# PESQUISA E DOCUMENTAÇÃO

## *On Readers and Texts: Tracking the Routes of Cultural Studies*

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The purpose of this paper is to present cultural as an international phenomenon by way of comparing and contrasting the work being done in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. First, however, let me say-and here I quote from Stuart Hall (1990)-that "cultural studies is not one thing, it has never been one thing" (p. 11). For, even when it is identified with a particular tradition, cultural studies remains a diverse and often contentious enterprise, encompasing different positions and trajectories, addressing many questions, drawing on competing theories and methodologies, while shaping itself within varying institutions and contexts (see Hall, 1982, 1986a, 1986b, 1986b, 1992; Hebdige, 1985; Schudson, 1987; Sholle, 1988; Real, 1989; Williams, 1989; Morris, 1990, as well as the essays in Franklin et al.,1991; as well as in Grossberg et al., 1992, as they discuss the diverse traditions

(*) Thinking of Andrew Ross' (1989) remark that though not always evident, "reseach is always autobiographical" (p. 14), I wish to say that this paper "speaks for" myself alone, though I owe lots of gratitude to a number of people who have provided we with their insights and criticisms. Presented at the International Association for Mass Communication Reserach Conference Guarujá, São Paulo August. 16-21,1992

which laid claim to, and contributed to, the shape and work of cultural studies). In this sense, cultural studies is not, and is unlikely ever to be, a unified body of work, set of practices, or even a traditional academic discipline (Johnson, 1986-87).[1]

Different traditions of cultural studies have grown out of the efforts to understand the processes that have shaped (post) modern societies and cultures: the rise of mass communication, the increasing commodification of cultural life, popular culture and its audiences, discourse and textuality, gender relations, and the creation of a global (or, transnational) culture are but just a few of the issues and debates within cultural studies here and elsewhere. But, for all they hold in common, different traditions of cultural studies bear the traces of their own histories. My purpose in tracking the routes of cultural studies is to account for some of the key developments in theory and research practices in terms of these histories. Yet, by limiting my discussion to the works in cultural studies which deal with popular culture artifacts (or "texts") and its audiences (or "readers"),[2] I shall leave aside some important arguments and positions invoked by cultural studies practitioners in their efforts to theorize other cultural forms and practices which have equally taken root in and helped to shape our very daily lives (see, for instance, Modleski, 1986; as well as the essays in Giroux et al., 1989; and those in Mukerji and Schudson, 1991).

As it is certainly to be expected, longstanding differences among cultural studies in the United States, Europe, and Latin America do exist. However, it can be said that they share a common ground, that of taking a critical, rather than a behavioral or functionalist, approach to audiences and the conditions under which they make sense of and use the media artifacts they watch (see Atwood, 1986; Simpson Grinberg 1986; McAnany, 1986,1989). In a number of ways cultural studies has attempted to retain the cutting edge of the Frankfurt School's critical theory (see Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972), yet it has also rejected what it regarded as the oversimplifications of the Frankfurt School,

especially the emphasis on the way mass-mediated culture manipulates its consumers while preventing them from recognizing their own best interest.[3] This moved cultural studies away from the notion of ideology as "false consciousness" (as implied by cultural imperialism and dependence theory of mass media prevailing in the 1960s and 1970s[4]), and what followed was the notion of ideology as a set of social and material practices (i.e., non-discursive practices) mediated, in turn, by discursive practices (i.e., practices of representation and signification). By rethinking ideology as such, cultural studies opened up new roads for research in the past decade, particularly in regard to what I referred to in my title as **readers** and **texts**.[5] Broadly speaking, mass media texts were no longer to be considered in isolation from the historical conditions of their production and consumption. Both audiences and mass media texts, the argument goes, provide the mutual conditions of each other's existence and this intertextual relationship enables, in principle, a "negotiation of meaning(s)" to be made on the part of the audiences (see Hall, 1979, 1982). This question, however, is not without conflicts itself. Particularly problematic is the question of privileging either the text(s) or the reader(s) as the main producer(s) of meaning. This argument, I believe, needs clarification. For this purpose, I shall first briefly overview key theoretical and methodological concepts offered by North American and European traditions. I shall then overview more fully the Latin American tradition.

## North American and European Perspectives

Within cultural studies in general, and film/television studies in particular, there have been many attempts at understanding how meaning is produced, consumed and interpreted (see, for example, Woollacott, 1982; Kuhn, 1984; Radway, 1984; 1991; Giles 1985; Chambers, 1986; Cantor & Cantor, 1986a, Allen, 1987; Fiske, 1987a, 1991; Jensen, 1987, 1988; Waldman

1989; Press, 1986, 1989, 1991; Blau, 1990; Partington, 1991; Zavarzadeh, 1991; Ang, 1990; 1991; and the essays in Seiter et al., 1991; Franklin et al., 1991; as well as those in Grossberg et al., 1992). Thus it is now more customary to talk of "meanings" than of "meaning," neatly defined as the products of an audience's reading of a film/television text rather than as an essential property of the film/television text itself. In other words, audiences make texts mean; they don't merely recognize the meanings which have been put there by the author(s). Yet the notion that audiences may find a multiplicity of meanings in any one film or television text and that meaning is not necessarily "fixed." unchangeable, is still a eontested terrain within cultural studies (see, for example, the debate among Allor, 1988; Halley, 1988; Lull, 1988, and Fiske, 1988; as well as O'Connor, 1989; Grossberg, 1989; Long, 1989; Murdock, 1989; Lembo & Tucker, Jr., 1990; Evans, 1990; Budd et al., 1990; see also McRobbie, 1991; Mercer, 1991). A partial explanation to this might lie in the fact that, although agreeing that the audiences are constituted by a complex cultural history, media scholars do not necessarily agree on the nature of media texts. This, in fact, has produced what is known as the "constructive quarrel" among scholars who have placed thernselves under the aegis of critical and cultural approaches to media studies. Whereas the eultural approach (more typical of North American scholars) has been particularly influenced by James Carey's (1989) interpretive approach to communication, i.e., the ritual view of communication, the critical approach has come out of the Birminghan Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Great Britain) and has been Marx-influenced. Nevertheless, both approaches represent a departure from the largely quantitative, social scientific models dominant in the United States such as, "uses and gratifications" and "diffusion of innovations" (see Hall, 1986a, for fuller discussion of this point; and Kubey & Csikszentmnihalyi, 1990, who argue that some aspects of both cultural and critical approaches are comparable to developments in the uses and gratifications approach).

In the cultural approach, the mass-mediated texts are always polymorphic, presenting thus a multiplicity of meaning rather than a monolithic point of view (see Newcoomb & Hirsch, 1984). Though bounded or limited by their internal narrative structures (genres, for example) texts are thus considered relatively open to different Interpretations. In fact, the concept of television as a "cultural forum" produces, in its quasi-unlimited semiotics, a surplus-value of meanings which enables the audiences to get more out of television texts than that the author(s) intended to produce.[6]

In the critical approach, however, media texts do present hegemonic or "preferred" meanings which are negotiated, accepted, or opposed by the audiences. Thus, according to the "preferred reading" theory put forth by Stuart Hall (1986e), the meanings produced by media texts are always worked on by audiences as they make their own interpretations of particular representations. It further suggests that those texts do privilege a certain reading, in part by inscribing certain preferred discursive positions from which their dominant discourse appears natural and, therefore, credible.[7] As such, textual meanings must be thought of as deriving not from the text itself but from the text and the socially situated reader (see G. Thompson, 1979; J. Collins, 1989, for a critique of this approach).[8]

Undoubtedly, both critical and cultural approaches have definitely called into question the relationship between mass-mediated texts and audiences, mass-mediated texts themselves, the broad context of reality and the claims of its representation, as well as the audiences' ability to recognize and appropriate the meaningfulness of those texts. Yet neither one has been extended to include the problem of transnationalization of mass mediated artifacts-not to mention their interpretation outside the context of their production.[9]

Moreover, text-centered approaches to mass-media have been under fire for some time now, and many of the prominent scholars in audience studies admit to its inadequacy (see, for

example, Woolacott, 1982; Condit, 1989; Tomasulo, 1988; Bennett & Woolacott, 1987). In rejecting the notion that texts speak for themselves, media scholars have argued that the major obstacle to privileging the text (or the author) as the main producer of meaning is that one cannot assume that a particular meaning is intrinsic to a given text, since it must depend on how it is read (see Kellner, 1982; Grossberg, 1984). On this account, one must avoid making the mass-mediated text the only basis for critical analysis for, as feminist critic Michèle Barrett (1985) argucs, "to restrict our analysis solely to the text itself is to turn the object of analysis into its own means of explanation; by definition this cannot provide an adequate account" (p. 75).

Following this route, feminist media critics such as, Angela McRobbie (1985), Janice Radway (1986), Lawrence Grossberg and Paula Treichler (1987), H. Leslie Steeves (1987), and Lana Rakow (1986, 1990), have also called for a move away from a notion of text as an autonomous object of study and towards the more complex question of subjectivity seen in its historical, or social, terms.[10] This shift has in fact been significant to media studies: textual analysis, once considered unproblematic and easily explained by empirical evidence, has become a contested terrain. Yet a number of problems arise in connection with the shift from texts to "subjects" for, as John Fiske (1988) reminds us, "instead of passive audiences of the old-fashioned positivist and Marxist theories, it gives us the essentially passive text" (p. 248).[11]

But the taken-for-granted character of the text, however, had already lost its virtuosity in literary theory when, by the mid-1970s, literary critics-following Roland Barthes' (1977) tendency towards the "desacralization of the Author" (p. 144)-began questioning the whole idea of authorship.[12] For Barthes the "death of the Author" was a cause for celebration because it meant "the birth of the reader" (p. 148) (Wolff, 1984, and Miller, 1986, however, have attempted to determine whether or not this obituary notice has been premature). But such a prospect appealed less to those

working within film theory than to those in "television as text" theories and, perhaps, to those in literature.

Primarily concerned with the structure of the film text, film studies have drawn primarily on psychoanalysis, linguistics, and Marxism to provide a theory of film spectatorship.[13] Developed in the 1970s, and largely debated in the pages of the British film journal **Screen**, these studies argued that meanings were not immanent within the text but, rather, in the encounter between the text and the spectator. The latter, however, was not actually the originator of meanings, but was itself constituted through conventional visual codes provided by the text (see, for example, Metz 1982; Altman, 1985; MacCabe 1985, 1986b; Silverman, 1986; Mulvey, 1989, all contributors to **Screen**).

Central to **Screen**'s approach (hereafter referred to as "screen theory"), therefore, was the premise that film images do not simply reflect a pre-given reality but, rather, construct an imaginary one according to particular narrative conventions and codes of representation. The structure of film narrative forms (or genres) thus, not only produces certain ways of seeing de world and organizes consumption in particular ways, but alsoprovide spectators with the possibility of subjectivity (or "subject-positions").[14] Textual strategies, therefore, generate subject-positions for the spectator through a ceaseless stitching of text and spectator in the flow of the film narrative-a process known as "suture" (the shot/reverse shot formation is often cited as an example of cinematic suture) (see Dayan 1976; Heath, 1981, for a fuller discussion on the concept of suture; and Rothman, 1976; Detning, 1985; Morley, 1986; Klinger, 1988; Zavarzadeh, 1991, for a critique of it). Despite its sophistication, screen theory has been opened to a number of criticisms, one of them being that its proponents are notably reluctant in practice to follow their own theory on "text-reader" encounters. The result being that the pages of **Screen** "are still packed with apparently definitive readings of Douglas Sirk films or American TV soap operas, or the psychoanalytic meaning of Garbo" (O'Shea, 1989, p. 374).

Following a somewhat different line of inquiry, some film studies have also shown that the institution of **authorship**[15] is less a monument for genius-like directors than a battlefield between those directors, studio representatives, technicians and so on, and those who produce. distribute and exhibit their films (see, for example, Turner, 1988), while others (see, for example, Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 1985; Ryan & Kellner, 1988) have shown how the so-called "authorial talent" has been largely determined by both the production context and the larger political, economic, technological, and ideological framework in which it takes place.

The concern with institutional practices and with social factors that operate on cinema/spectator relation indicates a shift in film studies, a shift described as a "return to history" or as "a conversion of film studies into cultural studies" (Klinger, 1988, p. 136). No longer confined to the "text itself," and more in tune with the television studies previously discussed, some recent film studies have also been concerned with the "extratextual" signifying forms in exhibition. They have thus looked at film posters, hailers or previews, fan clubs and magazine stories, as well as a variety of objects ranging from t-shirts, dolls and caps to keyrings and hit songs, all of which make up the marketing (and signifying) strategies of particular films (see Dyer, 1986; Bennett and Woollacott, 1987; Turner, 1988).

As a way of concluding this section I wish to point out that the fundamental tension between thinking of meanings as produced by the text (or author) and thinkng of meanings as produced by the act of audiences' reading is by no means yet resolved in current media research (see Seiter et al., 1991). As outlined in the previous pages, the focus of research attention has shifted from texts to audiences and contexts, articulating them in different ways, and with arguments often open to critique and demolition. Yet the conceptualization of each of these positions entails rethinking the notions of subjectivity and signifying practices (such as myths, images, and discourses) in contemporary societies.

Whatever its limitations, cultural studies secks to do justice to the relationship between cultural artifacts and the audiences which consume them. Thus, even if still requiring some reworking, text-reader-context approaches to mass media represent a far cry from those textual approaches produced in the 1960s and 1970s (see Rêgo, 1990). Furthermore, by problematizing the conditions of both production and consumption of those artifacts, and their meanings, cultural studies has offered a serious challenge to traditional notions of authorship -or of films being the creation of talented genius, standing above or outside society (see Williamson, 1989).[16]

## Cultural Studies in Latin America

Turning now to the developments in theory and research in Latin America, it might be said that cultural studies in that region is informed by a Third World "structure of feeling,"[17] so to speak, for it placcs special emphasis on the problems of cultural transnationalization as well as cultural identity in Latin America which are, for obvious historical reasons, absent from both European and North American traditions.[18] Yet no longer informed by the assumptions of cultural imperialism and dependence theory which predominated in the 1970s,[19] Latin American scholars have, in recent years, become less concerned with the production of media messages and have turned instead to different processes of consuption.[20] This shift has been important not only because it has opened out onto new cultural practices (or, rather, old ones which had been absent from past research traditions), but because it has been grounded in an understanding of the relationship between social experiences and mass-mediated practices. In this respect, Latin American scholars have begun to focus for the first time on the active role of the audiences (see O'Connor, n. d., 1991, who provide an overview of work on Cultural Studies in Latin America).

In Brazil, Ingrid Sarti (1981) was one of the first to argue that the correct emphasis on the mechanisms of U.S. economic and cultural domination in the 1960s and 1970s served to mythologize

Latin American countries as "passive" victims of U.S. imperialism.[21] As a consequence, Latin American societies were conceived as "mere recipients" or "passive elements without any critical ability" (p. 327). According to her, by stressing this "passivity" some cultural dependency scholars, in fact, disregarded the on-going class struggles within each Latin American country. Therefore, it is unrealistic to think of popular classes as passive. Rather, "the potential for resistance and the capacity for organization of the so-called popular sectors [have] always [been] present in the struggle against capitalist domination, even in the most oppressive of circumstances" (p. 327). In a sirmilar vein, Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva (1982) has also argued that the concepts of manipulation and domination put forth by "cultural dependence" theories did not fully explain how the subordinated classes "elaborate their own cultural production and select, interpret, re-interpret, absorb and use the cultural production of the hegemonic classes" (pp. 5-6).

Raquel Salinas and Leena Paldán (1979) were also to argue that the analysis of the cultural sphere of the dependent societies such as those of Latin America cannot be devoid of class analysis. Moreover, such an analysis needs to reflect on how the constant invasion of meanings that do not express people's lived experience or their conditions of existence, will often generate sorme limits to its assimilation. Therefore, "the possibility of overcorning the order of domination exists, and no cultural-ideological system has thus far succeeded in hiding this reality completely" (p. 93).[22] And the feourishing of alternative communication models, such as those born out of the experiences and social practices of the popular classes, i.e., grass roots media (cooperative radio programs, community theater, use of slide-sound or video in urban neighborhood [**barrio**] organizations, women's movements and the Christian Communities [**Comunidades de Base**] gatherings) had already demonstrated tbe independent capacity of the popular sectors for cultural creativity and resistance to transnational culture (see Machado, Magri & Masagão, 1987; González, 1980, 1987; and the collection of essays in Simpson Grinberg, 1987).

Therefore, opposing the proposidons of class domination at home and imperialism from abroad that guided critical scholars in the late 1960s and 1970s,[23] Latin American scholars began stressing the need for a more in-depth investigation of the ways in which people in different social settings have used national cultures to unify and oppose, resist and subvert the dominant power structure and the dominant (usually transnational) media structure. They have thus placed stronger emphasis on the capacity of the popular classes not just to negotiate the meanings of mass-mediated texts, but to be themselves active subjects in the creation of cultural meanings.[24] In this sense, they are not concerned as much with the unpredictable power of interpreting pre-given meanings of media lexts (as, for instance, in the "cultural forum" or "preferred reading" theories) as they are with the ways in which popular classes have appropriated media forms so as to create a particular popular narrative memory through a process Jesús Martín-Barbero (1988) has named "mediations" (p. 454) (see also Martín-Barbero, 1983, 1987).[25] According to him, the concept of mediations enables the researcher to focus not on media forms (or texts per se) but on points of intersection, where media forms appropriate the meanings produced by the popular sectors and vice-versa.

It becomes evident that, by rehabilitating the audiences in its analytical framework, Latin American research has attempted to embrace the relations of y production and consumption as inclusive of all aspects of cultural practices (see López, 1991). And, as Latin American **telenovelas** [soap operas] are rescued from the dust bins of negative evaluations produced by former mass media theories, we learn that the popular classes not only do recognize in them the melodrama of their own lives, but also resist and reinterpret transnational cultural artifacts in terms of their own life context (see Martín-Barbero, 1987). But, with the exception of a very few (see Lins da Silva, 1985; Bosi, 1986, on the reading practices of the working class in São Paulo), what Latin American scholars need is to bring more empirical evidence to bear on those claims.[26]

This notwithstanding, the socio-historical analysis of the cultural competence of audiences (i.e., the construction of narrative memory through the media) has important implications for our understanding of the various ways audiences give meaning to the mass-mediated texts that surround them. However, when compared to those produced in Europe and the U.S., such an analysis is markedly different. This becomes quite clear when, for instance, one compares Fiske's (1987b) analysis of audience interpretations (he speaks of personal pleasures and the oral cultural gossip about television) and that of Martín-Barbero (1987), both published in the same year. While the latter locates the cultural competence of the popular classes in a much broader socio-cultural, economic and political history of specific countres or regions of Latin America, the former evaluates specific mearnings produced in text-reader encounters without much emphasis on the socio-historical conditions that frame those meanings. History is, in fact, absent from text-centered analyses of popular cultural artifacts although, ironically, much has been said about meanings being socially (rather than textually) determined (see Fiske, 1987b, 1989, and Allen, 1987, as unfortunate examples; O'Shea, 1989, who attacks Fiske's "populist celebration" of "the people's readings," and Gripsrud (1989) who also attacks Fiske's line of thinking; see also Moores, 1990, Carragee, 1990, Deming, 1985, and Liebes & Katz, n.d., whose works underpin some problems arising from this question).

I will not dwell upon this question here except to point out that, although both the "cultural forum" and "preferred reading" theories allow for different, often contradictory readings of a text's multiplicity of meanings, they still privilege those texts a great deal. By doing so, they leave a large part of the very crucial and complex conditions under which the audiences receive and respond (i.e., interpret) particular mass-mediated texts. Moreover, in articulating pleasure and desire as social, rather than merely individual experiences, Latin American scholars have embraced a

theoretical model which, in the words of Julianne Burton (1985), "recognizes a world outside individual subjectivity, a world in need of improvement, and affirms the social possibility of transforming it" (p. 21). But if a crucial goal of cultural studies is, as Burton says, to understand social transformation and cultural change, it is a goal we need to approach with care and humility. Otherwise, why bother?

## NOTAS

(1) The term cultural studies stands for, of course, the study of culture(s) - be that understood as either "a way of life" (see Williams, 1965, 1977, 1981) or "a way of struggle" (E. Thompson, 1961a & b, 1968, 1978). Though I have no intention of rehearsing here a debate that has been going on for decades, I wish to call attention to the fact that some of the tensions that constitute cultural studies are built into the diverse meanings given to the word culture (see also Carey, 1989).
(2) These terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper (see Fiske, 1987b; Kuhn & Radstone, 1990, for a detailed definition of these terms).
(3) It is, ultimately, for this reason that a new approach is suggested by those who, following Antonio Gramsci, argue that popular culture forms and practices cannot be simply reduced to either something passively received by "the people" (as implied by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School) or actively produced by them (as suggested in traditional approaches to Folklore) (see García Canclini, 1987). Rather, popular culture consists of those cultural forms and practices which constitute the terrain on which dominant and subordinate cultural values and ideologies meet and intermingle, yet constantly struggling with one another in their attempts to secure the space within which they might frame and organize popular experiences and consciousness (see De Certeau, 1980; Hall, 1981; Bennett, 1986a, 1986b; J. Collins, 1989; as well as the essays in MacCabe, 1986). It no longer implies, thus, thinking of two differente types of culture, defined in their own terms ("of the people" and "for them") but, rather, thinking of "popular cultures" understood here as "the result of conflictual relations between highly diverse groups, with common or divergent histories, which may no longer exist separately" (García Canclini, 1988, p. 464).
(4) This was quite evident in the works of Ariel Dorfman (1983) and Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart (1983, 1987), whose "readings" of

television programs and comic books attempted to show how the so-called cultural industries were mere containers of the dominant ideology. Audiences were thus conceived as passive consumers of a kind of "entertainment" which made no demand upon them. For a much up-dated and changed Mattelart, see Mattelart, Delcourt & Mattelart (1984); Mattelart & Mattelart (1990).

(5) Although much has been done by cultural studies to umblock the dead-ends of early mass media theories, I hope not to leave the reader with the mistaken impression that cultural studies theories (mainly in its Postmodernist forms) have completely departed from the thought of the Frankfurt School which insisted that mass-mediated cultural products "manipulated" the audiences while producing in then "false consciousness. This is quite evident in the works of Jean Baudrillard (see, for example, 1983) whose analysis of today's "hiperreality" leaves no theoretical space for social change to occur. This is, of course, not the case of feminist theories whose political strength lies precisely in their ostensible belief in social changes and in the critical abilities of the audiences to interpret mass-mediated artifacts (see, for example, Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Thurston, 1987).

(6) (A similar version of the concept of "cultural forun"is given by John Fiske and John Hartley (1982) in their discussion of "bardic television."

(7) The central text relevant to the notion of an "inscribed subject" is offered by David Morley (1986).

(8) Providing a radical critique of contemporary film studies, Zavarzadeh (1991) argues that reading a film is not merely conditioned by the "immanent" practives of the text or by the reader but rather is shaped, to the most part, by historically produced frames of inderstanding. It is thus not so much the "viewer who finds meaning in the film, as it is the structures of intelligibility that produce the positions of knowledge that will make sense of the film for those who occupy the desired positions"(p. 18).

(9) This is forcefully argued by Emile G. McAnany (1986) who claims that (1) the study of texts is no longer sufficient for understand the broader social contexts that influence the development of cultural forms; (2) nor is the sociologial/humanist approach to culture sufficient for understanding the international expansion and impact of cultural forms and practices (pp. 24-25).

(10) Whether overtly or implicitly, the term **subject** (and thus, subjectivity) has gained a privileged position in the debate around signification (or meaning). In political discourses, the **subject** signifies a person who is subjected to a particular form of rule or domination. The use of the word **subject** has been extended to include one who is subject to ideology [or

subject-in-ideology as claimed by Althusser, 1971], to particular hegemonic formations, or to power in general (see Foucault, 1982). Within psychoanalysis the word refers to the complex of psychical formations which are constituled as the human being is positioned in relation to language (see Smith, 1988).

(11) Jim Collins (1989) asserts that in any culture where a variety of contesting discourses attempt to assert themselves as "languages of truth, the tensions among them must become constitutive elements of their construction" (p. 86). Yet, "passive text theorists" only acknowledge those tensions at the receiving end (reception), not at the point of origin (production). The insistence on an inherent passivity or neutrality of media texts is, according to him, linguistically and ideologically problematic (see pp. 83-89).

(12) See also Michel Foucault (1984), whose work on **authorship** also claims that the author as "God" is dead. His analysis of discourses, subjects and power relations have been quite influential on film scholars whose work propose a new agenda on the institution of spectatorship (see, for example, Kuhn, 1985; de Lauretis, 1987; Mulvey, 1989).

(13) In the united States, Marxist-psychoanalysis-semiology represents the most vocal and, perhaps, the most influential form of film theory (see Carroll, 1988). Yet, as Teshome H. Gabriel (1989a) points out, Third World film scholarship suggests a different route for it "relies more on an appeal to social and political conflicts as the prime rhetorical strategy and less on the paradigm of oedipal conflict and resolution"(p. 39). See also Julianne Burton (1985) and Teshome H. Gabriel (1989b).

(14) Emphasis on the text (i. e., how a text determines meaning through its polysemic, open nature) has produced a particular subject-position, that of the "spectator-in-the-text" position, which implies that the spectator is "sub-jected to" the text. A formal distinction is thus made between the "subject of the text" (or "spectator-in-the-text") position and the "social subject" (also called "real subject" or "text-in-the-spectator" position) (see Morley 1986; Tomasulo 1988).

(15) See, for instance, Peter Wollen (1972); Edward Buscombe (1986); and Julianne Burton (1985), who discusses the question of authorship in light of Latin American cinematic practice.

(16) Equally important to the investigation of cultural practices, yet not mentioned in this paper, is the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (see, for instance, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1991) on the question of cultural (re)production at both material and symbolic levels.

(17) I have borrowed this term from Raymond Williams (1977). I use it here to convey a sense of passion and commitment for socio-political, economic

and cultural changes in Latin American societies which often informs the works of Latin American scholars.

(18) The full sperctrum of Latin American concerns about the transnationalization of culture cannot be reflected here. Moreover, the presence of transnational (usually U. S.) corpoarations in Latin America is intrinsically related to its political and economic relations with the United States (see Fejes, 1983, 1986a). In this respect, McAnany (1989) argues that the concern is one that U. S. scholars do not (or cannot possibly) share, because the impact of transnational corporations lies outside their territory (p. 13). Yet as the "Wall-to-Wall Dallas"debate might attest, European scholars currently do share with their Latin American colleagues some concerns with the growing presence of transnational corporations in the international market (see Ang. 1988; R. Collins, 1988).

(19) The theory of cultural imperialism argued that the U. S. (far and away the leading producer and exporter of television programming and film in the 1960s and 1970s) was imposing its values on the rest of the world. It was widely believed that, through its vast and seductive influence, television was a major instrument of propaganda and confirmity to North American beliefs and values at the expense of local cultures. The studies conducted in this vein further suggested that the audiences were passive consumers of whatever the U. S. culture industries decided to produce and distribute in Latin America (see, for example: Schiller, 1971; Wells, 1972; Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974; Ianni, 1976; Tunstall, 1977, 1987; Lee, 1979; Varis, 1984).More recently a number of media studies have criticized dependence theory for neglecting the internal class structure and dynamics specific to individual Latin American countries (see, for example, Fejes, 1986b. I discuss below Salinas & Paldán, 1979; Sarti, 1981; Lins da Silva, 1986).

(20) In García canclini's (1988) words, "consumption is the locus in which conflicts between classes, caused by unequal participation in the structure of production, continue by way of the distribution of goods and satisfaction of needs. It is, therefone, one of the spaces in which the culture of popular classes and its differences from those of others takes shape" (p. 493). García canclini's thoughts owe much to Pierre Bourdicu (1984).

(21) Emphasis on the "ideological aggression" perpetrated by U. S. transnational corporations via U. S. cultural materials has considerably waned in the 1980s. Pointing, for example, to the rise and decline of U. S. series **Dallas** in Japan, Muriel G. and Joel M. Cantor (1986b) suggested that U. S. programs appeal quite differently to audiences in various countries. Thus, it was the audiences in each country that ultimately decited the popularity of foreign programs, playing a decisive role in influencing the

types of shows imported from the U. S. and other countries. They concluded, therefore, that it is unlikely that U. S. media forms can be destructive of other cultures. Having said this, many problems, of both economics and politics, remain (see, for instance, Mills, 1985).

(22) Examples of alternative cultural forms and practices [**cultura de resistência**] which have appeared in Brazil in recent years are found in the works of Jorge Cláudio Noel Ribeiro Júnior (1982); Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva (1982); José Guilherme Cantor Magnani (1984); Marilena Chauí (1986); Regina Festa & Lins da Silva (1986); Ecléa Bosi (1986); Eduardo Navarro Stotz, Sonia Virgínia Moreira et al. (1986).

(23) Although some U. S. and European scholars have also claimed that the notions of cultural imperialism and cultural dependence are clearly no longer adequate to explain U. S. cultural domination elsewhere (see Straubhaar, 1984, 1991), Tapio Varis (1988) has quite recently gathered empirical data for imported programs in Latin America countries in the 1980s and argued that, when compared with the situation in the 1970s, it seems that the situation has remained much the same (see also Oliveira, 1991a, 1991b, who provides a similar argument to Brazil; and Schiller, 1991, whose work attempts to demonstrate that, though cultural domination has not diminished in the 1990s, it can be better understood as "transnational corporate cultural domination"). The difficulty in dealing with this theme, however, "consists to a large extent in avoiding the ready-to-wear judgements produced by the tradition of the struggle against imperialism in the 1960s" (Mattelart et al., 1984, p. 100).

(24) It is probably fair to say—as Cristina Schwarz & Oscar Jaramillo (1986); Tim Brennan (1988); Robert White (1989); and Alan O'Connor (1991) do—that in a number of ways Latin American scholars have developed different and quite original approaches to cultural analysis. And, although O'Connor observes that a feminist consciousness is noticeably absent from this tradition, the work of Oliveira (n. d. a.) allows us to sense an exploration toward this direction.

(25) Mediations imply a process in which the narrative discourse of media forms adapts to the popular narrative tradition of myth and melodrama, and audiences learn to recognize their collective cultural identity in the media discourse.

(26) Nico Vink (1988) has suggested, not surprinsingly, that a serious shortcoming in television studies in Brazil is that yet to offer a thoroughly investigation of the telenovela audiences. It would be unfair, however, to dismiss the work of Ondina Fachel Leal (1986, 1990; see also Leal & Oliven, 1988) who, via Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, has revealed a

great deal of how structurally differentiated groups watch and assign different meanings to Brazilian telenovelas. Several studies on Brazilian **telenovelas** have been published, but they are either restricted in their focus or rather descriptive, with very little discussion if any on the forms of consumption of those texts by different social classes in the country (see, for instance, Ramos, 1986; Ortiz et al., 1988; Marques de Melo, 1988; see also Oliveira, n. d. b. for a replay of old arguments about cultural imperialism). I am certainly not devaluing these studies, but noting somewhat sadly that, though crucial in film/television studies, audience reception is still alien to our academic habitus. I do believe that there are practical, as well as political reasons for this: audience studies are not only time consuming and labor-intensive, but certainly in Brazil unlikely to attract funding unless there's an obvious pay off or function from the media standpoint.

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