FRANCINE MASIELLO: ***The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis.*** Duke University Press, 2001.

In *The Art of Transition*, Francine Masiello sets out to examine "culture as it moves from conditions of dictatorship to democracy" and "the fate of culture under market domain" (xi). Following this lead, my concern in the present review is not with her interpretation of literary texts, but rather her arguments concerning how markets and globalization explain the emergence of new voices and themes elaborated in those texts.

Masiello argues that the neoliberal economic order ushered in when the military dictatorships in Chile and Argentina fell served to suppress popular voices (presumably heard while those regimes remained in power) and impose market norms on high art. Masiello correctly explains that neoliberalism reasserted the primacy of markets (and a supposedly neutral sort of regulation via market mechanisms), but this idea was not new or only a characteristic of the transition from dictatorship to democracy in the 1980s and '90s. The dominance of the market in the cultural arena had never really been challenged in Chile and Argentina, even under Allende's government. Masiello's contention that the present art and literary marketplace in Argentina and Chile is an artifact of neoliberalism, then, misses the mark somewhat, for the dynamic she observes was central to the production and consumption of culture *before* the fall of the dictatorships as well as after. Art —both popular and high— have contended with the market, arguably, since the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of bourgeois Modernism. Masiello acknowledges this at times, but seems nevertheless to imply that what is occurring now in the arts marketplace is qualitatively different.

While the Chilean and Argentine military regimes imposed censorship on the arts (high and popular), they did so under neoliberal, market-driven conditions, as well as for political reasons. If dissident, avant-garde art retreated in the face of these forces, the "popular" emerged, at once broadening the cultural arena (albeit for mass distributed forms like *telenovelas*) and narrowing the range of viable subjects elaborated in that arena. In effect, content would undergo dual scrutiny by the "market" and the censors. Observing an analogous movement in the political and cultural realms today —from dictatorship to neoliberal democracy, and from the preoccupation with class embedded in the notion of the popular to matters of sexuality and gender, themes common to the texts she analyzes— Masiello asks whether (high) art will be able to interrupt the market logic that prevails during the age of globalization.

The answer is perhaps, but probably not. Masiello's analyses of new literature and art's representations of sexuality and gender, however much they illuminate

the texts she discusses, do not offer a new way to understand culture "under the market domain." Much of Masiello's discussion of the globalization of art and literary markets echoes the Frankfurt School's critique of mass culture and Latin American communications scholars' attacks on US-originated mass culture products in the 1970s. To wit, the ever-increasing array of mass-produced cultural products that enter people's lives via the market must lure them into false consciousness (a phrase Masiello does *not* use) of their positions within their communities and nations. Updating this reasoning for our present global age, Masiello argues that mainstream, market-driven media offer citizens the illusion of participation through consumption while purveying images of cultural difference and inclusion, when in fact large numbers of critical and dissident voices are excluded from the public sphere. This is surely true, but shifting the focus in literature, art, or critical analysis from class (the framework of the old cultural imperialism thesis) to sexuality and gender does not disrupt the economic dynamic of cultural production and consumption. Perhaps globalization is deepening and broadening the market's reach into high art, but perhaps it is only making it more visible.

If the dynamic of the market has not changed, what *is* new are the themes and voices of a new generation of Chilean and Argentine writers and artists. In analyzing these voices, Masiello offers keen insight into how the current economic trends both restrict and stimulate the circulation of new voices, especially the entry of voices from the South into the markets of the North. Voices that were repressed or exiled under dictatorship offer new visions of democratic practice and imagine new bonds of community. If the "popular classes" were the outsiders articulating these ideas under dictatorship, under neoliberalism women, gay men, and lesbians have emerged at the margins of society to provoke critical inquiry into the representations of normalcy offered by mainstream media dominated by the market and the State.

What do these voices say? Masiello develops three frames for interpreting their utterances: Masks, Maps, and Markets. In Masks, her concern is how popular subjects are addressed in literature and art. She asks: what has become of the representations that equated the popular (i.e., subalternity) with resistance to dictatorship? Given the disappearance of the popular under redemocratization (i.e., as political parties subsumed social movements), who are the marginal subjects whose positions as outsiders allow them sharper insights into the state of neoliberal society? The answer: gendered subjects, positioned to bring to light the contractions of the new democracies (which turn out to be pretty much the same as the contradictions of the old dictatorships and democracies they replaced). It bears pointing out, however, that for these critiques to have an impact, they must be heard by more than the rest of the avant-garde.

Maps focuses on the "reconceptualization of the North/South axis and metaphors of translation," questioning the "gloss of global theory that effaces local cultural production or rarifies its critical thought" (16). Here Masiello reveals the contradictory logic of globalization. On the one hand, globalization clearly signifies a kind of flattening of cultural difference, as advertising and mass production contribute to a sense of pervasive "Americanization" and the loss of cultural distinctiveness. On the other hand, through the new communication technologies and market processes that impel it, globalization opens the cultural field to new and larger numbers of producers and consumers, creating real opportunities for breaking down cultural barriers and overcoming provincialism. A case in point is Isabel Allende, whose novels sell very well in the United States and Europe, in effect speaking to a Northern audience in a Southern voice. This is the case even though Allende's wild popularity in the North reveals the market's insidious way of commodifying difference (her work is heralded by critics for appealing to what is universal in the human condition rather than articulating a Southern perspective), and thereby neutralizing its dissident, critical potential.

Masiello's ambivalence about Allende's success foretells her theme in the final section of the book, Markets. Here Masiello explores the market's tendency to appropriate and subdue difference, and reasserts the avant-garde's responsibility to expose the contradictions of the current age, especially the conflict between art and market. New popular subjects reveal (as their predecessors had under dictatorship) the fissures in the new democracies' promises of equality and community, and propose new possibilities for re-establishing a sense of community not constrained by the market. This new community would contain —and make visible— all those overlooked by history.

While attempting to demonstrate that the present phase of globalization signals a change in the underlying logic of cultural production, Masiello's analysis underscores the tenacity of capitalism. It's not simply that the market's reach into art is lengthening, but also that the technologies of globalization create and reveal the limitations of the market to control cultural production and consumption. Our particular age may have given rise to new outsider voices — of both writers and their characters— which can be disseminated through mainstream and alternative channels, but these will not avoid the influence of the market. And one day, that influence will move today's margins to the mainstream, making way for new outsiders.

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