



Yeidy M. Rivero. *Broadcasting Modernity: Cuban Commercial Television, 1950-1960.* Console-ing Passions: Television and Cultural Power Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. 264 pp. \$94.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8223-5859-6.

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Like many carefully crafted books, the last few sentences of Yeidy M. Rivero's *Broadcasting Modernity: Cuban Commercial Television, 1950-1960* capture much of the essence of the text by providing a satisfying and succinct review of the intellectual journey the reader has taken since the introduction. Thus, at the very end of the epilogue, Rivero emphasizes the importance of television to transitional societies, such as Cuba, and, consequently, the importance of innovative research into television's role in such societies. Rivero's final sentence reads, "Equally important, the Cuban case illustrates the ways in which television is a participant and sometimes also a creator of a nation's history" (p. 180). Here is the core of *Broadcasting Modernity*: it is a well-researched examination of the discourses of modernity that shaped the Cuban nation-state during the fundamentally important decade in the Caribbean island's life: , 1950 to 1960. *Broadcasting Modernity* delves into the claims on modernity made in the pre-Fulgencio Batista dictatorship period, during the Batista dictatorship, and during the early years of Fidel Castro's revolutionary government. These claims were made in and through discussions about television. As Rivero puts it, "Cuban television was born in a democracy, matured during a dictatorship and a revolutionary struggle,

and was born again when the nation-state began to adopt a socialist perspective" (p. 3).

In this book, Rivero continues her efforts, started in her 2005 book, *Tuning Out Blackness: Race and Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television*, of adding nuance to our understanding of what smaller commercial television systems tell us about race, class, gender, and national identity. Rivero's point of departure is the limited attention given to the Cuban television industry in the Latin American and Caribbean media scholarship, despite, as she points out, Cuba's outsized significance as an early leader, indeed a hub, in the Latin American television industry. *Broadcasting Modernity* therefore contributes to the body of work within communication studies that has sought to trouble the tendency to become fixated on European and American media systems, and/or global media corporations. With its focus on discourses of modernity, this work is also part of a larger conversation about race, gender, and modernity.

The six chapters plus epilogue of the book follow the arc of commercial television development in Cuba. Chapter 1 focuses on the eve of television in Cuba. It examines the discourses articulated in radio regulations. These discourses established the commercial nature of Cuba's broadcasting in-

dustry and also rehearsed many of the delimitations of Cubanness that would shape the modernizing projects begun by and through television. Chapters 2 and 3 highlight how television in Cuba was central to the claims of modernity made by the Cuban government, industry leaders, and television critics. Chapter 2 focuses on technological discourses and how Cuba's mastery of television's technology was central to its ability to claim to be modern. In chapter 3, by examining the efforts of Cuban industry leaders, government officials, and critics to define Cuba as properly Spanish/European, Roman Catholic, and sexually constrained, *Broadcasting Modernity* elucidates the racial and gender politics at the heart of the project of Cuban modernity. Chapter 4 is something of a fulcrum previewing the coming Cuban Revolution and the ways in which US and Cuban television events sought to address the "Communist menace." Chapters 5 and 6 explore the television industry after the revolution. Rivero highlights three stages of the revolution: democracy, humanism, and nationalism/socialism. Chapter 5 is centered on the first two stages and focuses on the changing nature of the modernizing project for television in Cuba set in train by the new Castro government. Particularly significant to the new project was a rejection of the old regime's repudiation of Afro-Cuban heritage. Chapter 6 examines the revolutionary government's use of television to articulate Cuba to a socialist modernity. The epilogue is a brief, more personal examination of contemporary television in Cuba. It highlights the meanings made of the seepage of US television programming into Cuba.

Broadcasting Modernity, therefore, provides readers with a rich exploration of the television industry in Cuba from 1950 to 1960. Through her careful examination of how discursive statements about Cuba, Cubanness, race, and gender are articulated within the television archive, Rivero examines the changing disciplinary projects that defined, redefined, and defined again what it meant/means to be a modern Caribbean nation-state.

Thus, by teasing out the ways in which the project of Cuban modernity was deeply connected to how the United States was seen "the most progressive country in the world" (p. 4), Rivero provides a way of examining the relationship between Caribbean lived experience and the *idea* of the United States. Further, the rich specificity of this Cuban case is added to a range of texts that seek to unpack modernity and its others.

As I suggested earlier, *Broadcasting Modernity* is in direct conversation with the literature on Latin American media. However, the book also provides valuable insights for media research in the broader Caribbean, that is to say, beyond the linguistic silos of the Spanish Caribbean, the French Caribbean, Dutch Caribbean, and the English Caribbean that were created by colonialism. Much of the media history of the region is still to be written, and *Broadcasting Modernity* provides a useful model for that scholarship.

In addition to this significant contribution, *Broadcasting Modernity* contributes some particularly useful insights about the figure of the television critic in projects of modernity. Communication and literary studies have, in multiple ways, engaged with the role of the literary critic and modernity in, for example, the Habermasian public sphere. In this text, the television critic plays an extremely significant role in constructing Cuban discourses of modernity and, by paying such close attention to the work that is done in the media critical sphere, Rivero's text offers an important model for examining the Caribbean media critic as part of the intellectual tradition of the region. The professional media critic, as Rivero shows, is extremely important to crafting the ways in which Caribbean popular culture is made meaningful.

Rivero's text is an extremely strong contribution to our understanding of Cuba between 1950 and 1960 and how colonial discourses articulated modernizing television practices in a rapidly and radically changing political environment. This

book will find audiences in a number of intersecting fields, including media and communication studies, popular cultural studies, Caribbean studies, and Latin American studies. It also offers a very rich way for those seeking to understand or add to their understanding of the history of Cuba in the Batista years and the early days of the Cuban Revolution.

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