

LAST201: Popular Culture in Latin America

week four: January 31, 2017

Popular Culture as Folk Culture

- folk culture and folklore
- some versions of postcolonialism...
- the master/slave dialectic
- the subaltern speaks
- decolonialism and deconstruction
- José María Arguedas

Folk Culture and Folklore

- folk = people, but Germanic (not Latin) root
- cf. “volk”
- lore = knowledge (compare “science”)
- folklore = popular knowledge
- stories, myths, legends, fairy tales
- oral, rather than written
- later collected (captured, museumified?)

Some versions of postcolonialism

- postcolonialism: an analysis of the effects of colonialism, particularly in culture
- and a recognition that colonialism doesn't end at formal independence
- Latin America: independence in 1820s; but legacies of colonialism continue
- Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak...
- Some debate about relevance to Latin America

The Master/Slave Dialectic

- Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*
- both master and slave dependent on other
- the slave is subordinate
- but the slave knows more than the master
- thus the master's victory is never complete
- constant anxiety and insecurity

The Subaltern Speaks

- “subaltern”: junior, subordinate
- term employed by Antonio Gramsci
- taken up by South Asian intellectuals in 1980s
- then by Latin Americanists in 1990s
- those whose voice does not count
- Gayatri Spivak: “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

Decolonialism and Deconstruction

- decolonialism: attempt to overturn colonial thought and logics
- a bid to overthrow the supposed superiority of Western reason
- deconstruction: an internal/external critique of Western reason
- refuses or undoes its dichotomies; as such, perhaps more radical than decolonialism



José María Arguedas



José María Arguedas

- 1911-1969
- mestizo, raised speaking Quechua
- anthropologist, poet, activist, novelist
- *Yawar Fiesta, Los ríos profundos, Todas las sangres*
- “No soy un aculturado”: “I am not acculturated”

Questions

- What is the lesson of “The Pongo’s Dream”
- What does it tell us about rural Peru?
- What does it tell us about Peruvian popular culture?
- To what extent do theories of postcolonialism help us understand this text?