

MEDIA, POLITICS, AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

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- CHILDREN OF COLONIAL DESPOTISM: PRESS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE IN CUBA, 1790–1840.* By Larry R. Jensen. (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1988. Pp. 211. \$24.95 cloth.)
- LA INFORMACION INTERNACIONAL EN AMERICA LATINA.* By Eleazar Díaz Rangel. (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1991. Pp. 295.)
- THE AMERICAN RADIO INDUSTRY AND ITS LATIN AMERICAN ACTIVITIES, 1900–1939.* By James Schwoch. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Pp. 184. \$29.95 cloth.)
- POLITICAS DE TELEVISION EN LOS PAISES ANDINOS.* By the Instituto para América Latina (IPAL). (Lima: IPAL and Programa Internacional para el Desarrollo de las Comunicaciones de la UNESCO, 1988. Pp. 133.)
- MASS MEDIA AND THE CARIBBEAN.* Edited by Stuart H. Surlin and Walter C. Soderlund. (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1990. Pp. 471. \$65.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.)
- LA INDUSTRIA DE LOS MEDIOS MASIVOS DE COMUNICACION EN COLOMBIA.* By María Teresa Herrán. (Bogotá: Fundación Friedrich Ebert de Colombia, 1991. Pp. 330.)
- ESTRUCTURA DE LOS MEDIOS DE DIFUSION EN VENEZUELA.* By Lulú Giménez Saldivia and Angela Hernández Algara. (Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 1988. Pp. 226.)
- LA COMUNICACION CERCENADA: EL CASO VENEZUELA.* By Antonio Pascuali. (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1990. Pp. 174.)
- POWER AND TELEVISION IN LATIN AMERICA: THE DOMINICAN CASE.* By Antonio V. Menéndez Alarcón. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992. Pp. 199. \$47.95 cloth.)
- TELEVISION, POLITICS, AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Thomas E. Skidmore. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993. Pp. 188. \$25.00 cloth.)
- COMMUNICATION, CULTURE, AND HEGEMONY: FROM THE MEDIA TO MEDIATIONS.* By Jesús Martín-Barbero, translated by Elizabeth Fox and Robert A. White. (London: Sage Publications, 1993. Pp. 272. \$65.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)

THE TELENVELA AND EMANCIPATION: A STUDY ON TV AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN BRAZIL. By Nico Vink. (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1988. Pp. 287. \$25.00 paper.)

THE CARNIVAL OF IMAGES: BRAZILIAN TELEVISION FICTION. By Michelle and Armand Mattelart, translated by David Buxton. (New York: Bergen and Garvey, 1990. Pp. 175. \$42.95 cloth.)

All the works to be reviewed here contend with the impact of globalization on the organization, financing, and regulation of mass media systems and on the production of information and entertainment programming. The scope and rationale of this review essay are summarized in an observation made by Michelle and Armand Mattelart in their preface to *The Carnival of Images: Brazilian Television Fiction*:

[T]he norms of program production and distribution are becoming generalized in terms of a global market. This internationalization is a logic so powerful that analysis could very well stop at this point. And yet, at a time when norms are becoming universalized, the need has never been greater to examine the specific, concrete way in which each society links up with the enveloping reality of the market and international exchange. . . . [There is also a] need to understand how, within this logic of integration into a world market, the differences among societies, groups, and cultures express and recombine themselves. How do specific processes of acclimatization to the new technoscientific conditions work? What are the modes of appropriation of this movement toward the transnationalization of commercial exchanges? (P. x)

The studies to be discussed here can be organized under four broad headings—histories, country studies, television and politics, and mass media and culture—although the boundaries separating them are not distinct. All thirteen works begin with the assumption that media messages affect the cultural and political development of a society. Several other themes crisscross these works, regardless of individual focus: the dependence of Latin American media systems on foreign information, technology, and capital; the predominance of private economic power in establishing the operational norms and programming policies of mass media systems; the preponderant influence of advertising as a source of revenue and a force in producing program content; and the role of new technologies in the conglomeration of the mass media sector.

HISTORIES

Children of Colonial Despotism: Press, Politics, and Culture in Cuba, 1790–1840, by historian Larry Jensen, provides a short history of the periodical press during a period of relative stability in Cuba, despite considerable upheaval elsewhere in Latin America and Spain. Jensen argues that the fact that Cuban stability was only relative resulted mostly from the ebb and flow of constitutionalism in Spain during these years,

which unsettled Cuban colonial politics and society by permitting a limited freedom of the press, which in turn contributed to the evolution of political journalism.

Prior to the first period of free press and constitutionalism (1811–1814), “public writers” in Cuba stayed within the guidelines set by royal legislation and the Catholic Church. Although they chafed at the strictures imposed by the church, their stake in the political and economic status quo discouraged wide deviations from these norms. The role played by the press in the French Revolution underlined for these elite writers and the authorities the destabilizing potential of unfettered expression. In literary terms, this period witnessed the development of *costumbrismo*, which took the form of essays on local customs and became a dominant literary form in Cuba. A kind of accommodation between colonial officials and periodical writers set the Cuban press of this era apart from its counterparts elsewhere in the Spanish colonies. As Jensen explains, “In Cuba . . . , a happy coincidence of priorities produced a significant, elite-monitored periodical press” (pp. 16–17).

The revocation of prior censorship (but not subsequent censorship) during the first constitutional period (1811–1814), except in the case of writings on ecclesiastic topics, stimulated an increase in periodical writing, but it remained fairly conservative in political terms by supporting the interests of sugar producers: free trade, increased sugar production, and the slave trade. A notable publication inaugurated during this time was *Correo de las Damas*, the first periodical to address a female audience, although its content seemed to reflect the interests of male readers. The debate that took place revolved around personalities and personal attacks, with a fairly high level of self-censorship continuing. In fact, when the restoration of the Spanish monarchy ended this limited kind of freedom of the press by reimposing prior censorship and licensing requirements, almost no one protested. The periodical press returned to its literary orientation, but a political subtext (albeit a conservative one) could now be detected between the lines of *costumbrismo*.

The second constitutional period of 1820–1823 saw an increase of critical commentary in periodicals and pamphlets. The editors of several publications banded together to form a front against colonial authorities, and this group was nicknamed “*la flota*” because it was, as Jensen explains, a “fleet of periodical vessels” (p. 66). Such commentary included demands for electoral representation and guarantees for a free press. A conservative backlash dampened the level of criticism in the press but not the writers’ commitment to these two causes, despite the fact that constitutionalism was now beginning to take on conservative tinges as it came to be viewed as a way of preserving the status quo of the sugar aristocracy.

Royal absolutism was restored in 1823, and after an interlude of

stagnation, the resulting political censorship gave rise in 1828 to a vigorous literary press that espoused romanticism over the classic literary tradition characteristic of the earlier literary outgrowth. This period included the internationalization of the Cuban press as publications like *Revista Bimestre Cubana* reviewed information on a wide range of social topics, including lists of recently published works from journals and periodicals in Madrid, Cádiz, Barcelona, Boston, Vienna, Leipzig, Hamburg, and Paris. As Jensen points out, this cosmopolitan fare revealed “a voracious appetite for the intellectual production of the Western world” (p. 105). Prior to this time, dissemination of information from abroad had been strongly curtailed. Periodicals also published social criticism indicting the “gambling, lotteries, and other public vices that were contributing to idleness and vagrancy and sapping the moral and productive energies of the island” (p. 106). According to Jensen, such exposés actually served as veiled critiques of the colonial social order. By 1835 new legislation had curtailed these literary forays into the social realm but had not entirely suppressed their authors.

In 1836 constitutionalism was proclaimed again in Spain but not in Cuba, where censorship remained constant, although controversial, and dampened even literary publication. By 1840, what was left of the critical press had disappeared, and it was no longer possible for Cuban literary writers to earn a living at their craft.

Children of Colonial Despotism is valuable as one of the few studies of the historical antecedents of a Latin American media system, but its limited scope is disappointing. The tendentious relations between peninsular and colonial officials and some Cuban elites illuminate aspects of the role played by information and opinion in Cuban political culture during the early nineteenth century. But the reader is left wondering whether the tendencies Jensen describes made their imprint on the Cuban press from 1840 on and in what ways. It is tempting to conclude that the struggle between authoritarian tendencies to control expression and journalistic fervor in reporting and commenting on politics continued, with the forces of repression retaining the upper hand. It is not clear, however, that this was true in Cuba, or if it was, that an unbroken tradition of strong state control extends from the colonial period to the present. Much historical research needs to be done before researchers can do more than speculate about the weight of the colonial past on the organization of present-day media systems in Latin America.

La información internacional en América Latina presents a chronological history of international news—defined here as current information of public and social interest—in and from Latin America prepared by Eleazar Díaz Rangel, a noted Venezuelan scholar of journalism. The unifying theme is that Latin American colonies and countries have been primarily receivers of information about the rest of the world and even

about each other. As a result, what Latin American countries know about each other is deeply conditioned by externally generated information.

Díaz Rangel divides his study into two parts. The larger first part surveys the chronological evolution of international news in Latin America, from the *relaciones* of the colonial period to the satellites of today. In his view, "This history parallels or, more precisely, reflects the changes occurring in the dependent relations of Latin America under the international powers prevailing in each era, and the efforts to break free of them" (p. 11). Thus the development of news media in Latin America parallels the history of the region's economic domination first by Spain and Portugal, then by Britain (including British-French rivalry in the nineteenth century), and finally by the United States, especially after World War I.

The second part reviews research on international news in and about Latin America, paying particular attention to alternative projects, especially ALASEI (the *Agencia Latinoamericana de Servicios Especiales de Información*), which aims to rectify the imbalance in the flow of news out of and within the region.¹ This section also discusses the continuing dominance of the international news agencies and the impact of new communications technologies, a concern of several books discussed here.

Díaz Rangel's detailed historical survey reveals how Latin American countries deemed to be particularly important to the commercial fortunes of the great powers—meaning Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico—were integrated into an international news network. He also analyzes biased treatment of internal conflicts in "important countries" in the international press, as exemplified by coverage of the Mexican Revolution, and the evolution of U.S. dominance in communications.² Díaz Rangel contributes a useful bibliography, including an extensive *hemerografía* of newspapers consulted in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, France, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Although European and later U.S. preponderance in international news cannot be disputed, viewing the development of journalism in Latin America through this single lens distorts its history and obscures the complicity of local elites in constructing national media systems as well as the international news system. Nor does such a viewpoint leave much room for identifying the activities and influence of oppositional media in national and local politics.

James Schwoch goes some distance toward remedying these limitations in *The American Radio Industry and Its Latin American Activities*,

1. See also Bruce Underwood, "ALASEI: A New Dimension in Communications Pluralism in Latin America," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 6 (1987):289–300.

2. On the evolution of U.S. communications and cultural power, see Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). See also Herbert I. Schiller, *Mass Communications and American Empire* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1969).

1900–1939. He presents two versions of the development of radio in Latin America from 1900 to 1939 by using two different models: the competing nation-states model, characteristic of a traditional “diplomatic history” approach to the study of communications; and the world-systems model. In both accounts, the U.S. radio industry has played a prominent, if not determining, role. But in the “competing nation-state” version (which takes up most of the chapters), the United States emerges as the protagonist, offering technology and bringing its increasing international power to bear in formulating conventions for international communications. The first three chapters of *The American Radio Industry* chronicle the development and international expansion of the U.S. radio industry, a private-public venture intended to buttress U.S. economic and military strength. The fourth chapter reviews the development of radio in Latin America country by country, with considerably more attention paid to Brazil (the arena of Anglo-French-U.S. rivalry over trans-Atlantic cables).³ This chapter also documents the role of U.S. entrepreneurs backed by the Departments of State and Commerce in implanting U.S.-style commercial radio in Latin America. At the same time, Schwoch’s evidence lays the groundwork for an interpretation of these interactions that reveals both originality and some measure of autonomy among some Latin American entrepreneurs.

Chapter 5 tells the story of Latin American radio from a world-systems perspective, highlighting the role of governments and radio entrepreneurs in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, which results in a more nuanced history of how the twentieth-century international communications order developed. U.S. dominance is indisputable here, but Schwoch’s history of international communications from the bottom up shows how and when Latin American and U.S. radio entrepreneurs prospered, declined, and adapted within that changing global order. To summarize this version of the history of radio in Latin America, U.S. entrepreneurs and government officials, motivated by a desire to promote the sale of U.S. technology (and to assure U.S. military might) began first to sell radio technology in Latin America, which also entailed “selling” the know-how to establish and operate broadcasting facilities. These same U.S. agents later went on to manufacture equipment in branch plants (to counter competition from imported German and domestically produced equipment). When direct investment in broadcasting facilities proved unprofitable,⁴ U.S. entrepreneurs focused their efforts on supplying program-

3. On the Anglo-French-U.S. competition over establishing submarine cable networks in Latin America, see Daniel R. Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

4. Commercial radio broadcasting, especially in its early days, was highly competitive, and U.S. corporations like RCA were unable to garner the audiences necessary to support their operations or to counter what they considered to be the unfair business practices of their Latin American competitors.

ming, an area in which their dominance expanded with the advent of television. It continues today, despite the considerable production capabilities of Brazil's Globo network and Mexico's Televisa. Then as now, Latin American audiences took to U.S. programs. Their consumption of these products through the medium of commercial broadcasting (later supplemented by domestically produced shows) stimulated formation of internal markets for U.S. and locally produced goods and facilitated the integration of Latin American economies into the global economy. In examining global integration via the expansion of communications infrastructure and programming, Schwoch reveals how key entrepreneurs and the state in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico were able to influence the evolution of Latin American radio broadcasting.

COUNTRY STUDIES

Políticas de televisión en los países andinos is the final report of a study conducted by IPAL (Instituto para América Latina) in Lima, under the direction of Peruvian Rafael Roncagliolo, a major communications scholar. It is actually less a study of television policies than a series of brief factual overviews of the television systems in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, and Venezuela (members of the Junta del Acuerdo de Cartagena), followed by general observations and recommendations for developing useful television policies.

Each case-study chapter is intended to cover an array of topics: the production, importation, and maintenance of equipment; infrastructure in general (stations, number of receivers, and similar aspects); ownership and financial structures; program production and content; and means of transmission (over-the-air signals, cable, satellite, and so on). The overall purpose is to identify and analyze implicit or explicit public policies as revealed in legal and administrative regulations; decision-making processes; specific decisions, practices, and negotiating options; and methods of legitimation. In practice, however, researchers could locate full information only on the legal underpinnings of television in the Andean countries, with uneven data gathered for the other categories. Information was difficult to come by on equipment in Bolivia and Ecuador (where statistics of this kind are not kept) as well as on diffusion and reception equipment in isolated areas and financial arrangements in all five countries.

Nevertheless, a few generalizations may be derived from the data presented in *Políticas de televisión en los países andinos*. The media systems in the Andean countries are organized as private property (the norm in Latin America and the United States but not in the rest of the world). Despite the fact that television has been considered a public service since its beginnings in the region, it too has become more and

more privatized. The result is a mixed system of public, private, commercial, and institutional interests in which the economic and political interests of powerful private groups predominate in making decisions about operations and programming.

In Andean countries, the state regulates the technical operations of the media and establishes norms for programming, but its power is subordinated to the wishes of media owners, who increasingly own different forms of media. The importance of advertising as a source of revenue also gives advertising agencies and advertisers disproportionate power over programming decisions. Official policies and regulations in all five countries are inconsistent and piecemeal, with the result being that in each country (except Colombia), the number of channels is disproportionate to the size of the audience. For example, in Bolivia at the time of this study, forty-four channels were broadcasting to an audience of some three and a half million potential viewers (p. 94).⁵

Television broadcasts originate primarily in urban centers, leading to a double concentration of information: it is urban-oriented and relies primarily on an urban media workforce. Regional diversification of programming is not profitable under the commercial model adopted in these countries, a problem exacerbated by financial regulations that inhibit the development of independent national production. For example, imports of production equipment are usually exempt from taxes only for media enterprises, not for independent producers (except in Peru). None of these countries manufacture their own production equipment, although Colombia has an assembly industry. All rely heavily on imported Japanese and U.S. equipment. As new technologies such as cable television, broadcast satellite systems, and video recorders are introduced, they tend to fall outside state regulation.

Similarly, despite laws passed to encourage nationally produced programs, U.S. imports predominate because they are cheaper and more competitive. *Telenovelas* (soap operas), series, and films (generally imported) dominate programming in each country. Documentary programming is minimal. Only Venezuela comes close to complying with regulations concerning percentages of nationally produced programming. It also produces and exports telenovelas.

At the most general level, Roncagliolo and his associates conclude that television policies are needed because the commercial organization of the systems in these five countries has created conflicts between the rights of communicators and receivers. The state must formulate and enforce policies that reconcile guarantees like freedom of the press with

5. Such proliferation in essentially commercial systems exceeds the capacity of the audience to support the system through advertising and therefore hastens concentration of ownership.

the right to information, meaning the right to access and participation by different social groups and individuals in elaborating, transmitting, and receiving messages. The authors of the study also conclude that the television industries of the Andean countries should cooperate with each other because their domestic markets are too small to protect cultural production from outside forces and influences. This conclusion, however, seems to beg the question of the cultural homogeneity of these countries and to overlook the weight of the private commercial interests, which the researchers discovered to be powerful. Still, given the power of those interests throughout the region as well as the relative underdevelopment of television in some Andean countries, one can easily understand why the topic of communication policies looms larger on the research agenda in Latin America than in the United States.

The first part of *Mass Media and the Caribbean*, edited by Stuart Surlin and Walter Soderlund, offers factual overviews of present-day print and broadcast media on the "large and small, independent and non-independent, democratic and non-democratic" countries of the English-speaking Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, Grenada, St. Lucia, the Leeward Islands, and Belize), the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico), and the French- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean (Haiti, Guadeloupe, and the Netherlands Antilles) (p. 3). Each chapter surveys government-press relations (especially the situation regarding direct or indirect censorship); media ownership (generally private); and the influx of foreign (mainly U.S.) programming via VCR, cable television, and satellite; the growth of mass media industries; and journalism education.

These case studies reveal patterns much like those found in the Andean countries. Ownership of the print media is generally private; mixed in the radio industry, where a government station usually competes with licensed private stations; and public but problematic in the television industry, where government channels compete with unlicensed stations that employ new technologies (notably VCRs). The traditional media have grown considerably throughout the region in the past fifteen years, as have advertising, wire services, public relations, and recorded music production. In addition, imported programs (largely from the United States) appear to be altering Caribbean cultures and inhibiting the development of local production industries, even as they broaden access to information, which Surlin and Soderlund equate with freedom of the press. Only Cuba and Puerto Rico can boast local production industries that address local programming needs.

The individual country studies provide useful beginning points for learning about the mass media in these largely understudied countries (excepting Cuba and possibly Puerto Rico). These studies lay the basis for the more analytical chapters in the second part, subtitled "Inter-

national and Regional Media Issues" and subdivided into sections on international influences on Caribbean media, international coverage of the Caribbean, and Caribbean radio and music. All the chapters in the book are written by Caribbean media specialists.

The four chapters in the section on international influences on the Caribbean are set within the context of the debate in the late 1970s and early 1980s over the international information order. Although this polemic has lost its saliency in the United States, the issues it raised are still much on the minds of most Third World communication researchers. These chapters focus primarily on the impact of new technologies (VCRs and cable television) on television programming and find that they increase the number of foreign programs watched. The new technologies also widen the gap between those who can afford the new devices and those who cannot, a trend with ramifications for what people learn, including English. The question of threats posed to cultural identity by foreign media programming loomed large in the debate over the international information order, but findings reported here of a survey of Jamaican, U.S., Canadian, and Monserratian students do not support the notion that viewing foreign television programming imperils cultural identity. Surlin and Soderlund observe in their opening and closing remarks that Caribbean identity is changing as a result of (or perhaps in concert with) a new media environment, comments that show how murky the matter of cultural identity has become in recent years. More will be said on this subject subsequently.

The chapters on international coverage of the Caribbean focus on the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the Voice of America and Radio Martí, and the Haitian election crisis of 1987. These studies show that coverage of the Caribbean is greatest in neighboring countries that are involved most in the conflicts there. Such coverage also tends to focus on the present, and consequently, when new conflicts arise, they seem unprecedented to the outside world. In analyzing programming on the controversial Radio Martí, Howard Frederick and Bruce Drushel conclude that it soon diverged from its mandate to provide Cubans with an alternative to the information provided by Cuban media (representing the perspective of official Cuba and other communist countries) and instead broadcast mostly news and information about the United States.

The final section of *Mass Media and the Caribbean* addresses radio and music as political communication. The specific topics covered are Jamaican talk radio; CANA (the Caribbean News Agency), which supplies newspapers and provides a radio news service; calypso as means of democratic participation and expression in the English-speaking Caribbean; and reggae in the rise to power of Michael Manley's People's National Party in Jamaica during the 1970s.

In *La industria de los medios masivos de comunicación en Colombia*, Colombian lawyer and journalist María Teresa Herrán provides a detailed analysis of the economic and technical aspects of mass media in Colombia as well as an analysis of the regulatory role of the state. Her discussion in the first chapter of the economic bases of mass media could well stand alone as an argument as to why researchers need to take stock of mass media as both economic and social entities and why this dual perspective has been so difficult to achieve. Herrán argues that information is an economic product that differs significantly from other consumer goods: "Concerning the 'information product' and unlike what happens with other products that are socially less explosive (like a pair of shoes), something much greater is at stake: the ideological and political conceptions of an economic system and its defense" (p. 23). She elaborates the economic organization of mass media, emphasizing how they generate income, their roles as information producers, and the crucial relationships that commercial mass media systems forge among producers of information (conceived broadly as including all types of commercial programming), consumers, and advertisers.

In analyzing the organization of the mass media sector in Colombia, Herrán focuses primarily on its structure and the concentration of ownership. She finds increasing concentration that operates in two ways, both illustrating the phenomenon known as horizontal integration: first, conglomeration, which occurs when communications corporations invest in related industries such as printing, publishing, and distribution of books, ink factories, news agencies, and cable television; and second, the acquisition of radio and television networks by nonmedia corporations, especially financial groups, a fate that has already befallen the two largest Colombian broadcasting networks, RCN and CARACOL. Financial groups (usually conglomerates in their own right) possess great power to orient media messages through advertising and programming. Herrán provides specific data on the extent of concentration in Colombian media by detailing which groups own what and which individuals belong to which groups. This account reveals an advanced state of conglomeration that is turning the mass media sector into an oligopoly and deepening its role in the Colombian economy.

The processes that Herrán observed at work are already faits accomplis in Mexico and Brazil and are underway in all commercial media systems in the region in much the same way as in Colombia. The print press, the primary source of information for political and economic elites, is being transformed from an openly partisan medium into media enterprises whose bottom-line orientation is toward competition, which leads to declining diversity in printed information. This trend is occurring as newspapers are concentrated into horizontal monopolies and the role of nonmedia industrial capital increases. Although some newspapers remain

vehicles for particular political interests, they now have greater difficulty competing at regional and national levels. Colombian radio has always had commercial ties and commercially oriented programming since shortly after it was introduced in the late 1920s. The two main radio networks, RCN and CARACOL, now garner more than 90 percent of the listening audience and most radio advertising revenues. Colombian television, considered an essential basic service, is organized according to a mixed financial model, but private programming interests dominate the operation of networks and stations. Herrán's assessment of the impact of media concentration in Colombia is stark: it is antidemocratic because, deliberately or not, the information received by the public is manipulated, lacking in diversity, and one-dimensional. The structure of the Colombian media industry, including advertising, also reveals extensive transnationalization, a common phenomenon throughout Latin America.

Herrán moves on to analyzing the advertising industry, which by 1990 accounted for more than 1 percent of the Colombian gross domestic product. A survey of Colombian journalists found advertisers' influence to be the greatest factor in self-censorship (p. 105). The reason may be explained by the phenomenon of *retroalimentación*, the practice of certain advertisers of favoring certain programs and networks. Herrán reveals the ownership links between those advertisers and the favored networks, which suggest why journalists might become wary economic reporters. The forces at work in this practice can also be perceived more generally throughout the media sector as links among owners and organizations create multimedia systems motivated by a commercial logic.

Herrán next considers the impact of new communication technologies (including computers, videotext, fiber optics, satellites, and cellular phones) on day-to-day operations and on production and dissemination of information and programming in the press, radio, and television. Although new communication technologies have the potential to expand and democratize information production and dissemination, they have not been employed toward this end to date. Instead, they tend to isolate the audience from the producers in part because of the gap between the technology and those who can use it, either for financial reasons or because these technologies tend to change faster than consumers can learn to use them. A gap has also opened between the technical needs of the modernizing mass media industry and the training of potential employees. Media enterprises still must rely on training employees abroad, usually in the United States. The result is often underutilization of available technology.

Herrán indicts the Colombian government for failing to pass legislation that would address the impacts of new technologies in a timely manner. She notes a general absence of media policies, especially for television, which exacerbates the impact that nongovernmental controls

(economic factors) can have on operations and programming of media, especially in limiting diversity. Like many other Latin American communication researchers, Herrán argues for redefining the regulatory role of the state to support the protection of constitutional freedom of the press and the right to information. She calls on officials to move beyond the tendency to focus on minutiae or nonissues like private versus public ownership and commercial versus noncommercial media, which are idle debates in the current transnationalized media order. Rather, the state must pay more attention to the economic determinants of mass media "because of their frequently unsuspected but very real impact on informative pluralism and the right of the community to be correctly and efficiently informed in a timely manner" (p. 27).

Lulú Giménez Saldivia and Angela Hernández Algara characterize *Estructura de los medios de difusión en Venezuela* as a preliminary study of the economic structure undergirding mass communications in Venezuela. Like Herrán, they concentrate on providing data on the owners (individuals and corporate) of the Venezuelan press, radio, and television. Their information is detailed, revealing the study to be preliminary only in that not all media outlets are covered. Like Herrán's study of Colombian media, this analysis also reveals the extent of concentration and conglomeration in Venezuelan mass media and the dominant role of advertising as the source of financing. Advertising is once again found to be the linchpin of economic links among sectors of the industry and nominally competitive enterprises within each sector. Hence arises the increasing economic and political power of the media sector.

The first three chapters discuss the development of mass communication research in general and in Latin America. They tread ground covered in textbooks surveying research on mass communication but are good introductory overviews. The fourth chapter presents the operational framework used by Giménez Saldivia and Hernández Algara to collect data on the media industry. They claim a dependency perspective (and a view of the audience as passive receivers of information), but this approach does not really enter into their study, which is primarily a presentation of names and statistics.

Chapters five, six, and seven address respectively the press, radio, and television in Venezuela by presenting a plethora of facts, an almost overwhelming array of names and financial data that lay bare the structure of the major mass media enterprises. The final chapter offers general conclusions about the Venezuelan media sector that can be drawn from the data presented. The findings, which reinforce studies of media industries throughout Latin America, include the general lack of information on the financial structure of the industry; a growing concentration in radio (always more decentralized than the press or television because of its lower operating costs) via networks (*cadena*s) and the operations of the

advertising industry; foreign capital (largely U.S.) invested in national media through transnational advertising agencies and advertisers; and increasing vertical and horizontal concentration. Such concentration arises when financial groups control or have a significant financial stake in all aspects of a single medium—from production to dissemination, advertising, and importation of equipment—as well as in other media and nonmedia enterprises (such as soft-drink bottling or textiles).

La comunicación cercenada: El caso Venezuela, an interpretive analysis of Venezuelan mass media, was written by Antonio Pasquali, a Venezuelan philosopher and one of the founders of Latin American communications research.⁶ Pasquali takes as his point of departure the seeming paradox that despite an ostensible increase in the number of channels of communication, less information is available to citizens of the kind needed for informed participation in democratic politics, an outcome that discourages the building of democracy. Thirty years of technological advances that could have expanded access to media and therefore participation in society have been wasted, while the media system has become more commercialized and its owners have amassed ever greater economic and political power.

Pasquali departs from most studies of media examined here in two major ways. First, he refuses to separate personal communication from social communication (as embodied in the mass media or culture industry). Second, he addresses the sphere of personal communication—by telephone, mail, and paper, the stuff of everyday communication—as part of the larger communications system that includes the commercial mass media. Pasquali covers both spheres and is extremely critical of the commercial mass media in Venezuela for their dependence on advertising and imitation of the U.S. commercial model of programming.

The Venezuelan postal system IMPOSTEL is notorious for inefficiency and poor service, or what Pasquali calls its “*hiper-subdesarrollo*.” Underfunded, understaffed, and undermechanized, the system is being replaced de facto in urban areas by private messenger services, which serve both public and private entities, and by nationally and internationally based private express-mail services. The Venezuelan telephone system CANTV, a public monopoly until 1990, is just as bad and even loses money, a rare problem among world telephone systems. Beset with mechanical problems, CANTV operates with old, deteriorating lines (which are slowly being replaced with fiber optic lines). It also suffers from inadequate planning, poorly trained personnel at all levels (none of the national universities train telecommunications engineers), and an

6. See Cristina Schwarz and Oscar Jaramillo, “Hispanic American Critical Communication Research in Historical Context,” in *Communication and Latin American Society: Trends in Critical Research, 1960–1985*, edited by Rita Atwood and Emile McAnany (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 48–75.

irrational rate system. Another problem is a kind of internal competition for resources arising from the fact that CANTV also supplies wire service communications and carries national and international audio and television signals.

Pasquali advocates development of a paper-production industry strong enough to meet national needs, which are growing partly due to an increase in the number of newspapers being published. Like most countries in Latin America, Venezuela currently relies on imported paper for newspapers and other reading matter and for paper packaging and products such as tissues and paper towels. The increase in the number of newspapers being published in Venezuela runs counter to the worldwide trend of declining newspaper publication. This growth is strongest in the provincial cities, where the demand for information on local events cannot be met by the Caracas dailies. Pasquali, however, laments the failure of the Venezuelan press to develop its own cadre of international correspondents who could provide readers with a Venezuelan perspective on international affairs. Pasquali ends his provocative analysis with recommendations for improving the quality of Venezuelan media and increasing their potential for contributing to the democratic process. He reaffirms the state's central responsibility for guaranteeing the provision of efficient social and personal communication systems and warns against the temptation to view privatization as an automatic and easy solution to the Venezuelan media system's present ills.

The final country study to be examined here, *Power and Television in Latin America: The Dominican Case*, is the most comprehensive in scope. Although limited to the television industry, it covers the structure and operations of the industry as well as the roles of the state and the audience. As if to complete Herrán's observations about information being an economic product with social dimensions, Menéndez Alarcón states in the introduction,

Of all the new techniques that have affected human beings today, television is probably the most imbued with sociological significance. Television produces social representations and is at the same time a sign of the social. Television is today considered by most individuals to be indispensable in their lives. It is an element that connects individuals with other people, although rather artificially. Given decreasing face-to-face social interaction in modern life, television increasingly constitutes the point of reference for individuals, and as such plays more and more the role of cultural mediator. (P. 2)

This study thus explores television in the Dominican Republic in terms of organization, how information and entertainment programming is developed, whose interests are at stake in the matter, and the role of television programming for the audience. Menéndez Alarcón seeks to connect television (broadly conceived) to other social, political, and economic actors and to the question of power in order to capture the relationship between

historically produced patterns of power and interaction (and the ways in which these shape everyday life) and ordinary people's understanding or living out of these conditions.

In the first chapter, Menéndez Alarcón provides a historical overview of the growth of Dominican television, emphasizing relations between political and economic processes (internal and international). Dominican television was shaped from the start by the political and economic elite in power in 1952, when television began as a state-owned system manipulated by dictator Rafael Trujillo to control the expression of dissent. The author's narration covers the transition to electoral democracy in the 1960s, when privately owned television broadcasting was inaugurated, and assesses the present situation, which is characterized by extreme concentration of ownership.

Menéndez Alarcón's analysis of the structure and organization of the television industry and the factors influencing program content includes networks' relations with sponsors and advertising agencies and ratings and other methods of measuring and classifying audience taste. His focus reveals that Dominican television is organized along the lines of the U.S. television industry—free and commercial, operating with minimal restrictions, and dependent on advertising. The logic of advertising thus conditions production and a strong reliance on independent producers and imported programming. The Dominican situation shows that, notwithstanding the situation in the Andean countries, it is possible for countries with small internal markets to promote independent production on a small scale.

All Dominican networks (even the public one) program the same kinds of shows: imported serials and movies (mostly from the United States), telenovelas imported from other Latin American countries, locally produced entertainment shows (variety, musical, and comedy), and locally produced news, interview, and debate shows. As in the other television systems considered in this review, documentaries and other cultural and educational programs constitute only a small fraction of total programming on Dominican television. Menéndez Alarcón reports that educational programming is minimal because network officials think that most of the viewing public would not watch such programs (p. 45). He concludes that the lack of program diversity is a function of competition and assumptions about the audience's taste, not of whether the system is owned privately or by the state.

Power and Television in Latin America is the only study under review that delves into the meaning of television for its audience. Television serves as a conveyor of cultural values and representations and is perceived variously by viewers from different socioeconomic strata. Menéndez Alarcón's research shows that for Dominicans, especially in the middle and lower strata, watching television is "a major source of plea-

sure in their lives" (p. 58). Television also functions as a sign of material status and as an educational medium, particularly for the lower classes due to the high rate of illiteracy in the Dominican Republic.

Dominicans dislike commercials, however, and deny that commercials influence them to buy things they do not want or need. These self-perceptions notwithstanding, Menéndez Alarcón argues that the impact of more subtle consumerist messages embedded in programming (whether domestically produced or imported) is "to stimulate people to consume in the long run" (p. 69) and that their effect is manifested most strongly in viewers at the lower end of the social scale (p. 70). Television thus functions to turn viewers into consumers, which is indeed the economic logic of commercial television.

Menéndez Alarcón devotes the fifth chapter of *Power and Television* to the role of television in circulating ideas and opinions. Because television is the main source of information in the Dominican Republic, especially for the lower classes, it makes Dominicans more aware of what is going on in the rest of the country and the world (p. 82). Thus it becomes important to understand how television news is defined, produced, and disseminated. After studying the production of news on Dominican stations, Menéndez Alarcón explains what makes an event or individual "news." Newsworthiness depends principally on technical considerations such as visual appeal, novelty, drama, and saliency and also on "political-structural considerations," which include the frame of reference created by bureaucratic structuring by the news organization, the cultural and political values of journalists and editors, and the economic and political requirements of network owners (p. 83).⁷ In this regard, despite the representation of different social groups in Dominican television news and a fairly high level of dissent expressed via television, the overall message is conservative in that it reflects the interests of a business-oriented status quo.

In "Election Ritual and Television," Menéndez Alarcón discusses the uses of television in Dominican politics. His analysis of the 1990 electoral campaign reveals that television functions as a kind of master of ceremonies, setting the agenda for political debate, generally limiting it to topics intended to harm the interests of opposition parties, and "telemarketing" candidates to the voters (p. 123). His analysis underscores the role of money in access to television in Dominican politics. As might be predicted, rightist parties dominate paid political advertising on televi-

7. This definition of newsworthiness recalls Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Vintage, 1980) and perhaps indicates the extent to which Dominican television journalism mirrors its U.S. counterpart. See also Gabriel Molina, "The Imperatives of Corporate Rationale," *Media, Culture, and Society* 9 (1987):159–87. He finds similarly that the economic and political interests of the corporate managers of the Mexican communications conglomerate Televisa play a role in defining the limits of acceptable reporting in Mexico.

sion, accounting for almost two-thirds of the spots purchased (p. 147). Thus television's impact on political campaigning deepens the relationship between economic and political power in the Dominican Republic.

TELEVISION AND POLITICS

The studies in the edited volume *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* do not ignore the political implications of the economic organization of television, but they attend primarily to how this medium has functioned in specific political transitions. While the findings do not invalidate the notion that the economic interests of media owners and the underlying logic of commercial media systems limit the democratizing potential of mass media, these studies suggest that more spaces may be found within Latin American political systems where political information is "processed" than is predicted in the media-centered studies already discussed. The contributions to *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* thus place politics and society at the center of analysis and examine what television did and did not do and could and could not do in specific election campaigns.

Chapter one by editor Thomas Skidmore introduces the topic of democratization in Latin America and lays out the major themes for research on the impact of television on Latin American politics, especially elections and electoral campaigns. Mass media play two essential roles in democratic politics: as disseminators of information and as mobilizers of opinion and various forms of action. Broadcast media, television in particular, loom largest as mobilizers, while print media address primarily an elite audience that includes politicians and policy makers.

The next two contributions provide historical background on mass media and their continuing impact on world communications and politics. In the first, Douglas Gomery and Lawrence Lichty, well-known scholars of U.S. and international media, address the technical capacity of television to influence the agenda and processes of international relations, as when it covered the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Tiananmen Square massacre while these events were occurring. New communications technologies like fax machines, VCRs, satellite dishes, and E-mail are also changing the political landscape by making official control of information more difficult.

James Schwach's contribution provides a history of the roles played by broadcast media in Latin American politics, particularly since the advent of television in the 1950s. Since that time, the economics of television (organized largely into private commercial systems regardless of the formal or legal characteristics of each system) have forged strong links between the owners of television broadcasting facilities and politicians. This outcome is not merely a continuation of the tradition of a politically

partisan press, however. It represents a new, quasi-independent political role for television and its owners.

Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America also features five case studies of elections in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Mexico by Latin American scholars (joined by Joseph Straubhaar, co-author of one of the three studies on Brazil). Argentine pollster Enrique Zuleta-Puceiro reviews the changeable and confusing legal context of the Argentine media, addressing specifically the role of television in the 1989 presidential contest between President Raúl Alfonsín and Peronist challenger Carlos Menem. Argentine media tend not to reflect the interests of any particular political party and therefore provide relatively balanced coverage of political campaigns. Although television coverage and campaigning are not necessarily the keys to winning, this medium keeps the major issues in the Argentine public eye.

In their own ways, Zuleta-Puceiro's contribution and the other case studies grapple with the larger underlying questions of how television influences the political process and to what extent. The "hypodermic needle" theory of media influence, which holds that a sender injects his or her message and meaning into a receiver via a medium like television, has been discredited for some time. Yet researchers still do not know how and where media influences fit in with the many other social factors that shape individuals' knowledge, understanding, and behavior. No one denies that television has an effect, but isolating it and the ways in which it operates remains a challenge to communication researchers.

Accordingly, María Eugenia Hirmas's analysis of Chilean television during the 1988 plebiscite on the Pinochet dictatorship and that by Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Cavaliari Nunes of how Brazilian voters gained information about candidates and issues during the 1988 election hedge somewhat in attributing a pivotal role to television. But in another contribution on the Brazilian case, Venício de Lima argues that television was the decisive factor in Fernando Collor's victory because of TV Globo's skillful construction and presentation of his image. Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva qualifies this opinion somewhat in his essay, which argues that Collor's success was not due simply to manipulation of his image by the media. Rather, the media's handling of Collor's candidacy (and that of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva or "Lula") resonated with the attitudes and aspirations of Brazilian voters, who had grown suspicious and cynical about "politics as usual" and were relieved to see a new face on the scene. Lins da Silva concludes that although the media constitute a powerful force in a campaign, television in particular, they alone cannot determine the outcome of an election.

Ilya Adler's analysis of the role of television and other media in the 1988 Mexican presidential election underlines the uniqueness of Mexican presidential politics. Just as a single party has dominated Mexican poli-

tics since the 1930s, the broadcast industry has been similarly dominated by the interests of one family, the Azcárragas, who own the communications conglomerate Televisa and are longstanding supporters of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Campaign coverage was grossly disproportionate during the 1988 electoral campaign, with most coverage in all media (public and private, print and broadcast, mainstream and opposition) going to the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. And yet more Mexicans voted against the official candidate than ever before. It is thus clear that skewed and manipulated coverage did not entirely foreclose alternative sources of information, although it is possible that widespread mistrust of the media in Mexico induced some voters to reject the candidate favored by them. Adler thus echoes Lins da Silva's reminder that however powerful televised campaign images may seem, their specific impact on voters cannot be assumed. The problematic role of Mexican media as disseminators of reliable political information leads Adler to consider their function in constructing and legitimating the overall drama and ritual of Mexican politics. This "anthropological" perspective is valuable in suggesting that the tendency to focus on the specific content conveyed by the media during political campaigns may miss the larger significance of media coverage of electoral campaigns. The media constitute an arena in which political rituals are enacted: the print press reports and interprets political rituals, while the Mexican broadcast media project the charisma of the candidate and the PRI.

MASS COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

Communication, Culture, and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations is arguably the single most influential attempt to date to explain the development and originality of Latin American popular culture, including the elements mass-produced by the culture industry. Colombian scholar Jesús Martín-Barbero surveys the historical roots of popular culture and subsequent mass culture in Latin America. He goes back to the Enlightenment to discover the emergence of ideas of nation, state, and "the people," then advances through Romanticism, the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of fascism to explain the genesis of "the masses" and the critique of mass culture that has segregated the cultural consumption of "the masses" from the realm of "Art and Culture." Martín-Barbero also traces the evolution of so-called popular forms, beginning with the sixteenth-century Spanish *cordel* (although one could probably extend the tradition back even further to the medieval Catholic Church as the site of "popular" dramas). He ends his survey by analyzing the contemporary telenovela, finding the unifying link between popular culture of the past and the present to be the melodrama, the medium that activates the cultural memory of the popular classes.

The theoretical underpinning of the sweeping analysis presented in *Communication, Culture, and Hegemony* is the concept of mediation: the process by which institutions, forms of expression, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors condition (and can explain) the changing yet enduring articulations between cultural manifestations and practices over time. Martín-Barbero's goal, realized in the third part of this dense but rewarding book, is to make "socially visible the contradictory sense of modernity in Latin America: the steady, predictable tempos of homogenizing development upset by the counter-tempos of profound differences and cultural discontinuities" (p. 149). Researchers observe evidence of homogenizing development everywhere but particularly in the productions and products of the culture industry: mass media and an unending supply of consumer goods. Differences and discontinuities are also objectively visible, especially in class relations but also in the different cultural matrixes of "mass society," which according to Martín-Barbero imply different social uses of culture.

Martín-Barbero anchors his interpretation of popular culture in the particular historical circumstances that have shaped Latin American society and the mass production of aspects of everyday life by means of consumer goods and mass media. He shows how ideas about society and culture developed in response to real institutions and contributed to the development of forms of expression that created a particular system of social relations. Using the melodrama as the modal form, he identifies the common threads that link early forms of popular expression (before the emergence of bourgeois culture) to those forms denigrated as "mass" by today's cultural critics. Finally, Martín-Barbero elaborates the concept of *mediations* in the plural, which suggest that no single medium or institution—and certainly not mass media alone—shapes culture. This discussion provides a theoretical framework that permits readers to view cultural change as a social process taking place in similar ways and with shared meanings in everyday reality, not in a special realm called "Art" or in a debased space called "mass culture."

Nico Vink began the study that became *The Telenovela and Emancipation: A Study on TV and Social Change in Brazil* implicitly accepting the mass culture critique in the tradition of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. They believe that the products of the culture industry necessarily manipulate their consumers, rendering them passive and conservative supporters of the status quo. From this perspective, telenovelas with their Cinderella plots and idealization of history could not be forces for liberation or positive social change. In the course of his research, however, Vink changed his mind. He moved from the belief that "in capitalist society, only the struggle and organization of the popular classes could structurally change the social formation" to the view that change can occur through "the organization and struggle of any oppressed group," pro-

vided that the members of the group come to understand their oppression as socially constructed. Thus any medium that can reveal the “unnaturalness” of class and gender inequality is potentially a vehicle for change and liberation (p. 12).

To explore this thesis, Vink analyzes three aspects: the production process of programming for Brazilian commercial television, the major purveyor of telenovelas; telenovelas themselves as texts that carry meanings; and consumption or working-class audience responses to and “use” of the meanings embedded in or created by watching telenovelas. Along the way, he provides a wealth of solid information about the development of the Brazilian television industry, the writers and producers of telenovelas, the narrative strategies and meanings of these serial dramas, and the composition and lifestyles of the urban working classes. Vink presents a summary of the plot of the telenovela *Selva de Pedra* (Concrete Jungle) and a list of twenty-three telenovelas produced and aired in Brazil from 1970 to 1986, the basis of his study. The discussion of the production and reception of telenovelas draws largely on secondary literature but also on interviews and personal observations made during several years in Brazil. Finally, analysis incorporates literature reflecting significant theoretical debates in the fields of communication and political science, particularly the relationship between social class and culture and the role of culture in the formation of social movements and their course of action.

Vink’s findings are not startling: telenovela producers struggle to balance their creative independence against the organizational constraints of the television industry, especially TV Globo. Telenovelas themselves are polysemic, “representing discourses from more than one perspective” (p. 246). Most telenovelas revolve around personal relations (such as family life and love) and tend to resolve whatever social conflicts might be presented at the individual level (such as getting more education in order to be able to “marry up”). But the stories and their elaboration on film or videotape are open to enough interpretation to permit critical, “counterhegemonic” perceptions of class and gender relations. As Vink reminds readers, there is still “no research available to prove or disprove the notion that subversive messages related to class identity are perceived and decoded as such by working-class viewers” (p. 248). Yet working-class viewers genuinely enjoy watching telenovelas because, according to Vink, they offer characters and situations with which they can identify. Martín-Barbero makes the same point in explaining the persistent popularity of melodrama, arguing that it is in the process of identification that the audience formulates its own culture, one that encompasses the prevailing social order but does not necessarily exclude resistance.

Michelle Mattelart and Armand Mattelart cover some of the same ground in *The Carnival of Images: Brazilian Television Fiction*, but their

study also calls for rethinking and broadening the scope of communication research. Specifically, they advocate studies that combine political anthropology with political economy, studies that would link the audiovisual production market “to the lived and conflicting experience of social groups” (p. x). This approach is necessary because political economy cannot explain the apparent paradoxes of the contemporary global culture market, one of the largest being that Brazilian telenovelas “are more competitive than [soap operas produced in other countries], selling programs in a hundred markets, including Cuba, despite the still hegemonic presence of the U.S. audiovisual industry” (p. x). Echoing Martín-Barbero, the Mattelarts count telenovelas among “the ideological and aesthetic forms that have crystallized the collective imagination and in which popular memory and national memory are always in tension.” They note, however, that the international popularity of Brazilian telenovelas would be impossible without the “cheap, efficient mode of production” that brings them into being (p. xi).

The Carnival of Images begins by describing the rise of TV Globo in the 1960s, its evolution into a transnational multimedia conglomerate that monopolizes Brazilian television, and development of its premier product, the telenovela. The authors argue that TV Globo’s trajectory challenges the conventional wisdom of the overwhelming hegemony of the U.S. audiovisual industry, even though its productions still account for nearly three-quarters of international television program transactions. In 1987 U.S. productions earned more than a billion dollars, while the value of TV Globo’s exports reached somewhere between fifteen and twenty million dollars, having climbed rapidly from three million in 1982 (pp. 3, 13). Globo’s international operations now transcend exportation of telenovelas: the conglomerate also owns a majority share of Tele-Monte Carlo and provides technical assistance in telenovelas production to RAI, the Italian public television system. Like the U.S. television industry, Globo is now selling know-how as well as programming.

The Mattelarts next trace the evolution of the telenovela from its origin in radio soap operas to the contemporary U.S.-style television soap opera. This form of “radio with pictures,” unlike its Latin American counterpart, “is, in general, not a form of mass culture concerned with the expression of modernity” (p. 11). This difference explains for the Mattelarts why U.S. soap operas have not succeeded in the international television market and why Latin American telenovelas (especially Brazilian but also Mexican and Venezuelan ones) have. Brazilian telenovela production began in 1963 by adapting Brazilian *radionovelas* as well as imports from Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba. The 1965 production *O Direito de Nascer* (The Right to Be Born) launched the popularity of the telenovela form, and it quickly became the mainstay of programming on all channels. Production of *Beto Rockefeller* in 1968 established the hall-

marks of the Brazilian telenovela: dialogue close to the everyday speech of Brazilians, plots that develop more freely as if following the emotions of the characters, and situations that resonate with national and individual experiences. According to the Mattelarts, since *Beto Rockefeller* appeared, “the *novela* has never ceased to refer to certain problems of Brazilian society: racial prejudice, the condition of women, the relations between Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions . . . , industrial pollution, corruption, misery, urban violence, neighborhood struggles, and so forth. It has continued to take up the challenge of realism in a genre originally devoted to love triangles and affairs of the heart” (p. 79). Exceptionally popular Brazilian telenovelas have stimulated national debate and discussion, and even the print press devotes considerable coverage to telenovelas—their stories, issues, and actors.

The Mattelarts next explore the actual production of telenovelas, providing evidence on the role played by audience measurement (ratings) in developing plots and scheduling (different telenovelas are directed at different segments of the audience according to their viewing habits). The authors also analyze the relative openness of the production process with regard to the actual story: although telenovelas have beginnings, middles, and ends, they are not set in stone at the start. The plots change in response to audience reactions, sometimes because of the possibility of censorship on moral grounds and at others because of merchandising requirements. The practice of injecting paid advertising into the narrative via what the characters wear, eat, drink, and drive is a standard production practice but is handled separately from the rest of Globo’s advertising operations. What the Brazilians call “merchandising” makes the airing of telenovelas even more profitable.

In the second part of *The Carnival of Images*, the Mattelarts address the question of how telenovelas serve as mediators of Brazilian culture. Following Martín-Barbero, they argue that mediations between supposedly separate, historically constructed cultural spheres make it possible to speak of national, regional, or popular culture. The Mattelarts accept the idea that telenovela viewers are not simply passive recipients of meanings sent by program producers and industry executives. Receivers or consumers of entertainment programming can and do actively construct and rework the messages embedded in what they view. But as the authors warn, the class nature of communications still counts. Commercial media, especially television, which garners the largest share of advertising investment and earns the largest percentage of advertising-generated income, direct themselves to consumers—those with disposable income who are most likely to buy the plethora of consumer items advertised (not necessarily the wealthiest or the best-educated members of the audience). The media industry’s purpose is to sell products—the basic fact that remains unchanged even though members of the audience may “use”

the shows and commercials they watch in creative and even oppositional ways.

The third part of *The Carnival of Images* returns to the question of how internationalization occurs and why some countries' programs are more successful in the international market than others. Here the Matelarts end their consideration of Brazilian television and telenovelas per se, concentrating instead on television as a mode of organization, relations between the audience and the medium of television, and the ways in which popular audiences are created through the mediation of commercial media.

Taken together, the thirteen studies considered in this review provide a broad overview of the central questions currently framing research on Latin American media and communications. Foremost among them and encompassing the full range of issues that concern scholars is the power of mass media to shape political and social life and to structure economic options. The various disciplinary perspectives represented in this review are further unified by the central concern with the communication process regarding how and with what effects individuals and societies produce, send, receive, and comprehend information. As the interests of individual scholars diverge into the social, political, and economic dimensions of the communication process, their resulting studies yield a patchwork of understandings: broad and narrow surveys of a country or region, historical and seemingly ahistorical interpretations, anecdotal and more systematic data collection and presentation, and analysis of owners, influential individuals, and the audience from which conclusions about societies are extrapolated and vice versa. At the risk of oversimplifying the immense diversity of the actual conditions in which the communication process occurs in Latin America, a broad pattern may be discerned in the patchwork. What emerges is a bifurcated but not contradictory view of the media as powerful conditioners of public and private life and of individuals actively participating in the mass communication process as they fashion their own understandings of the information they receive and transmit those understandings to their friends and families and sometimes even back to the media.