

CULTURAL AGENDA OF  
LATIN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS  
AND MAGAZINES:  
Is U.S. Domination a Myth?

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During the early 1960s, when U.S.-Cuban relations reached their nadir and threatened to embroil this planet in the ultimate superpower showdown, a prophetic cartoon appeared in one of the then-popular U.S. feature magazines. It showed a bearded, fatigue-clad newscaster seated at the microphone in the Radio Cuba studios, telling his audience, "And now for the baseball scores from the hated imperialistic Yankee mainland." The cartoonist had no way of knowing that a quarter of a century later, his whimsical sketch would exemplify the controversy over alleged U.S. cultural penetration of Latin America through its own mass media, in some cases transcending even political barriers. The purpose of this study is to examine what role, if any, the Latin American printed mass media are playing in the intrusion of foreign cultures.

Dependency theory, in vogue for two decades now as a tool for analyzing the disequilibrium between developed and developing countries, was originally economic in orientation but was extended in the 1970s to the more abstract area of cultural relationships. Although the dependency literature's prevailing model is a dichotomy between the so-called core and periphery, or in more recent years between "North" and "South," dependency theorists have tended to single out the United States as the source of Latin America's perceived cultural and economic dependency. For example, André Gunder Frank devoted much of his 1969 study to "the North American emperor's social-scientific clothes," contending that the "consecutive metropolises of Spain, Great Britain and North America have subjected Latin America to economic exploitation and political domination which determined its present class and socio-cultural structure" (Frank 1969, 371-72). In his 1976 study, Herbert Schiller observed that "conspiracy need not be invoked to demonstrate that there is a large measure of intention in contemporary, American cultural domination" (Schiller 1976, 19).

How accurate is this picture of U.S. domination of Latin America?

Few would argue the nonexistence of a dependent economic relationship. Quantitative evidence is readily available in trade figures or the heavy indebtedness of countries like Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile to U.S. banks. Cultural dependency, however, is more nebulous. Even so, it is possible to gauge foreign cultural intrusion to some degree by examining box office receipts for imported films, the number of weekly hours of foreign television programming, or the sales of recordings by foreign artists, an approach that George Gerbner has named "message system analysis" (1973).

The *dependentista* literature over the years has focused mainly on the electronic media. The United States has evidently been cast as the *bête noir* in such provocative titles as Alan Wells's *Picture Tube Imperialism? The Impact of U.S. Television on Latin America* (1981) or Jeremy Tunstall's *The Media Are American* (1977). Yet comparatively little analysis has been made of the printed media in Latin America. Frank alleged in his 1969 work that the Latin American press is a "bourgeois institution" and that the native bourgeoisie is the "immediate enemy" of national liberation. Schiller thought that the press in developing societies should be state-owned. In another classic of dependency literature, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart warned that Donald Duck and other Disney comic-book characters constituted a subtle means of subverting Latin American children into accepting capitalist ideals (Dorfman and Mattelart 1971). Mattelart noted in a later work that 40 percent of the "information" in fourteen Latin American newspapers came from United Press International and another 31 percent from the Associated Press (Mattelart 1979). A similar study by Fernando Reyes Matta found that 39 percent of the published wire service items in sixteen Latin American papers came from UPI and 21 percent from AP (Reyes Matta 1977).<sup>1</sup>

Does the United States in fact culturally dominate Latin America? This notion is challenged by the perceptions of any objective observer who visits or resides in the region. It is true that J. R. Ewing, Rambo, Bruce Springsteen, and Calvin Klein are readily audible or visible imports. But does U.S. or domestic music "dominate" the airways? If a foreign culture indeed pervades Latin America, is it U.S. or European? Latin American fascination with the Continent is evident in literature, fashion, cuisine, automobiles, even the bidets in hotel bathrooms. But how accurate is such a subjective assessment? Any society's tastes are reflected in its newspapers and magazines, and in an age when literacy is rising in Latin America, these media have acquired a mass appeal akin to their U.S. and European counterparts. Moreover, the Latin American press has served since its inception as a cultural vehicle for the region's literary and artistic talent. For example, *La Nación* of Buenos Aires published the poetry of Jorge Luis Borges in its literary supplement for decades. The *ensayos* of Germán Arciniegas appeared regularly in *El Tiempo* of Bogotá and were

ultimately syndicated throughout the region, like the more recent writings of Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Gabriel García Márquez.<sup>2</sup>

*Definitions, Hypotheses, and Method*

The three key terms that require defining for purposes of this study are *culture*, *dependency*, and *domination*. In their landmark study of culture (1952), Clyde Kluckhohn and A. L. Kroeber reviewed dozens of definitions of culture, but the definitions varied so greatly that they could only be reduced to six basic groups. Other noted scholars on the subject such as Edward Hall, Arnold Toynbee, Raymond Williams, and Norman Daniel have also sought concrete definitions. In reviewing this multitude of definitions, one finds certain key words recurring: civilization, way of life, behavior, norms, heritage, traditions, society, products, artifacts, ideas, symbols, attitudes, beliefs, values passed from one generation to another. To simplify this study's task of quantifying the symbols appearing in newspapers and magazines, the working definition of *culture* adopted is the written or graphic representation or discussion of one of the aesthetic products or characteristics of a given homogenous social group, which include architecture, art, classical and popular music, literature, poetry, philosophy, dance, theater, opera, cinema, radio, television, fashion, gastronomy, journalism, photography, history, archaeology, anthropology, royalty, folklore, and travel.

The terms *dependency* and *domination* are essentially obverse sides of the same coin. A succinct definition of dependency has been provided by Brazilian economist Theotônio dos Santos:

Dependency is a situation in which a certain group of countries have their economy conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which their own is subordinated. The relationship of interdependence between two or more economies, and between them and world commerce, assumes the form of dependency when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and project themselves, while other countries (the dependent ones) can only act as a reflex to that expansion, which can act positively or negatively on their immediate development. (Santos 1980, 305)

For the purposes of this study, *cultural dependency* is defined as a condition in which the measurable coverage assigned to the domestic culture in the nonadvertising space of a newspaper or magazine is equal to or less than the coverage assigned to the culture of another country or region. This study, then, focuses on cultural agenda setting by the "gatekeepers" of Latin American newspapers and magazines.

Two hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis was that measurable U.S. cultural coverage in the sample newspapers and magazines is significantly greater than the coverage of the domestic culture. The second hypothesis held that measurable U.S. cultural coverage is significantly

greater than measurable European cultural coverage. Both hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance, applying the chi-square method to the frequency of cultural articles.

The method used in this study is content analysis, which has been defined by Klaus Krippendorff as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (1980, 21). More specifically, the study fits Gerbner's description of message system analysis, with the symbols to be quantified corresponding to what he termed the "visible and manifest sources of public acculturation" (Gerbner 1969, 563).

The analysis of newspapers encompasses two parallel cluster samples of sixteen consecutive issues each, one from January 1949, the other from January 1982. The separate samples were taken to examine changes in the Latin American cultural agenda over a third of a century. These two years were selected partly on the basis of maximum archival availability in the Benson Latin American Collection of the University of Texas at Austin, where the data were compiled, but 1949 was chosen specifically to compare the changes of agenda before and after the advent of television. A cluster sample was chosen rather than a random sample for two reasons. First, randomly chosen issues may not be available, forcing the researcher to generate more numbers. More important was the need to gauge the comparative coverage of the same cultural events occurring during a given period. Selection of the first half of January as the sample period was determined both by archival availability of the maximum number of newspapers and because it is a "culturally neutral" period that includes no major international or national cultural events that might skew the data (such as the Academy Awards, the Cannes Film Festival, the Brazilian Carnival, or the Chilean Viña del Mar Song Festival). The original plan was to cover fifteen consecutive issues beginning and ending on a Sunday because most Sunday editions contain the week's greatest cultural coverage. One newspaper, however, carried its cultural supplement on Monday, so the sample period was arbitrarily extended by one day to accommodate that paper. Some newspapers did not publish on Sunday or Monday, and in these instances, three weekday editions were added to bring their total number of issues to sixteen.

To the extent possible, the same newspapers were used for both samples. In each sample, two newspapers were chosen from the three largest countries of Latin America—Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina—plus one paper each from capital cities in eight other countries. Fourteen newspapers were included in the 1949 sample: *La Prensa* and *La Nación* of Buenos Aires, *Correio de Manhã* of Rio de Janeiro and *O Estado de São Paulo* of São Paulo, *El Mercurio* of Santiago, *El Tiempo* of Bogotá, *Diario de la Marina* of Havana, *El Imparcial* of Guatemala City, *Excelsior* and *El Universal* of Mexico City, *La Estrella de Panamá* of Panama City, *El Comercio* of Lima, *El Plata* of Montevideo, and *El Universal* of Caracas.

The 1982 sample included fifteen newspapers, the addition being *El Diario* of La Paz. *Correio de Manhã* and *El Plata* both had ceased publication between 1949 and 1982 and were replaced by *Jornal do Brasil* of Rio de Janeiro and *El Día* of Montevideo. *Diario de la Marina* was closed by the Castro regime in 1961, and it was replaced in this study by the official Communist party and government daily, *Granma*. *El Universal* of Mexico City could not be obtained and was replaced by *El Día*, also of Mexico City. The other papers were the same as those used in the 1949 sample.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that these newspapers represent the "elite" press of the region and, with the exception of the Cuban and Mexican papers in 1982, are generally conservative in outlook. It is because of their quality that they are available for research in U.S. libraries, although in most cases, these papers have smaller circulations than the more popular-oriented tabloids. But the fact that the sample papers are owned by the "elite" actually constitutes a crucial test of the issue of U.S. cultural domination in that these papers would be more likely to focus on U.S. or European culture than would their mass-circulation counterparts.

The unit of analysis used is the cultural article, meaning an article under a single heading that deals with one of the aesthetic products listed earlier in the working definition of culture. The articles were counted and coded according to whether their origin was domestic, U.S., European, other Latin American countries, some other region, or any mixture of the five. The articles were also broken down into twenty-four different categories of culture. Because articles differ in length, headline width, and other factors that determine their "play," an initial effort was made to use a modified version of Richard Budd's attention score. This approach assigned articles a score according to length, page placement, and column width in order to gauge more accurately the comparative emphasis assigned them by the "gatekeepers" (Budd 1964). But when a Spearman's rank-order correlation between the two techniques showed no significant difference, the more complex attention score was dropped in favor of the simpler item count.

The approach to analyzing the magazines necessarily varied due to differences in format, frequency, and content of the two media. Because magazines are not published daily and their content is less duplicative than that of newspapers, there was no critical need to examine consecutive issues. Sixteen issues of each magazine were selected randomly, at least three per quarter. The most recent year that offered the maximum selection of magazines was 1983, with the result being that the time period covered is contemporaneous with that of the later newspaper sample. The eleven magazines included were *La Semana* of Argentina, *Manchete* of Brazil, *Hoy* of Chile, *Cromos* of Colombia, *Bohemia* of Cuba, *¡Ahora!* of the Dominican Republic, *Vistazo* of Ecuador, *Tiempo* of Mexico, *Caretas* of Peru,

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TABLE 1 Selected Latin American Newspaper and Magazine Articles on Culture  
Classified according to Origin, 1949 and 1982–83

Sample	Domestic (%)	European (%)	U.S. (%)	Latin American <sup>a</sup> (%)	Other Region (%)	Mixed (%)	Total (%)
<b>Newspapers</b>							
1949	806 (34.1)	788 (33.4)	356 (15.1)	172 (7.3)	10 (.4)	228 (9.7)	2,360 (100.0)
1982	1,724 (42.7)	1,046 (25.9)	388 (9.6)	357 (8.8)	87 (2.2)	435 (10.8)	4,037 (100.0)
<b>Magazines</b>							
Articles	588 (48.1)	242 (19.8)	147 (12.0)	106 (8.7)	18 (1.5)	122 (10.0)	1,223 (100.1)
Vignettes	583 (33.6)	444 (25.7)	353 (20.4)	159 (9.2)	28 (1.6)	160 (9.3)	1,727 (99.8)

Note: Percentages do not always add up to 100.0 due to rounding. Probability is less than .001.

<sup>a</sup> Articles originating in Latin American countries other than the one in which the newspaper is published.

*Momento* of Venezuela, and *Visión*, a regionwide news magazine published in Mexico. All are weeklies save *Vistazo* and *Visión*, which were both biweeklies at the time (*Vistazo* has since become a weekly). Because magazine format varies greatly from that of a newspaper, two units of analysis emerged for the magazine sample: the cultural article, defined as a full page or more; and cultural vignettes, those brief, capsulized items common to magazines.

The reliability of the coding was tested by five faculty members and graduate students at the University of Texas trained in research methodology or Latin American culture or journalism. They were given seventy-eight synopses of articles chosen at random from the data and asked to code them according to origin (domestic, European, U.S., other Latin American countries, other region, or "mixed") and the form of culture represented in the article. The mean agreement among the ten pairs of coders was .874 for origin and .844 for form. I coded the same articles and achieved a mean agreement with the other five coders of an identical .874 for origin and .864 for form. Most of the disagreements involved the "mixed" category.

### Findings

In total, 6,397 cultural articles from newspapers were coded, 2,360 from the 1949 sample and 4,037 from the 1982 sample. The 1983 magazine sample yielded 1,223 articles and 1,727 vignettes pertaining to culture. As

table 1 indicates, the domestic category was the mode origin in all four rankings, followed in all four cases by the European category. The U.S. category ranked third except in the 1982 newspaper sample, in which it was supplanted by the "mixed" category.

Thus both hypotheses were rejected. The domestic cultural coverage was significantly greater than the U.S. coverage in all three samples. The chi-square values were 174.3 in the 1949 sample and 844.7 in the 1982 sample; in the magazine sample, they were 264.6 for articles and 73.3 for the vignettes. All four values are significant beyond the .001 level. The difference in the frequencies of European and U.S. articles yielded chi-square values of 167.9 for the 1949 sample and 299.8 for the 1982 sample. In the 1983 magazine sample, the values were 21.9 for articles and 13.8 for vignettes. Again, all four have a probability of less than .001.

One important peripheral finding should be noted. The 1949 newspaper sample contained only eighteen more domestic articles than European articles. A chi-square test revealed the possibility that the small domestic lead may have resulted from chance. Thus under the ground rules laid down for determining dependency in this study, it would appear that the Latin American press reflected a state of cultural dependency in 1949, but on Europe, not on the United States. This dependency had evaporated by 1982, however: the chi-square value for the gap between the domestic and European coverage was 165.0, significant well beyond the .001 level.

Tables 2 and 3 display the breakdown for each newspaper in 1949 and 1982, while table 4 gives the breakdown for the cultural articles in the 1983 magazine sample. Note that in 1949, *El Comercio* of Lima and *El Plata* of Montevideo showed clear cultural dependencies on both the United States and Europe; *El Plata* also exhibited a dependency on other Latin American countries, primarily neighboring Argentina. *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires, *Diario de la Marina* of Havana, and *El Tiempo* of Bogotá all reflected a dependency on European culture. *O Estado de São Paulo*, *Excelsior* of Mexico City, and *El Universal* of Caracas each devoted almost as much coverage to European culture as to national culture. *El Imparcial* of Guatemala showed a dependence on other Latin American countries, chiefly Mexico and its Central American neighbors.

By 1982, however, the picture had changed dramatically, with coverage of national culture the mode for all sixteen papers. Only *El Comercio* in Lima and *El Universal* of Caracas continued to reflect a near-dependency on European culture. It is interesting to note that in the three countries generally regarded as being the most heavily subjected to U.S. culture—Mexico, Cuba, and Panama—the coverage of U.S. culture was found to be negligible, even in Cuba in 1949. Also worth noting is the dramatic shift by the Brazilian press between 1949 and 1982 toward domestic coverage. The striking difference between the cultural agenda of

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TABLE 2 Percentages of Cultural Articles in Selected Latin American Newspapers in 1949, by Origin

Newspaper	Domestic	European	U.S.	Latin American	Other Region	Mixed	N
Argentina							
<i>La Nación</i>	40.3	26.8	19.5	4.0	0	9.4	149
<i>La Prensa</i>	31.0	37.5	20.7	3.9	.1	6.0	232
Brazil							
<i>Correio de Manhã</i>	48.3	31.8	6.5	1.7	0	12.0	292
<i>O Estado de São Paulo</i>	41.5	37.6	9.3	0	.5	11.2	205
Chile							
<i>El Mercurio</i>	50.8	27.8	6.3	7.9	.8	6.3	126
Colombia							
<i>El Tiempo</i>	29.1	31.6	16.5	7.6	0	15.2	158
Cuba							
<i>Diario de la Marina</i>	26.9	42.1	11.2	7.0	0	12.8	242
Guatemala							
<i>El Imparcial</i>	28.6	22.9	0	31.4	2.9	14.3	35
Mexico							
<i>Excélsior</i>	38.6	34.0	10.5	9.2	.7	7.2	153
<i>El Universal</i>	44.6	25.2	12.9	5.0	.7	11.5	139
Panama							
<i>La Estrella de Panamá</i>	44.2	24.7	13.0	13.0	1.3	5.2	77
Peru							
<i>El Comercio</i>	18.5	28.2	34.7	14.4	0	4.2	216
Uruguay							
<i>El Plata</i>	13.1	38.6	20.5	15.1	.8	12.0	259
Venezuela							
<i>El Universal</i>	44.2	37.7	10.4	2.6	1.3	3.9	77

*Diario de la Marina* and postrevolutionary *Granma* is not unexpected, given the Marxist government's rhetoric on the subject of cultural independence. It should be noted, however, that *Diario de la Marina* averaged forty pages a day while *Granma* averaged ten and that *Diario de la Marina* carried twice as many cultural articles overall as did *Granma*. The raw number of domestic articles was only slightly higher in *Granma* than in *Diario de la Marina*, seventy-four to sixty-five. One common trait of these otherwise ideologically opposite papers was that they both devoted extensive coverage to, and exhibited near-reverence for, Cuba's prima ballerina, Alicia Alonso, whose illustrious career spanned both sample periods.

The heavy emphasis on national cultural coverage is even more pronounced in the magazine sample, except in the Dominican Republic



TABLE 3 Percentages of Cultural Articles in Selected Latin American Newspapers in 1982, by Origin

Newspaper	Domestic	European	U.S.	Latin American <sup>a</sup>	Other Region	Mixed	N
Argentina							
<i>La Nación</i>	46.7	29.1	9.9	3.7	1.3	9.3	375
<i>La Prensa</i>	40.3	36.4	7.9	6.8	2.7	6.0	365
Bolivia							
<i>El Diario</i>	39.7	23.1	3.8	12.8	9.0	11.5	78
Brazil							
<i>O Estado de São Paulo</i>	60.8	21.1	8.3	3.9	0	5.9	204
<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	53.2	17.8	15.2	1.3	2.7	9.8	297
Chile							
<i>El Mercurio</i>	45.6	22.1	9.7	6.7	3.0	12.8	298
Colombia							
<i>El Tiempo</i>	43.8	21.2	9.5	7.3	2.9	16.1	137
Cuba							
<i>Granma</i>	61.2	22.3	1.7	7.4	.8	6.6	121
Guatemala							
<i>El Imparcial</i>	41.9	17.4	10.5	22.1	1.2	7.0	86
Mexico							
<i>El Día</i>	37.6	29.8	7.8	14.7	1.4	8.7	218
<i>Excélsior</i>	43.8	24.5	9.8	11.8	2.4	7.8	841
Panama							
<i>La Estrella de Panamá</i>	47.3	19.6	13.5	12.7	.7	6.8	148
Peru							
<i>El Comercio</i>	31.5	31.2	8.2	8.9	.2	18.1	426
Uruguay							
<i>El Día</i>	29.4	27.2	11.0	9.2	3.5	19.7	228
Venezuela							
<i>El Universal</i>	28.8	27.0	11.6	14.4	.1	17.2	215

<sup>a</sup>Articles originating in Latin American countries other than the one in which the newspaper is published.

and Ecuador. *Visión's* identity as a regional magazine precluded its having a domestic category.

An intriguing peripheral finding was that in 1982, 44.1 percent of U.S. cultural articles dealt with cinema, compared with 24.4 percent for Europe, 7 percent for other Latin American countries, and 6.8 percent again for the domestic category. This, too, was significant beyond the .001 level. Television accounted for 11.6 percent of the U.S. articles, compared with 8.3 percent of the domestic, 6.7 percent of other Latin American

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TABLE 4 Percentages of Cultural Articles in Selected Latin American Magazines in 1983, by Origin

Newspaper	Domestic	European	U.S.	Latin American <sup>a</sup>	Other Region	Mixed	N
Argentina							
<i>La Semana</i>	62.9	22.9	12.9	6.4	0	8.6	140
Brazil							
<i>Manchete</i>	49.8	23.6	14.8	1.8	1.8	8.9	203
Chile							
<i>Hoy</i>	60.3	20.6	7.4	7.4	0	4.4	68
Colombia							
<i>Cromos</i>	42.1	24.8	12.8	8.3	2.3	9.8	133
Cuba							
<i>Bohemia</i>	66.7	14.1	2.2	5.9	3.7	7.4	135
Dominican Republic							
<i>¡Ahora!</i>	31.3	23.3	14.7	16.6	1.8	12.3	163
Ecuador							
<i>Vistazo</i>	34.7	23.5	23.5	11.2	1.0	6.1	98
Mexico							
<i>Tiempo</i>	44.9	17.9	16.7	3.8	1.3	15.4	78
Peru							
<i>Caretas</i>	65.3	8.9	4.0	9.9	.9	10.9	101
Venezuela							
<i>Momento</i>	50.0	17.3	19.2	5.8	0	7.7	52
Regional							
<i>Visión</i>		8.8	0	47.1	2.9	38.2	34

<sup>a</sup>Articles originating in Latin American countries other than the one in which the magazine is published.

countries, and 3.3 percent of the European category. Again, the significance exceeded .001. In the magazine sample, cinema accounted for 44.2 percent of the U.S. cultural articles, television for 17.7 percent, both significant beyond .001. Approaching it another way, 47.7 percent of all articles on cinema in the 1949 sample pertained to U.S. cinema. In 1982 the percentage had fallen to 24.7; in the 1983 magazine sample, the figure was 39.9 percent.

Which forms of culture rank highest overall on the agenda of the Latin American press? Cinema was the mode form in both newspaper samples and the magazine sample. Tables 5 and 6 give the rank orders for all twenty-four categories of cultural forms. It is interesting to note that a significantly high correlation exists between the rank orders for the 1949 and 1982 newspaper samples. Only television and popular music showed significant increases, while radio showed a corresponding decline.

TABLE 5 Frequency of Cultural Articles in 1949 and 1982 Latin American Newspaper Samples, by Category

1949		1982	
Cinema	511	Cinema	692
Theater	405	Literature	487
Literature	306	Music (Popular)	414
Music (Classical)	185	Art	412
Art	162	Theater	376
Poetry	120	Television	301
Mixed	100	Music (Classical)	269
Folklore	66	Mixed	177
Radio	56	Folklore	171
Fashion	55	Poetry	150
History/Archaeology/ Anthropology	52	History/Archaeology/ Anthropology	86
Music (Popular)	47	Fashion	80
Ballet	47	Ballet	58
Opera	44	Other	51
Journalism	40	Travel	44
Travel	35	Journalism	40
Philosophy	31	Opera	36
Other	25	Dance	35
Architecture	19	Royalty	29
Royalty	19	Radio	29
Dance	12	Gastronomy	27
Photography	10	Philosophy	26
Gastronomy	9	Architecture	25
Television	4	Photography	22
Total	2,360		4,037

Note: Rho equals .736; probability is less than .001.

### *Qualitative Assessment*

Useful as they are, quantitative statistics tell only part of a story. In scrutinizing some nine thousand articles and vignettes included in this study, certain impressions surfaced that could not be neatly coded for placement in a table. These subjective impressions drawn from the data yielded seven basic generalizations.

*The Cultural Triangle and the Preoccupation with Europe /* Latin America, the United States, and Europe form the apexes of a cultural triangle evidencing a constant multidirectional flow. The triangle is not equilateral, however. It is arguable whether Europe is more closely linked culturally to the United States or to Latin America, both of which were European colonial creatures in the past. But if the Latin American press agenda is an accurate

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TABLE 6 *Frequency of Cultural Articles in 1983 Latin American Magazine Sample, by Category*

<i>Cultural Form</i>	<i>Articles</i>	<i>Vignettes</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cinema	163	433	596
Art	152	261	413
Literature	187	184	371
Music (Popular)	91	173	264
Theater	88	99	187
Television	71	90	161
Music (Classical)	26	117	143
Mixed	57	54	111
Other	56	45	101
Royalty	28	53	81
Folklore	54	26	80
History/Archaeology/Anthropology	54	22	76
Fashion	54	15	69
Journalism	29	34	63
Poetry	26	35	61
Photography	9	16	25
Dance	8	16	24
Opera	8	15	23
Ballet	7	16	23
Gastronomy	14	7	21
Travel	18	2	20
Architecture	10	3	13
Philosophy	7	5	12
Radio	6	6	12
Totals	1,223	1,727	2,950

indicator, Latin America is unquestionably more closely linked to Europe than to the United States.

The data support this impression, and even the cursory reader of a few Latin American newspapers and magazines encounters the seemingly overwhelming preoccupation with European culture. This interest is diversified, however, with art, music, literature, theater, and cinema all being well-represented. It is interesting that several of the extant European cultural figures who received prominent coverage in the 1949 sample—Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Jean-Paul Sartre, José Ortega y Gasset, Berthold Brecht, and George Bernard Shaw—remained the topics of feature articles in the 1982 sample, long after their deaths. Although the coverage of U.S. cinema outranked that of Europe, such coverage was devoted primarily to the film products themselves, usually in the form of movie reviews. With the European cinema, more attention was paid to personalities, especially to directors Federico Fellini, Franco Zeffereilli, Roberto Rossellini, Carlos Saura, Luis Buñuel, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc

Goddard, Ingmar Bergman, Costa-Gavras, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Film stars who appeared to be the most popular with the agenda setters were Isabel Adjani, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Clio Goldsmith, Marcelo Mastroianni, Claudia Cardinale, Nastassia Kinski, Sean Connery, and Silvia Kristel. Another recurring indication of Europe's cultural pull in all the samples was the number of interviews with Latin American artists who had relocated to Paris or Madrid to paint or study.

*The Hollywood Monoculture of the United States* / While coverage of European culture in Latin America is characterized by diversity, that of U.S. culture overwhelmingly focuses on one cultural product—the movies. For example, in the 1949 sample, only three U.S. cultural “events” received widespread attention through wire services: the death of Victor Fleming, who directed *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*, the conviction of movie star Robert Mitchum on marijuana charges, and the heated love affair between film goddess Rita Hayworth and Ali Khan.

About the only U.S. cultural item to receive multiple coverage in the 1982 sample was the death of comedian Paul Lynde, but it was far outweighed by the coverage given to the death of French director Marcel Camus, particularly by the newspapers in Brazil, where he had filmed his greatest work, *Black Orpheus*. Not even the Cuban media are immune to the fascination with U.S. cinema. In the 1983 sample, *Bohemia* carried a laudatory obituary of director Robert Aldrich, best remembered for *Vera-cruz* and other Westerns. Although reviews of European and Latin American films were well represented, the U.S. cinema clearly predominated, especially in the 1949 sample, when it was common to see multicolumn photos of stars like Judy Garland, Jane Wyman, and Humphrey Bogart. Several papers carried the Spanish translation of Louella Parsons's Hollywood gossip column. While emphasis on U.S. movies in the Latin American press has decreased over the years, it still far surpasses the attention given to the other most-popular forms of U.S. culture, television and popular music.

*Cultural Neo-Colonialism: The Fascination with La Madre Patria* / Save for Brazil, all the countries included in the study were colonized by Spain, which was the mode country for European cultural articles in all three samples, as can be seen in table 7. This lingering attachment to the culture of the mother country spans four centuries, and it is no exaggeration to say that Miguel de Cervantes is virtually as prominent in the Latin American press today as Julio Iglesias. Practically every newspaper in the 1949 and 1982 samples carried reviews of Spanish plays or *zarzuelas*. In 1949 several newspapers carried essays by or about Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who was still living; in 1983 several magazines ran feature stories marking the centennial of his birth. Perhaps the most

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TABLE 7 Rank Order of Cultural Articles about Europe in Selected Latin American Newspapers and Magazines, 1949 and 1982–83, by Country

1949 Newspapers		1982 Newspapers		1983 Magazines	
Spain	220	Spain	223	Spain	53
France	176	France	211	U.K.	51
U.K.	114	Italy	174	France	43
Mixed	91	U.K.	102	Mixed	21
Italy	73	Mixed	98	Italy	17
Portugal	29	Germany	67	Germany	15
Germany	23	Russia/USSR	53	Russia/USSR	14
Russia/USSR	13	Poland	20	Monaco	10
Ireland	9	Austria	16	Sweden	3
Sweden	8	Belgium	14	Czechoslovakia	2
Austria	8	Netherlands	10	Netherlands	2
Czechoslovakia	6	Czechoslovakia	10	Portugal	2
Switzerland	5	Sweden	8	Switzerland	2
Greece	3	Switzerland	7	Ireland	2
Romania	3	Ireland	7	Austria	1
Denmark	2	Greece	5	Greece	1
Netherlands	2	Hungary	5	Hungary	1
Vatican	1	Yugoslavia	3	Romania	1
Hungary	1	Norway	3	Yugoslavia	1
Poland	1	Romania	2	Belgium	0
Belgium	0	Finland	2	Denmark	0
Bulgaria	0	Monaco	2	Bulgaria	0
Finland	0	Portugal	2	Finland	0
Monaco	0	Vatican	1	Poland	0
Norway	0	Bulgaria	1	Norway	0
Yugoslavia	0	Denmark	0	Vatican	0

extreme example of the emphasis on Spain was Cuba's *Diario de la Marina*, which daily devoted the front page of an inside section to news of the mother country. This practice is intriguing considering the fact that Cuba did not win independence until 1898, and memories of that bitter struggle no doubt lingered in 1949. But many Spaniards had immigrated to Latin America in the decades preceding 1949, and several countries had become havens for Republican refugees from the Spanish Civil War.

Extensive coverage was given to Spanish artists, living and dead, particularly Picasso, Salvador Dalí, and Joan Miró. For example, most of the newspapers in 1982 carried a wire service report on Miró's pacemaker surgery. Perhaps the best example of this attention to Spanish art was an essay by Venezuelan Arturo Uslar Pietri that appeared in the cultural section of *La Prensa* in the 1982 sample. Entitled "Cuatro siglos, cuatro cuadros," it extolled the return to Spain the year before of Picasso's *Guernica* after forty-four years in exile in Paris and New York. Uslar noted

with some emotion that the painting had joined El Greco's *El entierro del Conde de Orgaz*, Velázquez's *Las meninas*, and Goya's *Los fusilamientos de la Moncloa* to complete four centuries of "the greatest testaments of Spanish painting."<sup>3</sup>

Interest in Spanish literature likewise spanned four centuries. Writers whose works were mentioned repeatedly in the data included Cervantes, playwrights Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, Federico García Lorca, and Jacinto Benavente.<sup>4</sup> Wire-service stories on poets Antonio Machado and Rafael Alberti received widespread play in the 1982 sample. The long-dead Machado was reported to have been posthumously "reinstated" by the faculty of the school from which he had been expelled during the early years of the Franco regime. Another story recounted that the poetess Pilar de Valderrama, alias Guiomar, had revealed in her posthumously published autobiography that she and Machado had been secret lovers from 1928 to 1936. The wire services also carried the report that Alberti, then eighty years old and recently returned from exile, had been presented with a theatrical award. Two other Spanish literary "events" also received universal coverage in the Spanish-language papers in 1982. One was the election of novelist María Elena Quiroga to the Real Academia Española de la Lengua, and the other the death in California of Spanish writer Ramón Sender, whose columns had been carried in several of the sample papers until his death.

The samples also contained several stories about great Spanish composers, chiefly Joaquín Rodrigo and Manuel de Falla. Universal coverage was accorded to the death of composer Joaquín Turina in 1949 and to the centenary of his birth in the 1982 sample.

Coverage of the Spanish royal family in the 1982 and 1983 samples rivaled the obsession of the U.S. press with Charles, Diana, Andrew, and "Fergie." Julio Iglesias was dominating the entertainment sections in 1982 and 1983, more than two years before Willie Nelson helped make him a household name in the United States. Spanish pop singers Raphael and Miguel Bosé received almost as much coverage as Iglesias.

Two anecdotes underscore the strong cultural ties between Spain and her former colonies. First, in the 1949 sample, *La Prensa* carried a guest column by the renowned Spanish historian Salvador de Madariaga on the topic of whether the period from 1492 to 1810 should be called "Hispanic" rather than "colonial." Second, in the 1949 sample of *El Comercio*, a poem appeared entitled "Innovación hispanica" by Spaniard José María Zaldívar. The poem saluted the lands of Spanish America, but its last verse admonished them: "¡Venid, almas de América, a ser firme custodia / de nuestro corazón, que es español!"<sup>5</sup> If Spanish America's press agenda is any indicator, the region's heart is indeed still Spanish.

It should also be noted that the Brazilian papers in 1949 carried a respectable, but not overwhelming, number of articles about Portuguese

culture (almost all the twenty-nine articles on Portugal in table 7 were from the two Brazilian papers). This interest seems to have evaporated, however, by the time of the 1982 sample.

*The Growth of Intraregional Influences* / Although many U.S. citizens mistakenly view Latin America as a homogenous cultural entity, each country in the region has a unique culture of its own. Despite the obvious similarities in language and religion, Ibero-American culture evolved in various forms from place to place, partly because of differences in the indigenous Indian cultures. Consequently, Mexicans or Cubans have "cultural fingerprints" that differ markedly from those of Peruvians or Brazilians. This variety helps explain the comparative dearth of coverage in the 1949 sample of cultural news from other Latin American countries. Another plausible explanation is that the papers in both samples relied heavily on four wire services—the Associated Press, United Press International, Agence France-Press, and Spain's Efe—for their cultural news (although in 1982, Latin, the Reuters-affiliated Latin American wire service, was well represented). The raw number of articles increased by only one and a half percentage points from 1949 to 1982, but the intensity of the coverage given to the cultural personalities from neighboring countries did seem to increase.

To look at the matter another way, the press seems to have created several regional superstars, particularly in the literary field. Chief among these in the 1982 and 1983 samples were the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, who died in 1986, Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, who received the Nobel Prize between the 1982 and 1983 samples, and Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, whose *La guerra del fin del mundo* made the bestseller lists throughout Latin America. Several magazines marked the tenth anniversary of the death of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who won the Nobel Prize. Also reported throughout the region were the deaths of the Argentine writer of gaucho stories, Alvaro Yunque, and Colombian sculptress Feliza Bursztyn in January 1982.

After literature, popular music seemed to be the most widely transferred cultural form. Among the singing stars whose fame has transcended national boundaries are José José of Mexico, José Luis Rodríguez (El Puma) of Venezuela, Alberto Cortés of Argentina, and Roberto Carlos of Brazil. In addition, Argentine, Brazilian, and Mexican films have been achieving greater critical acclaim, and these countries' television programs, particularly the popular *telenovelas*, are marketed widely. Table 8 gives a rank ordering of the number of cultural articles originating from the various Latin American countries. One can only hope that this intra-regional cultural awareness will continue to grow.

*National Cultural Protection* / It would be erroneous to believe that the



TABLE 8 Rank Order of Cultural Articles about Other Latin American Countries in Selected Latin American Newspapers and Magazines, 1949 and 1982–83

1949 Newspapers		1982 Newspapers		1983 Magazines	
Argentina	60	Argentina	72	Mexico	23
Mexico	43	Mixed	47	Argentina	22
Chile	19	Chile	33	Chile	10
Mixed	9	Brazil	33	Cuba	10
Brazil	7	Cuba	31	Brazil	9
Peru	6	Peru	28	Mixed	6
Cuba	6	Colombia	20	Puerto Rico	5
Uruguay	5	Mexico	19	Venezuela	4
Venezuela	3	Nicaragua	17	Peru	4
El Salvador	3	Venezuela	14	Bolivia	2
Panama	3	Puerto Rico	8	Colombia	2
Ecuador	2	Ecuador	8	Costa Rica	2
Nicaragua	2	El Salvador	7	Guatemala	2
Honduras	2	Uruguay	6	Ecuador	2
Colombia	1	Bolivia	6	Nicaragua	1
Paraguay	1	Paraguay	2	Paraguay	1
Bolivia	0	Costa Rica	2	Dominican Republic	0
Costa Rica	0	Panama	2	El Salvador	0
Dominican Republic	0	Guatemala	1	Haiti	0
Guatemala	0	Haiti	1	Honduras	0
Haiti	0	Dominican Republic	0	Panama	0
Puerto Rico	0	Honduras	0	Uruguay	0

Latin American gatekeepers are oblivious to the need to prevent dilution of national cultures, or worse, that they abet the invasion of foreign cultures. As early as 1949, essays published in the sample newspapers warned of undue cultural influences from abroad. Perhaps the most vehement warning came from Colombian writer Hernando Téllez. His essay entitled “Una querrela histórica: la transformación de las costumbres” filled the front page of *El Tiempo’s* literary supplement. In it, Téllez denounced the “external influences” that had transformed the customs of Colombian youth over the previous thirty years, citing Spanish, French, and British sources but singling out the “predominance” of the United States. He warned that U.S. fashion and cinema had corrupted traditional values and that “Colombian youths who have embraced these values constitute a fifth column.”<sup>6</sup>

These warnings were still being sounded in 1982. For example, *La Prensa* carried an essay stating that government control of the paper industry had crippled the Argentine publishing industry and increased the country’s cultural dependence, particularly on Spain. *O Estado de São Paulo* carried a report from the state of Rio Grande do Sul on how the

regional culture there had maintained itself in the face of the intrusion of the "Coca-Cola generation" and "the American way of life," terms that were rendered in English. Mexico City's *Excelsior* reported on a campaign by a government agency to eliminate foreign "barbarisms" from the Spanish language in business and advertising. Numerous other examples of national cultural awareness can be found in just these brief sample periods. It should also be borne in mind that all these newspapers are owned by the "native bourgeoisie."

*National Cultural Projection* / It is apparent that the flow within the cultural triangle is increasingly multidirectional. At the same time that the press has drawn attention to the need for cultural protection, it has also been reflecting a greater cultural projection as Latin American films, books, music, and the personalities who create them have achieved increasing recognition in Europe and the United States. Even the 1949 sample gave some indication of this trend when several papers carried wire service reports of such events as a visit to Spain by a Peruvian cultural delegation headed by the publisher of *El Comercio*, a recital in Italy by Chilean tenor Ramón Vinay, and the visits to Madrid of actresses Pepita Serrador (Argentina) and María Félix (Mexico), the former to star in a play by José Benevente and the latter to attend the premiere of a Spanish film in which she starred.

Such reports were far more common in 1982. One of the best examples was the extensive play of wire service reports that *La guerra del fin del mundo* by Perú's Vargas Llosa had been the top bestseller in Spain the previous month. An analytical piece from the Spanish wire service Efe published in one paper went so far as to state that the richest Spanish-language literature was now coming from America, particularly the works of Vargas Llosa and García Márquez. Several year-end cultural roundups of 1981 published in January 1982 noted with pride that Mexican poet Octavio Paz had become the first Latin American to win Spain's coveted Premio Cervantes (Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes recently won the same award). *La Prensa* carried a feature story about six translators who were rendering José Hernández's Argentine classic, *El gaucho Martín Fierro*, into Arabic, Galician, Croatian, Slovak, Yiddish, and Hungarian, bringing the number of languages in which the epic poem had been published to twenty-seven. Most of the papers in the 1982 sample reported that Brazilian actress Marília Pera had won the New York Film Critics' Award for her role in the film *Peixote*. Several papers also reported that Argentine classical tango composer Astor Piazzola was in Israel conducting the Israeli state orchestra in a concert of his works. *Jornal do Brasil* featured a story on two Brazilian members of the British New Wave rock group Blue Rondo and how they were combining the sounds of samba with New Wave. This encouraging trend toward national cultural

projection should enable the rest of the world to discover finally the richness of the Latin American cultures.

*The "Mixed" Category and the Hybridization of Culture* / Arnold Toynbee coined the term *culture compost* to mean the supplanting of one culture by another and the resulting hybridization. That process is essentially what happened during the Iberian colonization of the New World. A case could be made that the same process is occurring today, only now the compost is developing peacefully and multidirectionally. This intermingling of cultures involves all three apexes of the Latin America–Europe–United States triangle to the point where an increasing number of cultural products and personalities are truly international.

The "mixed" category used for this study was thus not merely a dumping ground for items that proved difficult to code but an inescapable reflection of this hybridization. Roughly one-tenth of the articles in all three samples fell into this category. For example, how does one code the nationality or region of origin of a story about Ingrid Bergman, Alfred Hitchcock, or Princess Grace? Another dilemma encountered frequently in this study involved the many Spanish writers who have relocated to Latin America, many of them forcibly exiled after the Spanish Civil War. Do they exemplify European influence on Latin American letters, or did the cultures of their adopted lands influence them and their works? A classic case was Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, who lived for several years early in this century in Argentina, a country that inspired his best-remembered work, *Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis*.

The same principle applies to Latin Americans who gravitate to Europe, carrying their cultural pollen with them. This hybridization is especially apparent in cinema. An excellent example carried by most of the newspapers in 1982 was a wire report that Spaniard Carlos Saura had been chosen to direct a joint French-Spanish-Mexican production based on the life of Mexican authoress Antonieta Ribas Mercado, who lived her last years in Europe and committed suicide on the grounds of Notre Dame in the 1930s. Cast in the title role was French actress Isabel Adjani. There were also several reports of Latin American playwrights adapting original plays from European novels. *O Estado de São Paulo* reported that the Belgian theatrical group Plan K was staging a play based on its tour of the Brazilian Northwest. If this trend continues, the triangular cultural model may have to be replaced with a circular one.

### Conclusions

No study goes as far as it might. One shortcoming of this study was that it was necessarily confined to the "elite" newspapers and magazines of Latin America that are available in U.S. libraries. Whether these find-

ings would be replicated by content analyses of the more widely read popular tabloids is another question, and one that invites further research. Studying the elite press at least provides a meaningful test of the allegation of some *dependentistas* that native bourgeois publishers constitute a kind of fifth column that is opening the gates to invading cultural armies.

The findings of this study should not be construed as attempting to refute dependency theory. But they do cast some intellectual doubt on the long-cherished belief that the United States is wielding a disproportionate cultural influence in Latin America. Granted, the argument could be made that in 1949 the combined U.S.-European coverage comprised 48.5 percent of the overall cultural agenda as compared with only 41.4 percent for the domestic and other Latin American countries combined. By 1982, however, the domestic and other Latin American coverage totaled 51.5 percent, compared with only 35.5 percent for the combined U.S. and European. In the 1983 magazine sample, the domestic and other Latin American share reached an even greater 56.9 percent.

Another concession that must be made is that the United States and Europe still occupy a far larger portion of the Latin American cultural agenda than Latin America can claim of U.S. and European agendas, an unfortunate situation given Latin America's great cultural riches. This disproportionate cultural flow appears to be balancing itself, however. Perhaps the most encouraging finding of this study was that Latin America has in fact begun to project its own culture to the developed world. Evidence of this projection has continued in recent years. In 1986, for example, U.S. film star William Hurt won an Oscar for best actor for his performance in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, a U.S.-Brazilian production set in Brazil, directed by Brazilian-Argentine Hector Babenco, costarring Brazilian Sonia Braga and Puerto Rican Raúl Julia, and based on the Argentine novel *El beso de la mujer araña* by Manuel Puig. Braga has since carved out a niche in the U.S. film industry with starring roles in *The Milagro Beanfield War* and *Moon over Parador*. Her costar in *Milagro Beanfield* was the Panamanian singer-turned-actor Rubén Blades, who has also moved on to new roles. More recently, Jane Fonda's production *The Old Gringo*, in which she costars with Gregory Peck, is based on Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes's *El gringo viejo*.

But if the flow of culture is still somewhat lopsided, is it appropriate for Latin American governments to impose arbitrary controls on foreign cultural imports, as the Cuban regime has done? Noted Chilean essayist Jorge Edwards published an essay in *El Universal* of Caracas during the 1982 sample period in which he recalled a visit to Havana in 1970. Castro had just suspended the observance of Christmas and New Year's as "European rites." Edwards observed, "It so happens, nonetheless, that we are a prolongation of the Old World, and even the revolution of Fidel

Castro is a remote application of a German ideology. But we are a prolongation that has entered into contact with different elements, and the result, whether we like it or not, has been a complete hybridization [*mestizaje*], an inextricable mixture of races and cultures.”<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the most eloquent case for the free flow of culture was provided by Peruvian novelist Vargas Llosa, whose works have been translated into English and other languages. In an essay transmitted by the Spanish wire service Efe and carried in several papers in the 1982 sample, he addressed the issue of cultural borrowing and hybridization:

The way for a country to fortify and develop its culture is to throw its doors and windows wide open to all intellectual, scientific, and artistic currents, stimulating the free flow of ideas, wherever they may come from, in such a way that its own tradition and experience are constantly put to the test, corrected, finished, and enriched by those who, in other countries and languages, share with us the miseries and greatness of the human adventure. Only by submitting to this challenge and encouragement will our culture be authentic, timely, and creative—the best means of our social and economic progress.<sup>8</sup>

Vargas Llosa is arguing here not for cultural dependency but simply against xenophobia. One can only hope that eventually the gatekeepers of the U.S., European, and Canadian presses will begin to show this kind of open-mindedness toward Latin American cultural coverage. Until then, however, the evidence indicates that the Latin American press will be able to “throw its doors and windows wide open” to outside currents without losing sight of its role as the purveyor and protector of Latin America’s own cultures.

#### NOTES

1. It might be worth noting at this juncture that in 1986 Mexican newspaper publisher Mario Vásquez Raña purchased 90 percent of UPI; granted, he is a member of the “native bourgeoisie.”
2. García Márquez is only one of several notable Latin American writers who began their careers as journalists.
3. See Arturo Uslar Pietri, “Cuatro siglos, cuatro cuadros,” *La Prensa*, 12 Jan. 1982, p. B-1.
4. It might also be noted that Argentina’s national theater is named for Cervantes and that of Cuba for García Lorca, who was martyred by the Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War.
5. José María Zaldívar, “Innovación hispánica,” *El Comercio*, 13 Jan. 13, p. 3.
6. Hernando Tellez, “Una querrela histórica: la transformación de los costumbres,” *El Tiempo*, 16 Jan. 1949, literary supplement, pp. 1, 8.
7. Jorge Edwards, “Fiestas y ritos del Nuevo Mundo,” *El Universal* (Caracas), 11 Jan. 1982, p. D-1.
8. Mario Vargas Llosa, “El elefante y la cultura,” *Excélsior*, 7 Jan. 1982, p. A-3.

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