presentation.

[19] In this analysis we are using, in addition to those sources of Monsiváis already cited regarding cinema and its 'images' of national culture in Mexico, other important works, especially Monsiváis, 1978, 1984a, 1985.

[20] Regarding the development of this urban culture, seen from the perspective of the mass media, see Mazziotti, 1983.

[21] In this respect, see *Comunicaçao e Sociedade*, 12, dedicated entirely to religious communication, and various essays collected in Vidales and Rivera, 1983.

[22] The sources of these quotes regarding the story of Tepito come from various *manifestos* entitled 'Qué és Tepito, qué és arte acá', 'Que viva Tepito', 'Arquitectura acá'. Some of these are signed by D. Manrique, A. Hernández and C. Plasencia. Some of them come from the newspaper, *El Nero en la Cultura*.

[23] Regarding these musical movements, see Llorens, 1983: 142ff; Vila, 1984. *Comunicación y Cultura*, 12, is dedicated to 'Nuevas fronteras de la música popular en América Latina' (Mexico, 1984).

[24] For a more detailed discussion of this theme see Martín-Barbero, 1982.

[25] This tendency is criticized by Landi (1983), and Lechner 'Información y política: Dos formas de comunicación' (1984).

[26] Regarding this new concept of democracy, see T. Moulian, in Moulian et al., 1981: 45–61; and Moulian, 1983: 313–37.

[27] The expression is taken from Gutiérrez and Munizaga, 1983: 25.

[28] Used with the meaning attributed by R. Da Matta (1985: 92).

[29] The meaning given here to the term 'mediations' is that of M. Martín Serrano (1977).

[30] Several of the chapters in Richeri, 1983, touch on the deepening of social differences as a result of the new video products.

[31] We take this notion from Muñiz Sodré, 1981, but removing from it the apocalyptic connotations in the original text.

[32] Radio had begun to bring these two worlds together but radio's non-exclusive use made it possible to carry on other activities without interruption.

[33] Calabrese, 1984: 70. *Análisi*, 9, is dedicated to 'repetition' and serialization in film and television.

[34] We refer to the proposal that is developed in Moles, 1978.

[35] Regarding the social meaning of the time occupied by television, see Thiolent et al., 1982.

[36] For an example of this, see Todorov, 1978.

[37] There are relatively few studies, however, that approach the melodrama from the perspective of 'culture': J.B. Rivera on the serialized melodrama in Argentina; C. Monsiváis on the melodrama in films and songs in Mexico; B. Sarlo on the weekly novel in Argentina in the 1920s; M. Meyer on the serial in Brazil (Meyer, 1973, 1982b); Hurtado, 1983.

[38] This theme has already been extensively developed in Part II.

[39] The term 'chorus' refers to the title of an essay by J. Nun on the reductionism of the conceptions of the popular held by the left: 'La rebelión del coro' (Nun, 1984).

[40] We refer to the relationships of the melodrama with the legends and mystery stories that deal with mixed up twins and changelings from unknown parents.

[41] In *Comunicación y Cultura*, 12, there are several articles which deal with this theme.

[42] This characterization is used in an article by O. Capriles (1982). The article discusses an interesting question concerning the 'cultural field'. In projecting the popular on to the idea of the alternative as something that exists *per se*, however, it is made into something different from a mass culture, for this latter is conceived of only in terms of industry and the drive for consumers.

[43] C. Marcondes Filho (1984: 111) studies the phenomenon of Gil Gómez, using the most traditional and external type of ideological reading. Nevertheless, he presents valuable information and direct transcriptions of some of the scripts.

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Index

abstraction, in Baudrillard 58, 60
Adorno, T.W.
  and art and culture 39, 40–6, 48–50, 52, 54, 59, 81
  on ideology 33
  influence in Latin America 40
  and the state 60
advertising
  and mass consumption 141, 195–6
  and television 217–18
aesthetics
  and ethics 134
  popular 16–17, 73, 81, 178
affirmation, ethnic 191–2
Aguirre, J. 52, 242
Akakia-Viala, 114
aleluyas 112
Alfaro, R.M. 182, 199–200, 235–6
alienation
  and art 44–5, 52
  and mass culture 55–6, 108, 117–18, 205, 213, 225, 226, 230
almanacs, in popular literature 107–8
anarchy, and popular culture 6, 13–17, 18, 96
anthropology, and popular culture 12–13, 75–6
appropriation 82
Arendt, H. 37
Argentina
  and film 195
  popular press 177
  populist government 160–1
  and radio 168–9
  studies 196–7
Arguedas, J.M. 159, 203
Arguemedo, A. 20
art
  and anarchy 16–17
  and class habitus 80–1
  and crafts 191–2
  and culture industries 41–6
  in Marxism 21–2
  and the masses 31–2, 49–51, 174
  scroundrelizing of 43
Assman, Hugo 199
audience
  ethnography of xi
  radio 169–70
  see also reception
authenticity
  ideology of 42, 45, 78, 120, 203
  of mass culture 34–5
author *see* writer

Bahro, R. 20
Bakhtin, M. 65–6, 70, 88, 227, 228
Barthes, Roland 17, 123, 126, 217
Baudelaire, Charles 46, 47, 50–2
Baudrillard, J. 57–9, 60, 183–4, 214
Bell, Daniel 34–5, 36, 60, 140
Benjamin, Walter xi, 57–8
  on art 16
  influence in Latin America 40
  and mediations between masses and culture 39, 46–53, 76–7, 85, 159, 220
  on narrative and novel 116, 227
  on repetition 219
Blomberg, Héctor Pedro 171
Bolivar, Simon 151–2
Bonfil, Guillermo 192–3
Borromeo, Carlo 71
Botrel, J.-F. 127, 130
Bourdieu, Pierre xi, 54, 79–82, 213
bourgeoisie
  hegemony 92, 121, 153
  and images 110–11
  Latin American 152–3, 158–9
  legitimacy 120, 121
  and the masses 13, 50–3, 120–1, 125, 158–9
  and nation-state 86
  and newspaper serial 125, 132
  and time and work 90
Brazil
  black music 171–2
  circus 231–2
  and development 179
  nationalism 154
  politics and television 239–40
  radio 236–7

Brecht, Bertolt 47
Brooks, P. 119, 134
Brunner, J.J. 210–11
Brunori, Vittorio 130
Burke, P. 70–1
Buxton, D. 140–1

Calabrese, O. 219
Calvin, John 71
Cantor Magnani, J.G. 201, 212–13, 228, 232, 233
capitalism
  and class 17, 20, 23, 93
  crisis of 39–40, 59, 97, 165, 183
  and development 179
  and family 226
  and mass culture 60–1, 120, 142
  and native cultures 13, 190
  and time 42, 89–90, 226
  transnational x, 179, 209
Capriles, O. 228
Cárdenas, Lázaro 160
carnival, in popular culture 65, 67, 175
Caro Baroja, J. 106, 112
Carpentier, Alejo 224
Castoriadis, C. 15, 18
change, social, and culture 34
Chaplin, Charles 17, 49
character
  in film 145
  in melodrama 115, 116–17
  in newspaper serial 132, 133, 137, 139
  in radio drama 171
Chile
  and development 179
  popular press 175–6, 177–8
  and radio 234–5
  role of State 155
Church
  and centralization 87
  and enculturation 70
  and magic 90–1, 110
  and social control 109, 233
  and use of images 108–10
cinema *see* film
circus, and popular culture 143–4, 169–70, 231–2
Cirese, A.M. 10, 74, 75
citizenship, and populism 163, 173, 192, 239
city
  and the masses 50–2, 120, 156–60, 233–4
  in newspaper serials 135–6, 139
  see also urbanization
class
  creole 153, 156
  ethnocentrism 81
  habitus 80–1, 82, 222
  and hegemony 74–6, 85, 92, 99, 121–2, 156
  and mass media 163
  and mass society 25–6, 31–2, 36–7, 120–2, 136
  and nation 161
  and the people 9, 13–22, 60, 161–3, 231
  and popular culture xii, 71–2, 73–5, 79–80, 133
  struggle xii, 17–20, 47, 87, 122, 153, 160, 176, 208
  see also bourgeoisie; proletariat
Clastres, P. 20
clericalism, of Middle Ages 64, 70
Colombia
  mass media 165
  television 180–1
Colombo, F. 142
colportage literature 99–100, 102–3, 105, 107
comic strip, in mass media 143
communication x
  in Baudrillard 58
  and culture 203–11, 213
  and hegemony 204, 206
  and information 29, 205–7, 211
  literary 125–6, 133
  and mass media 2, 139, 142, 164, 180, 215, 220, 222–4, 227
  and modernization ix
  and national unity 153
  semiotic model 24–6
  technologies 23, 182–6, 209–10
  transnational x, 207–8
  see also mediation
communication theory, functionalist 29
community, and society 29–30
competence
  communication 222–4
  cultural 80, 219–21, 222–3
  industrial 221
conflict, social 37
  and culture 122, 211
  in Frankfurt School 39
  and history of the people 64–5, 68–9, 70–3, 74, 82–3, 93–8
  in Latin America 160–2, 208–9
  new 39–40, 56–7, 60, 79, 214
  symbolic dimension 95–8
consensus, and mass culture 120, 122
consumerism 77, 165, 182, 195–6

consumption
  and culture 34, 140–1, 213–15
  social meaning 213–15
contact, simulation of 216–17
control, social
  by Church 109
  and popular journalism 106
  and rise of mass society 23–4, 27
cordel
  Brazil 177, 227
  Spain 70, 99–102, 105–6, 107–8, 111–12, 127, 143
creativity, cultural 10, 52–3, 82, 107, 192, 201, 202
creoles 153, 156
  circus 169–70
  in television 238
crime stories, Brazil 236–7
criollismo in television 238
crisis
  of capitalism 39–40, 59
  political 53–4, 56–61, 62
critical theory, neglect of daily life 212–13
crowd 51–2, 239
  psychology of 26–30, 35–6, 94
cultural criticism 35
  see also Frankfurt School
culturalism 3, 13, 37, 70, 74, 76, 120, 127, 219
  ethnocentrism 20, 85, 191
  and Frankfurt School 41
culture
  high/low 7, 63
  history of concept 78
  and ideology 21
  legitimate 80–1
  marginal 21
  mass *see* mass culture
  national 69–70, 88, 153, 155–6, 163, 183, 186, 230
  political 11–12, 210
  popular *see* popular culture
  production 54–5, 57, 99, 213
  rediscovery 209–11
  transnationalization xii–xiii, 70, 142, 146–7, 165, 181–2, 187, 210
  unification 86–8
  universal 92
culture, diversity 231
  evolutionary view 12–13, 20, 92, 184
  and market economy 69–70
  in Marxism 19–21
  and mass media 181, 185
  and modernization 86–7, 151–5, 192–3, 199
culture, diversity *cont.*
  in Romanticism 9–10, 12
culture industry
  in Frankfurt School 40–53, 81
  and hegemony 76–8, 85, 99, 194–5
  Latin America 156, 174–5, 211, 227, 230–1
  in Morin 54–6
  and newspaper serial 122–8

Da Matta, R. 187, 228
daily life
  in critical theory 212–13
  and mass culture 55–6, 76–7
  and political struggle 19, 56–7, 199
  and time 88–9, 218–19
  see also family relationships
De Certeau, Michel xi, 79, 81–3, 88, 96, 186
De Ipola, E. 18–19
De Moragas, M. 222
Deas, Malcolm 152, 163–4
Debord, G. 90
demand, popular 109, 141, 164, 230
democratization
  in Latin America 160, 178–9
  and mass media 54
  and mass society 24–5, 33, 34, 121
  and social change 208, 211
dependency
  and development 150, 161, 207
  intellectual viii–x
development
  and mass culture 165, 180–2
  and modernity 178–9
  and rural Indians 189
  uneven 150
dictatorship
  and development 179
  and mass media ix, 2
  and mass society 160–1, 164
difference, cultural, and modernity 150–2
dissonance, and art 44
domination
  class 60, 69, 74–6
  ideological 1, 12, 230–1
  and popular culture 12, 79, 82, 192, 229
  see also hegemony
drama, radio 168–71
Duhamel, Georges 49
Dumas, Alexandre 124, 126
Durham, E.R. 212, 213, 216

Eco, Umberto 66, 70
  and newspaper serial 128, 133, 137

editors, of newspaper serials 126–8
education, and popular culture 8, 78, 91
enculturation
and dominant class 86–92, 99, 120
and popular resistance 70–1, 92–8
Engels, Friedrich 25, 51
Enlightenment
and culture 174, 176
and nation-state 87
and the people and politics 6–8, 9, 12, 13, 40, 97
entertainment
in Frankfurt School 42, 44, 50
and mass culture 36
and political crisis 16, 57
see also film; melodrama
Épinal, images 111
Erasmus, Desiderius 6, 70
Escarpit, Robert 107, 125, 243
ethnicity, in Latin America 188–93
ethnocentrism
class 50, 69, 81, 122
culturalist 20, 85, 191
nationalistic 181
Europe, Single Market, and identity xiv
event, in Morin 56–7
excess
in melodrama 119
in newspaper serial 139
experience, as mediation 47–53, 76–7, 83, 159, 166, 219
exploitation
and daily life 90, 212–13
resistance to 15, 25, 93

Fabri, P. 133, 220
Fadul, A.M. 237
Falleto, E. 179
Falleto, E. *et al.* 156
family relationships
and mass culture 76–7, 140
in melodrama 118–19, 226
and popular culture 19, 212–13
and television 216–18, 226
see also daily life
fascism
and Frankfurt School 39
and modern art 32
festivals
and popular culture 19, 70–1, 191–2
and sense of time 88–9
urban 233–4
fiestas, and popular culture 233–4
film
and art 48–50, 54
and communication 217
and culture industry 41, 54
and mass culture 143–7, 159, 164, 165–8, 193, 195
and melodrama 114–15, 146–7, 167–8, 195
and popular culture 195
and western 146–7
folk, in Romantic movement 10–11
folklore
alluvial 159
and comic strip 143
and film 168
in Gramsci 74
in Latin America 155, 203
and literature 99–108
and mass culture 228–9
and Middle Ages 64
in Morin 55
in Romantic movement 10–11, 12
in television 219
Follain, J. 118
fool, in melodrama 118
Foucault, Michel xi, 57, 59, 88, 90, 218
France, 1960s political crisis 53–4
Frankfurt School
and cultural criticism 43
influence 54
and mass culture 40–6
and mediations between masses and culture 46–53
and nazism 39
French Revolution, and emergence of the people 112–13
Freud, Sigmund 26, 27–8, 55–6, 166
Frias, C. & Romero, F. 198–9
front, cultural 233
Frye, N. 116–17, 138
functionalism, and mass culture 29, 40, 75, 204, 213, 220

Galeano, E. 155, 165
García Canclini, Néstor xi, 11–12, 75–6, 174, 190, 192, 207, 211–12, 213–14
García Riera, E. 145
genre
film 17, 144, 145–6
novel 155
story 133
in television xiii, 220–1, 223–8
gesture
and black music 172, 174
in film 167
in melodrama 113, 114, 115–16

gesture *cont.*
in popular culture 65, 194, 232
Giner, S. 24
Ginzburg, C. 12, 65, 67–9
Goimard, J. 116, 117–18, 127
Gómez, Gil 236–7
González, Jorge 233
graffiti, and urban culture 202
Gramsci, Antonio xi
and culture and hegemony 62, 73–6, 79
and newspaper serial 123, 136–7, 243
and symbolism 166
grotesque, in popular culture 65–6, 237–8
Gubern, Roman 138
Gutiérrez, Eduardo 170
Gutiérrez, L.H. & Romero, L.A. 157, 196–7
Gutiérrez, P. & Munizaga, G. 182, 234–5

Habermas, Jürgen 46, 52–3
and the masses 8, 120–1
and political crisis 53–4, 59–60
habitus, class 80–1, 82, 222
Hall, Stuart xi
hedonism, of mass culture 60–1
Hegel, G.W.F. 43–4
hegemony
and class habitus 80
and communication 204, 206
and culture 62–83
and culture industry 76–9, 85, 99, 194–5, 218, 222
in Gramsci 74–6
and massification 121–2, 127, 139, 145, 156, 230, 237–8
and nation-state 86–92, 152–3, 154–5, 161, 179
resistance to 92–7
of USA 33–4, 142
see also domination
Heidegger, Martin 42, 45
Herder, Johann Gottfried 9–10
heroism
in *cordel* literature 106
in mass media 141, 167
in melodrama 117, 118
in newspaper serial 134, 138
in radio drama 170–1
in Romanticism 9
history
cultural 63–4
and mass society 33
the people in 62, 63–73, 163–4, 193
and popular culture 12–13, 33, 83, 85
Hobbes, Thomas 6–7
Hobsbawm, E.J. 10, 92, 94, 242
Hoggart, Richard xi, 116, 133
and mass culture 76–7, 78
and popular culture 98, 226
Horkheimer, Max, and art and culture 39, 40–4, 46, 52, 54
Hugo, Victor 11, 52, 135

iconography, popular 70, 108–12, 163, 202
identity
cultural 97, 145, 156, 169, 184–5, 187, 196, 199–201, 209, 216
Indian 188–93, 203
Latin American 224–8
national xii–xv, 2, 149, 154–5, 165, 166, 195, 210
regional 234–6
ideology
of authenticity 42
and communication 204–7
and culture 21, 33, 43, 79, 163–5, 230–1
and domination 1, 60, 74, 123, 204, 229, 230–1
reactionary 118, 123, 136
images
in mass media 143, 163, 218, 225, 228
in popular culture 108–12, 113
imagination, cultural
and culture industry 77
and images 110–11
and memory 3
imperialism, media x
Indians, identity 188–93, 203
individual
and community 89, 141, 191
and crowd 26–9, 35–6, 51
and state 52, 87
individualism
and Christianity 87
and mass society 29, 35, 140, 141
industrialization
in Latin America 152, 154–6, 160, 162, 179
and mass society 24–5, 51, 93, 120, 160, 162
and popular culture 194
see also culture industry
information
and communication 29, 205–7, 211
of culture industry 55
and newspaper serial 55, 126
and political crisis 58–60

information theory 205–6

Jarvie, I.C. 144
Jaspers, Karl 45
Jauss, H. Robert 214
jazz, and culture industry 41, 48
Jdanov, 21
journalism, popular, origins 106–7
Jovellanos, G.M. de 115
Jung, C.G. 27

Kant, Immanuel 81
Kaplan, T. 97
knowledge
  and information 206–7
  transformation 90–2, 107

La Boétie, 25
labour movement, politicized 162, 197
Lacan, Jacques 206
Laclau, E. 18, 161, 212
Landi, O. 161, 209, 210, 211, 245
language
  and popular journalism 178
  and popular literature 99–100, 102, 105, 132–3
  of radio 234–6
  and symbolism 166
  of television 219, 238
Las Casas, Bartolomé de 6
Lasswell, 204
Latin America, diversity and unification 149, 150–2, 153–4, 164–5
Lauer, Mirko 21, 189
laughter, in popular culture 66, 70, 102
Le Bon, Gustav 26–9, 30
Le Goff, Jacques 63–5, 68, 70, 89
leader, in mass society 28
Lechner, N. 10, 160, 179, 207, 209, 245
Lenin, V.I. 20
liberation movements 2, 14–16, 18, 96–7
library, role 197
literature
  of dialogue 227, 228
  gaucho 171
  and *mestizaje* 188
  oral/written 99–108, 123, 126–7
  see also colportage literature; *cordel*; serial, newspaper
Livak, L. 17
Llosa, Mario Varga xi, 168
Lope de Vega, Felix de 100–1
Lotman, Yuri M. 125, 220
Louisse, J. 103

Lukács, S. 21–2, 116

MacBride Report x
Machiavelli, Niccoló 6
machismo 91, 168, 200
McLuhan, M. 37, 58, 67
magic
  and the Church 110
  in popular culture 19, 71, 90–1
Mairet, G. 87
Mandrou, Robert 103–4
manipulation
  by mass media 1, 58–9, 107–8, 119, 143, 159, 178, 230, 239–40
  and populism 157, 163
Marcuse, H. 242
Mariátegui, J.C. 152
market economy and mass culture 122, 126, 128, 137, 140, 142
  resistanec to 94–5
  transnational 179, 195
market, national 69, 86, 150, 152, 154, 172, 179
market, symbolic 230–1
Martí, J. 152
Martín Serrano, M. 210, 245
Martín-Barbero, Jesús, and popular cultural studies x–xv
Marx, Karl 69, 121
  and class 19–20
  and newspaper serial 136
Marxism
  denial of popular culture 6, 13–14, 17–22, 40
  and populism 161
  see also Frankfurt School; Gramsci, Antonio
mask, in popular culture 66–7
mass communication xiii
  and art 46
  as site of socialization 34–5, 36
mass consumption 140–1
mass culture 2–4, 76–7
  as authentic 34–5
  formation 112, 120–2, 163–78
  in Frankfurt School 40–1
  as hedonistic 60–1
  and hegemony 85, 121–2, 127, 139, 145, 230–1
  Latin America 159, 163–78
  and mass media 36, 55–6, 138–43, 164, 220, 228
  and the people 3, 52, 77–8, 228–40
  and popular culture xii, 37–8, 88, 108, 113, 120–2, 177
  and technology 36–7

mass culture *cont.*
  and urbanization 50–2, 158–60, 193–203
  see also culture industry; film; serial, newspaper
mass media
  as creating mass culture 36, 139–42
  as democratizing 54
  and ideology 204–5
  as manipulative 1, 58–9, 107–8, 143, 163, 178, 230, 239–40
  and mass society 140, 141, 145–7, 164, 179–80, 213
  as mediation 139–47
  and national culture 163–78, 230
  political role 151, 179, 180–2, 211, 230
  uses 196–7
  see also communication; film; press
mass production
  and mass consumption 140–1
  of novels 122
mass society 23–38, 149
  and experience 47
  history of concept 23–4
  Latin America 152–3, 156–63
  in Marxism 22
  and mass culture 33–8
  and mass media 140, 163, 179–80
  metaphysics of 30–3
  as mob 23, 24, 93–4
  and politics 24–6, 56–9
  as proletariat 26
  psychology of 26–30, 35–6
  and public 3, 29, 228–40
  studies 187
masses *see* mass society
massification
  and cultural pessimism 24–6, 29, 30–3, 37, 41–4
  and development 180–2
  and industrialization 24–5, 51, 93, 120
  in Latin America 156–63, 229–30
  and popular culture xiii, 2–3, 37–8, 40, 78, 85, 88, 157–8, 234–5
  of reading 128–35
  and social visibility of masses 120–1, 166, 194
Matos Mar, J. 198
Mattelart, A. ix, 227
Mattelart, A. & Schmucler, H. 183, 186
meaning
  and festivals 88–9
  and information 58, 60, 211
  inversion 120–2

meaning *cont.*
  residual 192
  unification 92
mediation
  communication as 2, 187
  as culture 33–8, 122
  experience and technology as 46–53, 54, 76–7, 166
  and family 216–18
  and mass media 163–78, 215–16, 220–1
  and negotiation of culture xiii–xiv, 3, 56, 99, 119, 139, 211–12
  of popular culture 197–8
  and popular literature 102–8, 126
  in the press 78–9
melodrama
  and cinema 114–15, 146–7, 167–8, 195
  and dramatic structure 116–19
  and Latin Amerian identity 224–8, 240
  as popular entertainment 112–19, 134
  and sensationalist press 177, 178
memory
  and cultural imagination 3, 83, 85, 132–3, 191, 225, 227–8, 231
  narrative 122–39, 163
  and new technologies 184–5
  and struggle of the people 15
  and utopia 192
Mendes, C. 179
mestizajes
  culture 2, 157, 159, 189, 219, 222
  in Latin America 149, 151, 188, 225, 238
  literature of 105–6
Mexico
  and the masses 160
  and popular culture 194–5, 201–2
  role of cinema 165–8, 195
  role of state 155–6, 160
  urban festivals 233
Meyer, M. & Montes, M.L. 239–40
Meyer, Marlyse 228
Micelli, S. 230–1
Michelet, A. 11, 91, 130
Middle Ages
  and images 108
  and rediscovery of the people 63–4, 70
Mill, John Stuart 26
Mills, C.W. 37
mime, in popular entertainment 114
modernity
  and communication ix, 153

modernity *cont.*
in Latin America 149, 150–1, 152–6, 167, 178–9
and Marxism 21
and mass media 182, 196
and massification xiii, 2–3, 25, 31, 36–8, 140
and Middle Ages 63
and new technology 183–4
and Romanticism 8
Moles, Abraham 220
Monsiváis, C. 149, 156, 166–8, 193–4, 196
morality
and market economy 94
in melodrama 118–19
in newspaper serial 134, 136–7
Morande, P. 10
Morin, Edgar 53–7, 139
and film 54, 145, 166
movements
and melodrama 226
new political 39, 56
popular 23–4, 95–7, 157–8, 161, 163–4, 198–9
Muchembled, R. 69–70, 85, 87, 109, 243
multitude, masses as 51–2
Muñiz Sodré 92, 175, 244
music
black, urban legitimization 171–5
and radio 235–6
and urban culture 159, 202–3
music hall, in popular culture 143–4
myth, and culture industry 54, 56, 97

narration, and newspaper serial 132–3, 135, 138
narrative, and *telenovela* 227
nation
and class 161
in Latin America 150–6, 164–7, 178
as market 86
and mass culture 164–7
and popular culture xii–xiii, 10–12, 88
and state 13, 86–93, 150, 152–6, 163
and transnational communication 208
nationalism xiv–xv, 69
cultural 173
and film 166–8
Latin American 150, 153–6, 162–3, 164, 172–3, 189, 194–5
in Romanticism 9–11
nazism *see* fascism
neighbourhood, and urban culture 76, 197–202, 213, 226

New World Information and Communication Order x
newspaper *see* press
Nissard, C. 103
Nodier, Charles 113
novel
crime 134–5
newspaper serialization 15, 55, 122–39
Nun, J. 229, 245

obscenity, in popular culture 65–6, 72, 97, 194
opinion, public
and communication 29
in Enlightenment 8
Ortega y Gasset, José 30–2, 33, 44
Ortiz, Fernando 169

Palacios, M. 152
Pareja, R. 165
Passeron, J.-C. 54, 80
pastiche, and art 45
Peirano, L. & Sánchez de León, A. 237, 238
people
in anarchism 13–17, 18
in Enlightenment debate 6–8, 12, 13
in Frankfurt School 40
in historical research 62, 63–73
in Marxism 13–14, 17–22
and mass culture 2–3, 77–8, 228–40
and mass media 219, 228, 237–40
and melodrama 112–13
as mob 11, 23, 24, 93–4
and nation 87–8, 153, 164
and politics 6–8, 13–16, 19, 121, 161–3
rediscovery of 62–83, 163–4, 208
in Romanticism 8–13, 14
and state 150–1, 172–3, 176
as subjects 6–22, 57, 93–4, 129–35, 145, 161–2, 188, 194, 208–9
see also class; popular culture
Perón, Juan Domingo 160–1, 169
Peru
national project 154
radio 235–6
television 237–8
urbanization 198
pessimism, cultural 24–6, 29–33, 37, 41–4, 54
peuple, in Romantic movement 10–11
photography, and art 49
Pires do Río, T. 200
Pitt Rivers, 14, 241

Pixérécourt, Gilbert de 112, 113, 114
politics
and business 153–4
centralization 86–8, 95, 154–5, 192–3
and communication 207
and culture 56–60, 72–3, 93–8, 210–11
internationalization 179, 207–9
and massification 56–9, 121, 158–63, 176, 230
and neighbourhood associations 199–200
and television 239–40
see also people
popular culture
and anarchism 6, 14–17, 96
commercialization 52–3, 234
creativity 10, 52–3, 82, 107, 201, 202
cultural circulation 105–8
degradation 120
and Enlightenment 7–8
and history 12–13, 33, 83, 85
and Indian identity 188–93
in Marxism 6, 17–22
and mass culture xii, 3, 37–8, 52, 88, 108, 113, 120–2, 177, 228–40
and mass media 138–9, 143–4, 163, 181–2, 185
and pleasure 44–5, 50
and political consciousness 93–8, 150
rediscovery 62–5, 88, 211
and Romanticism 9–13
studies x–xii, 62, 63–73
as syncretic xiii
three strata 79
transmission 91
urban 83, 164–5, 173–4, 193–203, 214, 229, 237–8
see also massification; people; repression of popular culture; resistance and popular culture
populism 10, 11–12, 18
and art 32, 45, 81
and fascism 32, 45, 161
in Latin America 155, 156–63, 164–5, 171–4, 189, 194–5
and massification xiii, 160, 230
of newspaper serials 136
Portantiero, J.C. 162
poverty, in newspaper serials 134, 135–6
power
centralization 69, 86–8, 95
and popular culture 37, 56–9, 79, 156–7, 209, 214
and time 218

press
commercialization 124, 142–3
and mass culture 142–3, 175–8
as mediation 78–9, 122
and popular culture 77
role in mass society 33, 35, 77, 104, 181
sensationalist 106, 133, 142–3, 175–8
serial stories 15, 47, 55, 122–39, 170
in USA 142
'yellow press' 142–3
private/public spheres 61
production
and daily life 212–13
and indigenous culture 190–1
and television 221
and time 89–90, 93
transnationalization 165
professionalization, of writer 125–6
progress
and development 178, 181–2
and enculturation 92, 93
and technology 49, 196
proletarianization
and popular resistance 97
and time 90
proletariat
in Latin America 156–9
in newspaper serials 135–6
and the people 14, 17–18, 26, 52, 98
and victim in melodrama 117
protector, in melodrama 118
protest, popular 93–7
psychology of the crowd 26–30, 35–6, 94
Puig, Manuel xi
Pulido, González 171

radio
and development 180, 181–2
drama 168–9
and mass culture 159, 164–5, 195, 196, 234–5
and popular culture 181–2
radionovela 114, 170
Ramírez, J.A. 109
rationality
and communication technologies 183–4
and culture industry 40–2, 54, 56
instrumental 7–8, 40, 47, 58–60, 92, 97, 189
reader, and writer 128–35, 136–7
reading
interpretative 214
popular 104, 169

realism
and Marxism 21
and popular culture 65–6, 227
Reboul, P. 113, 118
reception
in Benjamin 49–50
and meaning 211, 213, 214
and radio drama 169
and television 215–16, 221–2
reception analysis xi–xii, 2, 206
recognition
in film 166–7
and newspaper serial 133–4
in television 219, 225–6, 227
Reich, Wilhelm 28–9
religiosity, popular 16, 19, 76, 102, 213
Remy, T. 114
repetition, in television 219, 222
repression, of popular culture 19–21, 64, 70–1, 85, 86–8, 92–8, 99
reproduction, in Bourdieu 79–82
resistance, and popular culture xiii, 79, 92–8, 119, 193–4, 222, 229, 523
in anarchism 15
and daily life 77
in Middle Ages 64, 65, 67
and nationalism xiv–xv
and new technologies 183–4
political 72–6, 209, 211
and tactics 82–3
Reszler, A. 14, 21, 32
rhetoric of direct address 217
Ribeiro, Darcy 154
Richeri, G. 215
Riesman, David 35–6
Rivera, J.B. 169, 170
Rodríguez, J.M. 105–6
Romanticism
and the people and politics 6, 8–13, 14
social 124, 135
Romero, J.L. 149, 150, 158–60, 197, 229
Roncagliolo, R. 179
Rosenberg, B. 36–7
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 7–8
Rudé, G. 93, 242

Sadoul, G. 144
Salcedo, Hernando 224
Sarlo, Beatriz 214, 219
Satriani, Lombardi 75
Schiller, Herbert 34
Schmucler, Héctor ix
scientism 205
secularization, effects 71, 110–11, 141
Seibel, B. 170
Sennett, R. 25, 60–1, 113, 115, 141
sensationalism, in popular culture 143, 175–8
sensibility *see* experience, as mediation
sensorium see experience, as mediation
serial, newspaper
compensation mechanisms 136–7
development 124–5
format and symbol 138–9
forms of presentation 125–6
and mass culture 15, 47, 55, 122–5, 170
production and editing 126–8, 130–1
writer and reader 128–35
Serrano, Martin 23
sexuality, control 88
Shannon, C.E. 58
Shils, Edward 35
Signorelli, A. 230
Silva, Armando 202
situationism, French 56–7, 59
Soboul, A. 94, 95
society
and community 29–30
and the masses 24–6
and state 52–3, 86–8, 121, 197
sociology, and rediscovery of the people 73–83
sovereignty
popular 7–8
of state 87
space, in popular culture 65–6, 113, 118, 139, 192
spectacle
and festival 89
melodrama as 112–19
spectator, and mass culture 29, 41–2, 217, 228
Spengler, Oswald 30, 32–3
square, public 65–6, 234
Squeff, E. 154
Squeff, E. & Wisnik, J.M. 172, 173, 174, 175, 244
star system, film 145, 167
state
and hegemony 86–92, 155
in Latin America 150–63, 164–5, 176, 192–3
legitimacy 156, 172–3
and massification 121, 142, 156–63, 164–6
and nation 13, 86–93, 150, 152–6, 163
and political centralization 69, 86–8, 95, 154–5, 192–3

state *cont.*
and power 57, 60, 69
story telling
cultural circulation 105–8
as genre 133
and production of popular literature 99–104, 111–12, 122–39
stratification, social, and media technologies 215
structuralism, and communication 204–5
Sue, Eugène 16, 124, 128–9, 135
Sunkel, G. 19, 157, 175, 177–8, 230, 231
superstition, in popular culture 70–1, 91, 97
suspense, in newspaper serial 132
Swingewood, A. 120, 121
symbolism
cultural 95, 192, 230
and language 166
and political power 211

tactics, and strategy 15, 82–3, 186
Tarde, Gabriel 29, 30
Tartu school 125
taste, popular 73, 80–1, 102, 110, 137, 173, 213
technology
and art 16–17
and culture 92, 185–6
and loss of culture 33
and mass society 23, 30, 36–7, 67–8, 93, 122, 124, 139
as mediation 48–52, 54, 78–9, 82–3, 125, 215–16
and progress 49, 196
and uses 182–4
telenovelas xiii, 132, 226, 227
television
and communication 215, 220, 222–4, 227
criollismo 238
and cultural competence 29–1
and development 180–1
and family life 216–18
as mediation 215–16, 220–1
and melodrama 224, 240
and politics 239–40
and popular culture xiii, 181–2, 196, 237–40
production and use 221–4
and time 218–19
Terrero, Patrica 169
terror, urban, in newspaper serials 135–6
theatre
and melodrama 112, 114
see also circus, and popular culture; drama, radio
Thompson, E.P. 18, 71–3, 94–5, 106, 119
time
changes in meaning 63, 88–90
and daily life 78, 218–19
in serial stories 131–2
Tobar, Leonardo Romero 127
Tocqueville, A. de 24–6, 29, 30, 33–4, 140
Tönnies, Ferdinand 29–30
Tortel, J. 132
totalitiarianism, and mass society 6–7, 35, 39, 40, 52
tourism, effects 190–1
traitor, in melodrama 117
transnationalization
and communication x, 207–8
of culture xii–xiii, 70, 146–7, 165, 181–2, 187, 210
economic 179, 195, 210

Unamuno, Miguel de 105
unconscious, the, and crowd psychology 27–8
unification, in Latin America 149, 150–2, 153–4, 164–5
urbanization
Latin America 152–3, 156–62
popular and mass cultures 193–203
Ure, 90
USA
countercultural movements 56
influence on development 180–1
and mass media 140, 141–7, 196
and rise of mass society 25, 33–7, 140–2

Valera, Don Juan 105
Vaneigem, R. 56–7
Vargas, Getulio 160
Verón, Eliseo ix
victim, in melodrama 117
video technologies, and social stratification 215
Vitoria, Francisco de 6
Volk, in Romantic movement 10–11
Volkeskunde, in Romantic movement 10–11
Voltaire, F.M.A. de 8
vulgarization
and high culture 122
and popular literature 105

western film 146–7
White, D.M. 35
Wiener, Norbert 58
Williams, Raymond xi, 5, 78–9, 175, 192, 212, 231
witchcraft, in popular culture 70, 90–1, 97, 106
women
  in newspaper serials 135–6
  role in neighbourhoods 199–200
  in transmission of popular culture 91
work
  and exploitation 93
  and time 42, 78, 89–90, 200, 218, 226
writer
  and editor 126–7
  and newspaper serial 125–6, 136
  and reader 128–35, 136–7

Zavala, I.M. 107
Zeldin, T. 73, 175
Zonabend, F. 226