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The Self-representations of the "Lettered" City and the New Popular Culture: A Cultural History of Bogota (1930-1948)

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Caliban: You taught me language, and my profit on't,
I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
for learning me your language!
No, pray thee.
[Aside] I must obey. His art is of such pow'r
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
And make a vassal of him.

William Shakespeare, ***The Tempest***

1. Introduction and Objectives

The history of Prospero and Caliban as told in Shakespeare's drama has been present throughout human history. The relationship between master and slave, servant and lord, colonizer and colonized are variations on a theme; there are, however, many variants that have to be taken into account when situating this relationship in place and time. The history that is the subject of this work has a great deal to do with the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. The addition of the specific features of Bogota as a peripheral and post-colonial city makes it a special and possibly unique case.

Hispanic American cities supported the Spanish crown in its colonial civilizing mission. In order to facilitate the exercise of absolute power, the Spanish had to hierarchize and concentrate social power. Cities were the places were delegated powers centered, and these powers were conferred on a specialized social group. It was also indispensable that this group of white colonizers be imbued with the consciousness of exercising a sacred duty, equivalent to that of a priestly class. These

prerogatives gave them the authority to organize the universe of local signs, at the service of the monarchy overseas (Rama 1996; Rama 1984: 23). Until the 18th century this group of lettered intellectuals were composed of many ecclesiastical figures. With the influence of the Enlightenment, secular intellectuals replaced the priests. In any event, before and after the Enlightenment, the functions related to the crown were assigned to high-ranking persons within the Spanish hierarchy. That is why Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the author of Don Quixote, was refused a position in Mexico: his lineage did not meet the expected profile for the role.

The “lettered” city (Rama 1996; Rama 1984) reached full expression in Bogota. The officials of the crown were surrounded by a retinue of educators, religious leaders, administrators, professionals, writers, all lettered men. Literacy was a system of quasi-sacred signs that imbued this group of persons with a magical aura. This allowed them to flaunt their positions and to maintain a high social status, thus obtaining abundant material wealth. The order to "civilize" gave them rein to govern their geographic jurisdictions in hegemonic fashion, creating a bureaucratic state of lettered officials. The lettered men found themselves in a privileged situation that allowed them to maintain political power and social status for many years, in fact centuries. So much so that with the advent of independence the group merely laicized, keeping themselves in power in some cases until the 20th century (Rama: 1984).

For this city, the written word was practically a sacred sign; it imbued the literate group with a magical aura. This allowed them to flaunt their positions and to maintain a high social status, thus obtaining material wealth and, at the same time, marginalizing from education all those who did not already possess these skills and social characteristics. In any event, during colonial times, following the Enlightenment and even during the republican era, the functions related to the crown and/or the state were assigned to high-ranking individuals in the Spanish hierarchies and their successors. That is why Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the author of *Don Quixote*, was refused a position in Mexico: his lineage did not suit him for the role. In Bogota, the lettered group at the close of the 19th century bore family names that could be traced

back directly to officials of the crown in colonial times. The learned and their descendents found themselves in a privileged situation that allowed them to maintain political power and social status for many years, even centuries (Rama: 1984). The "lettered" city, in summary, is not only a lifestyle but also a social organization, a form of maintaining a class in power politically, which is also linked to economic power through time.

There are three particular characteristics of Santa Fe de Bogota - founded in 1538 by the Spanish – that typify the relations established between colonizer and colonized, between the culture of the center and the culture of the periphery, and between Spanish lineage and *mestizo* blood. These are, first, the ethnic makeup of the subaltern group; second, the geographic location; and third, the mineral and agricultural wealth of the region that promoted a certain economic stability in the "lettered" city.

First, aboriginal populations in the Americas had different levels of cultural development. The *Muiscas*, who inhabited the area that today is Bogota, were neither the developed Incas, Mayas or Aztecs, nor were they the fierce and savage *Caribes*. They were a people at an intermediate level of development, sedentary and peaceful, and they lacked knowledge of writing and mathematics. These characteristics made them easy prey to economic and social domination and to assimilate the master's language. The sexual and cultural subjection of the Muiscas created an almost total *mestizaje* (racial and cultural mixing and fusion) in the subaltern groups that lived and worked in the city. Another factor is that Bogota was characterized by a very sparse population of African-Americans. All this implied a very limited presence of popular culture, unlike the situation found in other parts of the country. Outside Bogota popular culture continued to weigh heavily in the general culture, including oral literature, dances of native or African origin, etc. The scanty cultural production of the *mestizo* citizens of Bogota as an independent and autonomous group, left a space open for the culture of the "lettered" city. Therefore, the relations of power and knowledge between Hispanic descendents and subalterns, largely *mestizos*, developed more through mechanisms of imitation than through resistance (Fiske, 3).

Second, Bogota's location and geography marked the city's culture. Isolation, since it is situated on the heights of the Andes mountain range, and physical obstacles—high mountains, deep and swiftly-flowing rivers—hindered freedom of movement as well as creating a border with other regions. There is no existing work that explains how a small group of learned men, whose physical presence was almost nil past the borders of what is known as the plains of Bogota, maintained their hegemonic leadership for so many centuries. What is clear is that an illiterate[1] majority surrounded the Bogota intelligentsia, a fact that helped the intellectuals to portray themselves to local and regional subalterns as greatly superior and highly distinguished. This image is encapsulated in the term "*Cachaco*" by which Bogota men were known.[2] Due to this situation, Rafael Uribe Uribe, a liberal politician, justifiably said of Bogota's citizens in 1898:

> "Colombia is divided, if you will, into two nations: the residents of Bogota and the provincials, the latter being the dispossessed vassals of the first... Since here the politicians have started wars all their lives that we provincials have to fight to better their fortune, while they are enjoying themselves and chatting pretentiously among enemies... " (Uribe, 1979)[3]

Bogota's isolated location could lead one to think that it would be out of the running to govern as a capital city. However, it did not turn out that way; Bogota was the capital, first, of Nueva Granada (1550-1719); followed by the vice-royalty of New Granada-Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela- (1719-1810); the Republic of "Gran Colombia" - Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela (1819-1830); and finally the Republic of Colombia (1830- to the present). Bogota's hegemony – based on the strategic use of high-level literacy at the service of politics, culture, and

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[1] In Colombia it was very unusual to find a literate person at the end of the 19th century. According to some estimates, illiteracy in 1870 was on the order of 90 percent. When the first national census was conducted in 1912, the percentage who could not read and write had dropped to 80 percent. There were regional variations; for example, the department of Boyaca had an illiteracy rate of 90 percent, while it was only 60 percent in Antioquia. In 1918 the department of Cundinamarca to which Bogota belonged had a rate of 70 percent illiteracy.

[2] Traditional name for the formal and upright citizens of Bogota, still in use today.

[3] Cited as an epigram to Hebert Braun's book *Mataron a Gaitán* (Bogotá: Norma, 1998).

everyday life, as well as the support of cultural institutions that it had acquired by serving as the capital of the Spanish empire (presses, library, museums, astronomical observatory, etc.) and nurtured over time – allowed its elite of intellectuals to keep their power almost intact, although not unchallenged, from the days of the colony up to 1930. At that time the "lettered" presidents began to disappear and what was previously called the Athens of South America began to decline.

To these factors must be added the fact that Bogota and the surrounding savanna were rich in minerals (salt and emeralds), on the one hand, and in land with agricultural potential. The productivity in cereal crops (barley, wheat and corn) and cattle on the extensive and fertile lands of the savanna and the docile and cheap labor force enabled the founding elite of the "lettered" city to maintain their economic, social and cultural status well into the 20th century.

Having painted the general panorama, we find that the relationship between Prospero and Caliban in Bogota has some unique characteristics that differentiate it from other post-colonial situations, such as the cases of the United States, Africa and Asia. First, Bogota was a colony at a time of mercantile capitalism, or, as Enrique Dussel terms it first modernity, or Hispanic Catholic modernity (Castro-Gomez 2000:513). In addition, following independence in 1980, there was no "neocolonial" economic power in the city, since the economy was managed almost completely by local economic elites. The most important exception, and almost unique in the country, was the United Fruit Company, which functioned on the Caribbean coast from approximately 1900 to 1928 (Williams 1999:98). This allowed the elite a great deal of freedom of action, which indicates that the strategies they used to relate both to their subalterns as well as to the world centers of culture, were autonomous ones.

Second, the elite who led the city politically and culturally during the postcolonial or republican era wanted to retain the traditions of the "lettered" city—this was voluntarily chosen. In addition, they wished to maintain the most Western image possible and to feel directly connected to the mother country as during the colonial period. For this purpose they used the mechanism of imitation. With the eclipse of

Spain as a world cultural center, they directed their attention to imitating the second, rational and industrial, or Enlightenment, modernity of the 19th and 20th centuries. That is to say, they began to imitate France, England, and later the United States, while at the same time everyday life at the local level remained in the stage of first modernity.

This process of imitation was repeated in different ways throughout the history of the city. At the beginning, when the group of native-born "men of letters" imitated Iberian society, these in turn were imitated by their *mestizo* subalterns. As the years passed, the model for imitation changed to focus on 19th English and French society. This continuous process consolidated this attitude in difficult to modify, *longue dureé* social structures until after 1930. There is no clear evidence of cultural resistance to the mechanism of perennial cultural mimicry. That is to say that there is no indication of alternatives that challenged the Hispanic cultural inheritance and that proposed the creation of a self-referential culture that examined itself instead of looking outward and repeating the virtual reality that, like a film, occurred at a great distance and that was the standard of behavior in other contexts and societies.

The consequences of this process of cultural imitation were various and numerous. First, tensions were created between the borrowed forms and the free development of an autochthonous culture. Second, the superficial imitation of Enlightenment modernity generated a social mimicry with eclectic forms. Third, the impossibility of keeping up with developments in Europe— in material culture, enlightenment and technology—produced a sense of impotence that over time became an interiority complex. Fourth the ruinous ongoing process of copying fashions from abroad hindered free and autonomous cultural development, a process that justified the stultified patterns and rigidity of the local culture. Fifth, since the subaltern *mestizos* and the regional elites also took part in the process, despite the criticism, by imitating the Bogota Hispanic elite, this produced an imitation not only of the culture of the "lettered" city but also its complexes.

What was in fact generated was a cultural and political resistance in

the provinces to political centrism and against the rigidification of culture in Hispanic forms, phenomena that had their epicenter in Bogota. The resistance to centrism produced an endless progression of civil wars, which, as Rafael Uribe Uribe said, had very little effect on the everyday life of the city. This cultural resistance is documented in a number of accounts of intellectuals from Antioquia Department, for example Tomas Carrasquilla, and from the Coast, for example the Catalan scholar Ramon Vinyes. Although regionally based, they advocated a free and cosmopolitan cultural life (Gilard, 1989). The citizens of Bogota ignored these critiques until the pressure of events forced on them a position more compatible with the changes in the world. That only began to happen in 1930.

At that time external and internal factors helped to break the political and cultural hegemony of the "lettered" city. The main objectives of this work are not to study the factors that stimulated change directly, but rather their effects on the culture and the way that the new Prospero and Caliban found of relating culturally to each other.

The People's Voices Liberated From Hispanic Tradition

The period between 1930-1948 brought about great changes in the cultural history of the city. The year 1930 marks the beginning of the end of the "lettered" city that had existed since colonial times, independently of the political regime—liberal or conservative—of the day.[4] The year 1948 is an important benchmark in the city's history and that of the country: on April 9 of that year Jorge Elieser Gaitan, the liberal populist, was assassinated. A black period in Colombian history, called *La Violencia*, begins from the date of his death, a period that changed the dynamic of the process that had begun in 1930. The scope of this work will be restricted to an examination of the cultural changes that occurred between 1930-1948.

There were many factors at work that led to the democratizing advances of the period under study. On one hand, we find economic, political and social changes that were fundamentally domestic in nature, and on the

[4] The period of Conservative Party hegemony (1886-1930) placed a great deal of emphasis on Hispanism, but the liberal citizens of Bogota did not oppose this cultural form; on the contrary, they embraced it. On this see Malcolm Deas (1993).

other, external influences of many types that supported these changes. Other forces worked to oppose the advances, attempting to put the brakes on the democratic development of the culture and the society. However, the "lettered" city was definitively swamped by the masses to the extent to which they were able, simultaneously, to gain access to education and to the new communications media (Brunner: 1994, 178). What is clear is that the culture of the once archaic and formal city took a giant leap toward liberalization, toward cosmopolitanism, and toward the beginnings of a more autonomous cultural expression. In addition Colombia moved from being a nation of isolated region to being an integrated nation (Williams: 1999,8).

The integration of Bogota and the country occurred on all fronts. In economic affairs, reformist governments of the Liberal republic invested heavily in railroads and highways, as well as promoting air transportation, which had begun to function quite early on (in the 1920s). In the social area, an unprecedented rural to urban migration occurred, especially affecting Bogota. These newcomers brought with them the regional cultures. Cultural integration with the popular cultures of the regions and of Latin America was strengthened by two significant changes: educational reform and spread of radio.

Educational reforms brought about a climbing literacy rates beginning in 1930. Meanwhile, radio arrived in the country in 1929 (to Barranquilla on the coast) and reached Bogota in 1931 with the Nueva Granada broadcasting company. Radio broadcasting used innovative programming and succeeded in incorporating radio plays and serials into the everyday life of illiterates. At the end of the 1940s, 40 percent of the total hours on the air were dedicated to Spanish, English and French theatre, historical plays, and different kinds of serialized stories (Williams 1999:43). As well the radio news imposed a new rhythm of immediate connection between the city and the outside world. The days when news and fashions were delayed in reaching the city and being appropriated by its residents were past. These were not the only achievements of radio; this work will also examine the influence of popular culture, both Latin American and Colombian regional culture, on the "lettered" city. Popular song is the most representative of the popular oral tradition. This had been eclipsed in the "lettered" city

Bogota by written culture. It is through Latin American music- the songs of bolero and tango and the provincial contributions of vallenato, cumbia and porro—that popular culture enters into a dialogue with high culture in Bogota.

During the two decades under study in this thesis, a cultural synthesis was produced with its varied consequences and multiple effects. What is clear is that the process of transculturation (Ortiz, 1940) must have not only enriched the old Hispanic formalism with popular themes, but it can also be hypothesized that between 1930 and 1940 Prospero and Caliban must have related to each other and represented the relationship differently.

Objectives

The intellectual Eduardo Azula Barrera (b. Boyaca, 1912) once said of Bogota, "Prim, insular and Mediterranean city, since colonial times it has had the task of building around itself a nation, guiding it, defining its destiny, keeping it united and not dispersed.... and to be at all times the ancestral home where all Colombians from the most remote parts of the country arrive in search of a culture, of a great national prestige, of the realization of an ambitious dream, or simply a comfortable and tranquil existence sheltering in its hospitality."[5]

The objective of this work is to study the self-representations[6] of Bogota's residents during the roughly twenty-year period in which the "lettered" city was deconstructed (1930-1948). I argue that the self-representations allowed a group of 'lettered' men to enact the destiny suggested in Eduardo Azula Barrera's quote. These self-representations were also used as a mechanism of domination because they tacitly organized what was considered to be socially acceptable; though a mechanism of social mimicry they were repeated at all social levels both regional and local.

Since the decades under study are the period in which new self-

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[5] Cited as the epigraph to Herbert Braun's tome *Mataron a Gaitán* (Bogota: Norma 1998).

[6] The meaning of 'self-representation' will be explicated in the theoretical section of the proposal.

representations appeared, those emanating from subalterns (they find their voice in the new popular song), the consequences of the cultural democratization stimulated by the radio represents a kaleidoscope of dialogues among diverse publics and texts. It is essential, therefore, to compare the self-representations of the elite and the new self-representations of the subalterns throughout the course of the two decades, as well as to illustrate the cultural structure of domination and the new structure of liberation through these self-representations.

Through systematic observation, I propose to answer the following questions in this thesis:

1. What are the self-representations of the elite during the period 1930-1948?

2. What are the self-representations of the subalterns during the same period?

3. How is the process of transculturation between the Hispanic elite of the "lettered" city represented in its dialogue with the new popular culture?

4. How do the self-representations react to the obvious process of decomposition of the traditional "lettered" city?

Hypothesis

This work examines two principal variables. The first is related to the legacy of the "lettered" city, which implies an inheritance of a social organization and a culture, a form of interacting both with European elites as well as with *mestizo* subalterns that can be summed up as a world view and at the same time a strategy of domination. The second is made up of the situational factors at the time that led to the beginning of the crisis of the "lettered" city. The new popular culture expressed in song or poetry was stimulated by mass culture: radio, movies, musical shows, and so forth, as well as by the democratizing reforms known as liberal reforms. The synthesis of these two trends could have unfolded in many different ways, but since the structures of the "lettered" city

were so strongly rooted they resisted the change, fending off the assimilation of the lower classes and their new culture. Apparently the resistance was insufficient to silence the dialogue between the new popular culture and the high culture, which implied that underneath the resistance a process of transculturation was underway in the midst of strong tensions, which led to the events of 1948.

We begin from the proposition that the "lettered" city was a strategy of domination harking back to colonial society and culture and that its deconstruction started in 1930 with the circulation of the new popular culture through the mass media, and propose the following hypothesis:

The resistance to change exercised by the "lettered" city during the period 1930-1948 inhibits the presence of the new and emerging popular sectors in the self-representations of the dominant elite. This suggests that the liberating effects of popular music on the masses are repressed once again and thus excluded. But the new culture, repressed and excluded, not finding itself represented, erupts with violence. This must be examined using the notion of new self-representations.

Methodology and Sources

This work is based on the theories and methods of historical sociology.[7] It therefore integrates methods, sources and theories originating in both disciplines.

The principal method to be utilized is content analysis, originating in the field of sociology; second, the results of the content analysis will be melded to methods developed in social history—the *Annales* school and the British Marxist historians. Like the methods, multiple sources will also be used. Some sources are drawn from the mass media—*Cromos* magazine, for example, which incorporates photographs as well as

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[7] Peralta, Victoria: "Some theoreticians of history and sociology like Charles Tilly and Dennis Smith maintain that there is no categorical difference between the two disciplines (Smith, 1991). For others, among them Julian Casanova, Peter Burke and Pietro Rossi, significant differences do exist (Casanova, 1997 and Rossi, 1994), which apparently can be located in their approaches to social facts viewed over time" in *Different Approaches between Sociological Theory and Historical Data*. Field Statement, New School for Social Research, New York, 2001.

written material. Likewise popular song and the advertisements that appear in the press will be used. Other sources that emanated from the city's elite include history textbooks for children and youth studying in the city's schools, biographies, and secondary sources. This variety of sources and methods will contribute to answering the questions posed above and to supporting the hypothesis presented in the preceding section.

Next, we will outline the use that will be made of the methods and sources and the results that are expected.

Content analysis

Bernard Berelson defines this method as, "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. "[C]ontent analysis... is understood as a technique for the classification of sign-vehicles, a process which relies solely upon the judgments of the analyst or the scientific observer." (Berelson, 1948:2). In any 'content analysis' the task is to make inferences from data to certain aspects of their context and to justify these inferences in terms of the knowledge about the stable factors in the system of interest (Krippendorff, 27).

Since this method deals with what is said in the content, and not the motives or appeals of the sources, we are going to proceed as the method indicates to us:

1. Assembling the data as it is communicated.
2. Classifying and/or quantifying in order to find the ruling guide.
3. Examining the pattern, interrelationship, and context of the data.
4. Interpreting the findings.

These inferences will be linked not only to the inherited *longue durée* cultural structures but also to a broader historic and social context of the city and the country in the period under study (1930-1948).

The recent study of Roberto Franzosi suggests advances in the possibilities for using content analysis. Leo Lowenthal and Bernard

Berelson, and others, employed it exclusively for the study of mass media sources. Franzosi opens the possibility of using the same method to treat multiple sources as we will see below (Franzosi, 2001).

Franzosi comments on content analysis as follows: "For several decades, content analysis was only a set of names with no 'connections of one of them to another'" (Franzosi, 28). Franzosi's contribution was to develop a strategy known as "story grammar," in which cognitive psychology is linked to linguistics in an interdisciplinary fashion. With this approach, content analysis becomes a method that has possibilities for use with a great variety of sources. Franzosi says, citing Roland Barthes, "Narrative is present in songs, myth, legend, fable, tale, novel, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation." What is important about narrative thus conceived by Barthes and taken up by Franzosi is that it moves in the everyday world of subjects, actions and objects and not in the world of ideas, thought, and opinion. Therefore, the types of sources excluded from the narrative for the purposes of content analysis include letters, autobiographies, editorials and all those that treat opinion, thought, ideas and not the narration of everyday situations. In chapter 2, Franzosi explains how the 'grammar texts' are readily converted into a theoretical framework, in a generalization of representative situations(Franzosi, 29).

For the reasons cited above, content analysis will allow us to examine the self-representations, which, in this case, will be those produced by the elites and by the lower classes. The former will be viewed through the pages of *Cromos* magazine and the history textbooks. The latter will be studied in the lyrics of popular songs that circulated widely in the city during the period.

The following data will be collected:

1. *Cromos* magazine will be used to study the evolution of self-representations at three points in time: 1930, 1942 and 1948.

2. The history textbooks will contribute the self-representations reproduced in texts published in Bogota between 1930 and 1948.

3. The self-representations expressed in popular song will be studied based on the lyrics alone. Songs that were widely heard and sung in Bogota during the period will be examined.

Using these sources and the method of content analysis, we will attempt to elucidate the following cultural and social patterns: social hierarchies—what is admired and what is scorned; social networks or solidarity groups among individuals, groups and governmental or non-governmental organizations; gender relations and race relations; relations between the culture of the center (Europe, the United States) and the periphery (Latin America and Bogota specifically); the relations between Bogota and the provinces; the relations between the period being studied and the colonial past; the meaning of civilization and barbarism; the paraphernalia of everyday life, and its relation to groups holding power.

Methods Drawn from Social History

The methodological tradition of the French Annals School and British social history has produced a voluminous bibliography on method. For example, Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt review the methodological possibilities of the Annales school and recount how history can be done in modern fashion, leaving positivism behind, as well as proposing the use of sociological theory to illuminate historical analysis. For the English, we can highlight the work on historical methodology of Dennis Smith, Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Maurice Dobb, Perry Anderson, Harold Perkins, among others, who advocate the well-known approach "history from below" as well as reflecting on new ways of doing history.

With the contribution of these new lenses, both to process historical data as well as to view society and cultures with the aid of sociological theory, we propose to link the social history methodologies to that of content analysis. This connection will be made with the assistance of a prosopography, or collective biography, developed out of the self-representations of Bogota's inhabitants that appear in *Cromos* magazine. From this will come a cultural history based on real people, that is a social history.

Theoretical Framework

In this section we will examine certain aspects that will allow us to delimit, theoretically and conceptually, the case under study. First, a definition of what is meant by popular culture is required. Second, the meaning of self-representation must be delineated. Finally, the triple relationship between the culture of the "lettered" city, the national culture, and Bogota's postcolonial cultural milieu will be examined.

Popular Culture

Sociological theories of culture have conceptualized popular culture using three main approaches to its study: folklore,[8] urban mass culture emanating from mass media such as radio, television, and so forth,[9] and, third, everyday life.[10] Curiously, the three notions of popular culture are interwoven in the period 1930-1948 as we will see.

On one hand, the arrival of radio to the nascent city of the masses implied the eruption of mass culture in a culture of popular tradition or "folk" culture. The culture of subalterns, based in tradition, custom, popular wisdom and anonymous contributions was juxtapositioned to the written culture, supported by the academy, and to the important role played by individualism and individual recognition. However, popular music "arrives" with radio, breaking subaltern traditions and offering them a new medium to express a culture that had until them

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[8] See Carol Silberman, "Reconstructing Folklore: Media and Cultural Policy in Eastern Europe," in *Comunication*, 11 (June 1989), pp.141-160. See also Robert Redfield "The Folk Society," *The American Journal of Sociology*, No. 4 (Jan 1947). In Colombia, Manuel and Delia Zapata Olivella are pioneering names in the studies of popular culture from the approach of folklore.

[9] The work of the Frankfurt School is rich in discussion on the topic, for example the letters exchanged by T. Adorno and W. Benjamin during the 1930s.

[10] There are several approaches to everyday life originating in the work of Sigmund Freud and later branching out in different visions. From the French approach we can point to the work of Roger Chartier, *Culture écrite et société; L'Ordre des livres (XIV-XVIII)* (Paris: Alvin Michel, 1996) and the equally important view of French sociologist Henry Lefebvre, published in Spanish as *La vida cotidiana en el mundo moderno* (Alianza Editorial, 1984). The Frankfurt School's approach, as developed by Agnes Heller and Wilhelm Reich, is also of interest. As well there is a recent approach from American sociologist Herbert J. Gans, who emphasizes the taste and the education to confront everyday life, in the conservative lineage of Kantian thought. See *Popular Culture and High Culture. An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (1974).

been confined to the private or everyday sphere.

The culture reigning in the city since colonial times changed with the introduction of radio, especially for the subalterns. For this reason theorists argue that Latin American cultural modernity goes hand in hand with some profound transformations in modes of producing, transmitting and consuming culture. Jose Joaquin Brunner clarifies this idea stating, "This is where the specific differences with the European project of modernity can be found. We can say that while mass popular culture arrived in Europe following several centuries in which the written culture was consolidated, in Latin America, as in Bogota, it arrived in a society that was largely illiterate. That could be the reason why literature never became a mass phenomenon; on the contrary it ceded its space to cultural industries: music, radio, cinema" (Brunner: 1994, 178).

In order to clarify in what sense radio represents a cultural transformation for the subaltern groups, I want to set out here, theoretically, how the individual musical experience is related to the social world. Ana Maria Ochoa in her article on *bambuco* and Colombian cultural identity develops two main points.[11] The first is that music constructs social and individual identity and, second, that it facilitates the movement from the private sphere to the public sphere. On the construction of identity she says, "Musical genres are spaces from which we construct basic aspects of our social being and from which are constituted the codes and limits of what is supposed to be not only an appropriate musical language, but also a socially valid behavior" (Ochoa: 1997, 35). Later in the article she complements this by stating that perhaps one of the most powerful characteristics of music is its unlimited capacity to move us, to give form and expression to our affective worlds. This dimension of music relies on certain fundamental facts, at least at a palpable level, the main one being the corporal harmony through gestures and rhythms that contributes greatly to the definition of identity. That is the timber, intensity, tonality, rhythm, and so forth, are profoundly meaningful at the

[11] See "Tradición, género y nación en el bambuco," xxxx This article rests on the work of Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings, Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), and also on Ray Pratt (1990), *Rhythm and Resistance: Exploration in the Political Uses of Popular Music* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

cultural and social level.

The second point that she discusses is the mediating function of music, "[music] inhabits a space at the intersection between the public and the private." It "makes possible different ways of managing the interrelationship of these two dimensions of our lives." For this reason popular culture, understood as the culture of the masses that is transmitted through popular music played on the radio, is capable of transforming the social groups it touches (Ochoa, 1997, 35). Here we are interested in clarifying two ideas about Ochoa's work before continuing. The first is that although music in itself has transformational effects on society and culture, in this work we will not center the analysis on music properly speaking but rather on song as a form of expression and representation—as popular poetry set to music. Therefore we are interested in concentrating on the second part of the argument, that which situates music in the intersection between the private and the public spheres, facilitating movement between them. This brings us to the concept of popular culture and everyday life.

We will now examine the third notion of popular culture or the culture of **everyday life**. Habermas relates this understanding to the sphere of private life. Here we look theoretically at how the culture of subalterns in Bogota, repressed, eclipsed and confined to the everyday, finds new spaces and ways of expression beginning in 1930. Thanks to the position of music in the intersection between the public and the private, the subaltern culture in Bogota moves into the public sphere. This movement from the private to the public implies a process of liberation which in turn changes not only the social forms of self-perception but also those of self-representation of the everyday world. To summarize, a new narrative cosmos is constructed and represented through popular song, producing a cultural revolution in Bogota during the period under study.

All the points developed above lead us to the concept of **self-representation**, which can now be defined and discussed. This concept originated in the microsociological tradition of North American sociologist Erving Goffman[12] and if we want to trace its prehistory, the

[12] Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Anchor Books,

trail would lead to Freud. To uncover its path in the macrosociological tradition I cite Renán Silva's unpublished work on popular culture in Colombia, entitled "República Liberal y cultura popular en Colombia 1930-1946." In it Silva correctly places the origin of "forms of social classification and systems of representation," in the sociological theories of Emile Durkheim, theories which have continued to influence contemporary sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Marcel Mauss, Hayden White, and others. What is clear is that everyday routine practices once socialized and made conscious must be classified and represented, whether by the individual (Goffman) or the society (Durkheim).

Hayden White, dialoguing with Eiko Ikegami,[13] explains from a phenomenological perspective the social effects of the act of passing from everyday practice to the production of narrative discourses as follows, "Narratives, especially when they are stored and reproduced as stories... allow human beings to address the ontological problems involved in 'translating knowing into telling.'" As we saw in the section on methodology, for Franzosi, narratives also offer the solution to the problem of "fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning" (White 1987). The step between the production of individual narratives and the moment in which these begin to be converted into collective processes shaping a cultural identity will be discussed below. According to Ikegami, it is when the narratives or "stories" begin to unite in a coherent form around socially significant networks that what now can be perceived as "collective cultural identities" emerges (Ikegami, 4). Once the discourse is produced and recorded, it acquires a phenomenological presence and can be experienced as relatively coherent systems of meanings and symbols. These meanings and symbols are what are perceived as systems of representations (Durkheim) or social or individual signs (Goffman)—representations that define social groups that go from the individual to the wider social level and represent forms of collective identity that

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1959). On this topic see also Jesús Martín Barbero (1987) and especially the new work of Cristina Rojas on the representation of violence in 19th Colombia entitled *Civilización y violencia: La búsqueda de la identidad en la Colombia del siglo XIX* (Bogota: Norma, 2001).

[13] Ikegami, Eiko (2000). "A Sociological Theory of Publics: Identity and culture as emergent properties in networks," forward to the forthcoming book *Japan's Route to Modern Civility: Aesthetic Publics and Network Revolution.*

unite groups, cities, nations, in summary, cultures.

I would like to specify here that the self-representations of Bogota's citizens, are equated in this work to structures of meaning, expressed in narratives or "stories," that store not only social networks but also social relations and multiple meanings. These structures of social meaning are in turn embedded in individuals. *Cromos* magazine, the history textbooks and the new popular songs are both sources of self-representations and self-representations of a social group: the *Bogotano*, whether elite or subaltern. Self-representations are messages which, in the terms of Roberto Franzosi represent a narrative converted into a "story grammar" that can be analyzed using the method of content analysis.

Finally, I would like to clarify that this theoretical framework—popular culture as variously understood and its production of representations, will be analyzed within the framework of postcolonial studies.[14] By this is meant that we will take into account the multiple relations that are historically interwoven in Bogota's history during the period 1930-1948: inherited colonial structures, external cultural influences that originated in the western metropolis, and the particular situation of Bogota as the cultural capital of Colombia. However, as stated above, in the post-Independence era there have been no postcolonial powers in Bogota that inhibited the liberty of its citizens to decide their cultural destiny (Williams: 1999, 98), with the exception we would argue of the strong tradition of the "lettered" city, whose weight can only be explained through the theory of *longue dureé*, and which was stronger than any postcolonial power.[15]

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[14] Subaltern, or postcolonial, studies had their genesis in a number of disciplines, and also western historiography. At the beginning they were developed by Indian historians teaching in England, who were followed by social scientists from all areas. The Western origin of this new postcolonial or third world vision is undeniable, although many would wish to ignore it or detach themselves from it (Chakrabarty, 2000).

[15] Fernand Braudel in his article "La longue durée" (1958) explains: "All the cycles and intercycles and structural crises tend to mark the regularities, the permanence of particular systems that some have gone so far as to call civilization -that is to say, all the old habits of thinking and acting, the set patterns that do not break down easily and, however illogical, are a long time dying" (Braudel, 53).

As support for this position the historiographical tradition developed by the group working in postcolonial studies will be assumed. These scholars, initially working in and on Asia with emphasis on the history and culture of India, have recently been taken up in Latin American studies. The journal *Nepantla* edited at Duke University is the most representative platform for these discussions and the new position that has emerged from Latin America. Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his article "Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography," promotes the identity of postcolonial studies, defining it as "a postcolonial project of writing history" (Chakrabarty: 2000, 10).

From this postcolonial vision the objectives expounded in this project can be achieved.

Abstract

The project **The "Lettered" City and Popular Culture: A Cultural History of Bogota (1930-1948)** attempts to identify the self-representations produced both by Bogota's elite and subaltern sectors during the period 1930-1948.

It takes as its starting point the notion of the "lettered" city as a strategy of domination harking back to the colonial society and culture and argues that its deconstruction began in 1930 with the circulation of the new popular culture and/or popular song—bolero, vallenato, tango, porro—through the mass media. The resistance to change from the "lettered" city during 1930-1948 inhibits the presence of the new and emergent popular sectors in the self-representations of the dominant elite. This, it could be argued, indicates that the liberating effects of popular music on the masses were once again repressed and therefore once again excluded.

The thesis addresses various questions, the most important being How is the process of transculturation in the dialogue between the Hispanist elite of the "lettered" city and the new popular culture represented?