

THE FAILURES OF LATIN AMERICA  
AND CRITICISM ON LATIN AMERICA:  
READING JOHN BEVERLEY  
(WITH A DETOUR THROUGH ANTONIO CORNEJO POLAR)

*Juan E. De Castro*

Hegel famously wrote that “Minerva’s owl flies only at dusk.” As everyone knows, Hegel meant by this that only in retrospect can one begin to truly understand an event or topic. As we will see, the idea of knowledge as crepuscular is relevant to an understanding of *The Failure of Latin America: Postcolonialism in Bad Times* (2019).<sup>1</sup> John Beverley’s authorship gives *The Failure of Latin America* added relevance: he has played a major role in (U.S.) academic criticism about Latin America during the last forty or so years. *The Failure of Latin America* is thus presented as a kind of intellectual testament that sums up Beverley’s political and theoretical evolution, together with that of the region as a civilizational location for social hopes from the revolutionary 1960s to our post-utopian present.

For heuristic purposes I propose here to read Beverley’s meditations on the end of Latin America or, more accurately, of a version of Latin America, together with an earlier Latin American—rather than Latin Americanist<sup>2</sup>—jeremiad: Antonio Cornejo Polar’s 1997 critical testament “Mestizaje e hibridez: los riesgos de las metáforas. Apuntes” [“Mestizaje and Hybridity: The Risk of Metaphors—Notes”].<sup>3</sup> I believe it is possible to see the analysis of Latin American literature—as well as of the process of hope and despair regarding the region—documented in Beverley’s book as being implicitly in counterpoint to the putative end of the Latin American critical tradition lamented by Cornejo Polar in this, his last text.

## **The Failure of Latin America**

### ***Latin America***

The title of Beverley’s book—*The Failure of Latin America*—is significant. First it includes the name Latin America, a concept that because of use is often seen as much less problematic than it actually is. As many know, the term “Latin America” has “imperialist” origins. Although it was first coined by the Chilean radical Francisco Bilbao in 1863, who was living in Paris, it was taken

up by French intellectuals, like Michel Chevalier, and used by those supporting French intervention in the region as a way of hiding its true imperial nature.<sup>4</sup> That said, there is no reason why a term might not accrue or be given different denotations and connotations through time. A phrase that might implicitly support imperialism in, let's say, 1862, can be used in anti-imperialist discourse in 1962 not to say 2022 or 2062. However, Latin America is crisscrossed by fault lines so severe that put into question its putative unity. The most obvious division is that between *Spanish America* and Brazil. This is a division that is both linguistic and cultural.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the idea of a unity between both regions has always been seen as more questionable from the Portuguese speaking side. Thus, in 2019, only 4.2% of Brazilians considered themselves primarily Latin American.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, for instance, in Chile, 38% saw themselves as primarily Latin American, and in Colombia, 59%.<sup>7</sup> Even if one wishes the poll had actually asked about Latin America as a secondary rather than primary identity—in other words, as an identity held in addition to one's nationality—many Brazilian intellectuals have also questioned the idea of Latin America from the nineteenth century to the present.<sup>8</sup>

As is implicit in the use of “Latin” to describe the region, indigenous cultures and populations, as well as Afro-descendant individuals and communities, are marginalized if not excluded from the concept of Latin America. Many indigenous scholars and activists have, therefore, embraced *Abya Yala* as an alternative name for the region. However, the use of *Abya Yala*, while expressive of the need of organized indigenous movements for a name for the region distinct from Latin or Spanish America, is not unproblematically inclusive. It is difficult, for instance, to categorize writers such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Jorge Luis Borges, or Roberto Bolaño, as belonging to *Abya Yala*. However, one must note that even within Spanish-speaking Latin America there are significant cultural and regional differences. Apart from language and perhaps Catholic heritage, what connects Meso-America with the Andean region or with the Southern Cone? Needless to say, Beverley is fully aware of these divisions, even quoting well-known texts critical of the “idea” of Latin America by such diverse authors such as Walter Mignolo and Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Failure***

Underlying Beverley's embrace of the idea of Latin America is his belief that the region is a distinct civilization or, perhaps more accurately, that it has or has had the possibility of becoming one. Already in the introduction to *The Failure of Latin America*, developing Samuel Huntington's idea of Latin America as a civilization different from that of the United States, Beverley notes: “To recall Samuel Huntington's idea, it has not emerged as a ‘civilization’ yet . . . by contrast, [with] China and India, which also entered the race of mod-

ern capitalism late but quickly surpassed even advanced Latin American countries like Brazil. Latin American modernity has been a failure because Latin America, even as it has embraced its own internal diversity and heterogeneity, has remained ‘dependent’ (xviii).<sup>10</sup> “Dependency” implies being subordinated economically to the United States. Notoriously Huntington used this view of Latin America as a distinct and, therefore, inassimilable culture, as an excuse for arguing for restrictions on immigration from the region.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, Beverley assigns a different connotation to the idea of Latin America as a civilization, even if a failed one. Given that both China and India are in the grips of repressive governments—even if nominally of different political stripes—and are characterized by extremely unequal distributions of income, it is clear that the notion of success is based on a very basic view of the economy.

Looking at another paratext helps further explain what is seen as having failed with Latin America’s search for “independence,” as well as the connotations Beverley associates with “Latin America.” I am referring to the cover, which shows the sculpture of the dead Simón Bolívar in Quinta de San Pedro Alejandrino. Since Beverley is one of the editors of the series in which the book was published, it is difficult not to see him as (at a minimum) approving the cover. The representation of a dead Bolívar can, therefore, be seen as commenting on the title and the content of the study.

One could, perhaps, argue that making Bolívar into a representative of the totality of Latin America is not without difficulties: he played no role, obviously in Brazilian history; neither is he a significant part of that of Argentina, Chile, Mexico, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, or the countries of Central America. Even among those countries he helped liberate, such as Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, his role is far from uniformly celebrated. Not only did he found the conservative party of Colombia—which, at least in principle, would associate him with values far from progressive—but his role in Peruvian history has also frequently been questioned, such as, for instance, by liberal writer Ricardo Palma.<sup>12</sup>

Be that as it may, Bolívar has long been seen as synonymous with Latin America’s progressive movements, due to his belief in the need for regional alliances and his putative opposition to U.S. imperialism. For instance, Cuban songwriter Pablo Milanés in “Canción por la unidad latinoamericana” (1976) sang: “Bolívar hurled a star / that shone next to Martí / Fidel dignified it / for it to travel through these lands.”<sup>13</sup> The idea of Bolívar as the founder of a radical Latin American tradition is also present in Hugo Chávez’s calling his government the “Bolivarian Revolution,” and naming his alternative to the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana Para Los Pueblos de Nuestra América). Indeed, the name of ALBA brings together both Bolívar (Bolivariana) and Cuban José Martí, who proposed the name “Nuestra América” (Our America) as a substitute for Spanish America or Lat-

in America. In fact, the failure of this version of “progressive” Latin America is one of the book’s underlying motifs. As Beverley notes,

it is important to register and understand why, in the name of a fairer distribution of wealth via state control and planning, governments that call themselves socialist have a bad track record of wrecking economies. In Latin America, Cuba is one such case, as is today, even more catastrophically, Venezuela . . . These essays are beholden to the Pink Tide. They are shadowed by its current distress and impasse. They seek a way out of that impasse, without a clear vision of what that might be. (xv-xvi)

I can add that at the time of writing this article, whatever progressive hopes remained for Venezuela seem to be gone, as the regime attempts to hold on to power despite President Nicolás Maduro’s apparent loss during the 2024 elections. Moreover, one could even argue that, unfortunately, right wing dictators and presidents, such as Rafael Trujillo (Dominican Republic), Augusto Pinochet (Chile), Jorge Rafael Videla and now democratically elected president Javier Milei (Argentina), are as Latin American as the Cuban Revolution and the Pink Tide. *Pace* Milanés, one could imagine a right wing stone becoming an abominable star.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Postcolonialism***

More surprising than the notion of Latin America’s failure—regardless of one’s politics, very few, if any, would see in the region a success—the second part of the title—“Postcolonialism in Bad Times”—is the one that truly catches the reader’s attention. While we always live in “bad times”—and, given the second election of Trump, the rise of neo-fascism, and the climate emergency, the “times” have gotten much worse since 2019 when Beverley’s book was published—the surprising word is “postcolonialism.” After all, as José Antonio Mazzotti notes, “one needs always to keep in mind that the concept of postcolonial was originally applied to the situation of the former French and British colonies in Africa and Asia.<sup>15</sup>” While the use of “postcolonial” for an analysis of Latin American literature, culture, and society, reflects a laudable desire to stress the commonalities of the “Global South,” it can also be seen as erasing Latin American difference.

One must add that, as Nicholas Dirks argues, “postcoloniality is related to current developments in identity politics, multiculturalism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism.<sup>16</sup>” Thus, even if the notion of the postcolonial famously arose out of the writings of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha—that is, out of the scholarship of a Palestinian and two Indian scholars—the

fact is that it can be seen “as strongly influenced by the poststructuralist thought of Jacques Derrida and, in the fields of psychoanalysis, that of Jacques Lacan.<sup>17</sup>” One can argue that, regardless of its utility and insight, postcolonialism is imbricated with Western academic thought of the 1970s and 1980s and that, furthermore, it is, in principle, based on the marginalization, if not exclusion, of Latin American scholarship and the region’s multiple histories.

These issues are addressed in *The Failure of Latin America*. According to Beverley,

The rise of “theory” can be seen not only as coinciding with the anti-colonial struggles of that time but also as an effect of decolonization on the knowledge centers of the former colonial metropolis. To put this another way, even though produced initially in or from Europe and generalized by the colonially implanted universalization of European culture within global schools and universities, “theory” obeyed a post-European historical will. Postcolonialism in this sense was not the consequence of “theory” but its precondition. (94)

In other words, the turn to what used to be called poststructuralist theory and the turn to postcolonial theory are presented as part of the same intellectual movement.<sup>18</sup> Others have proposed a roughly similar genealogy for postcolonial theory, often critically, such as Aijaz Ahmad, who chastised its lack of concern with issues of revolution under the guise of a criticism of nationalism.<sup>19</sup> The most extreme version of this imbrication of postcolonialism and poststructuralism is Robert J.C. Young’s *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001).<sup>20</sup> After listing concepts; describing anti-colonial movements; and analyzing thinkers (including Marx and Marxists, such as José Carlos Mariátegui), postcolonial scholars (such as Edward Said), and “theorists” (such as Michel Foucault), the book concludes with a paean addressed directly to Derrida. In it Young presents the works and person of the author of *Of Grammatology* as the culmination of anti-colonial and post-colonial thinking and activism.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to celebrating the founders of postcolonial theory, Beverley will also highlight the importance of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. This group, which also included such noted figures as Ileana Rodríguez, Alberto Moreiras, Mignolo, and Javier Sanjinés, was inspired by Indian subaltern studies that paid attention to groups, movements, and individuals excluded from mainstream historiography, whether liberal or Marxist. Beverley compares *The Failure of Latin America* with Dipesh Chakrabarty’s 2002 *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*: “These are also essays in the wake of subaltern studies, but sixteen years after Chakrabarty’s” (x). However, it is clear that subaltern studies are presented as a development within postcolonial thought rather than a break from it. As we saw, Young

presents Latin American anti-colonial thought—from Martí to Che Guevara—as somehow concluding in Derridean deconstruction. In contrast, as we will see, Beverley considers the Latin American critical tradition as, at best, flawed, in comparison with that of India and other regions of the global South seen as reflecting progressive ideas.

**Antonio Cornejo Polar:  
The Frayed and Not-Very-Honorable Ending of Hispano-Americanism**

*Cornejo Polar and Beverley*

This may very well be as good as any a moment to bring into this discussion of *The Failure of Latin America* Antonio Cornejo Polar's testamentary essay, "Mestizaje e hibridez: Los riesgos de las metáforas. Apuntes" ["Mestizaje and Hybridity: The Risks of Metaphors—Notes"]. This brief text was originally read at the LASA congress of April 1997 because the Peruvian scholar was too ill to attend. He would die in May the same year. While there is no reference to "Mestizaje e hibridez" in *The Failure of Latin America*, Cornejo Polar shows up briefly on two occasions. The first is during Beverley's discussion of Lurgio Gavilán's (self) testimonial text *Memorias del soldado desconocido* (2012) (translated as *When Rains Became Floods*). As Beverley notes in a passage analyzing how Gavilán compares his writing to the activities of Andean peasants,

The great Peruvian critic Antonio Cornejo Polar had suggested in the title of his last book a metaphor for Latin American literature, borrowing the image from César Vallejo, "writing in air." Gavilán by contrast suggests in this final scene of his memoir a kind of writing in the soil, akin to the labor of plowing and cultivating. (119)

The second mention is, in my opinion, more relevant to a discussion of "Mestizaje e hibridez." Beverly first quotes anthropologist, historian, and educational entrepreneur Jorge Klor de Alva's statement in "Colonialism and (Post) Colonialism as Latin American Mirages" (1992) that "[t]he close identification of post-independence national cultures with their European templates makes it evident that the Americas, in contrast to many Asian and African societies, did not experience decolonization in the course of their assumed postcoloniality.<sup>22</sup>" Beverley adds: "it was greeted with alarm and skepticism in Latin American studies. I remember my colleague Antonio Cornejo Polar—my senior in every way—asking me anxiously if I thought it could be true. Today it seems more like common sense" (128). "Mestizaje e hibridez" can be read as Cornejo Polar's response to Klor's comments and their ensuing transformation into "common sense."

### *Cornejo Polar as a Critic of Latin American Thought*

Leaving aside the dramatic personal context of the text's writing, "Mestizaje e hibridez" is explicitly a criticism of Latin American critical thought in terms that are not completely out of line with Beverley's negative evaluation of the region's intellectual production. Cornejo Polar's very brief essay begins with a review of key Latin American concepts such as *mestizaje*—sexual and cultural contact giving rise to distinct Latin American cultures—and the related notion of hybridity, which he associates with the writings of Néstor García Canclini, then at the height of his influence.<sup>23</sup> According to the Peruvian scholar, "[i]t is evident that categories like *mestizaje* and hybridity basically stem from biology and other disciplines unrelated to cultural and literary analysis, with the aggravating factor—in the case of *mestizaje*—that it is an extremely ideological concept."<sup>24</sup> And:

the concept of *mestizaje*, despite its prestigious tradition, is a concept that falsifies the condition of our culture and our literature in the most drastic way. In effect, what *mestizaje* does is to offer a harmonious image of what is obviously disjointed and confrontational, proposing representations that deep down are only relevant to those for whom it is convenient to imagine our societies as smooth and non-conflictive spaces of coexistence.<sup>25</sup>

It is worth remembering that *mestizaje*—or different versions of this idea—has long been used in Latin America as a way of imagining distinct national cultures, despite the multicultural and multiethnic realities created by histories of conquest, exploitation, and conflict.

Cornejo Polar continues his negative review of Latin American concepts used in the study of the region's culture and history by looking at the notion of transculturation. First proposed by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, it was later brought into literary studies by Ángel Rama: "I add—despite my unrestricted respect for Ángel Rama—that the idea of transculturation has more and more become the most sophisticated disguise of the category of *mestizaje*."<sup>26</sup>

These are criticisms shared to a great degree by Beverley, even if he adds an interesting wrinkle. After noting that transculturation, as "cultural creolization," always takes place whenever cultures come into contact, he argues:

Like dependency theory, this second, programmatic sense of transculturation stressed the "underdeveloped" character of the Latin American national cultures—seen as bound up with the persistence of co-

lonial and neocolonial forms of dependency and therefore of residual Eurocentrism. In response, the intellectual, artistic, and political elites would have a “vanguard” role in creating a more inclusive, dynamic, and representative national culture. (Beverley, *Failure* 12)

While Cornejo Polar is concerned with how *mestizaje*, hybridity, and transculturation, can be used to hide the actual cultural, ethnic, and other tensions that cut through Latin American societies, Beverley sees in transculturation a Eurocentric quest for modernization. Moreover, it is one that is led by the elites, rather than the subalterns. If Cornejo Polar is critical of the idea of a national identity capable of erasing cultural tensions, Beverley adds the notion’s imitative Eurocentrism and its elite nature. However, Cornejo Polar’s criticisms of the region’s intellectual tradition can also be seen as responding in partial agreement to Klor de Alva’s comments noted above.

### *Jeremiad*

Despite these criticisms, Cornejo Polar’s essay is, as previously mentioned, a jeremiad against the end of a criticism based in Latin America, and, therefore, an argument for writing the experience of Latin America not only in Spanish, but also, at least in principle, in Portuguese, and, potentially, indigenous languages. The Peruvian critic notes “the difficult coexistence of texts and discourses in Spanish and Portuguese (and eventually in Amerindian languages) with the uncontrollable dissemination of critical texts in English (or in other European languages).<sup>27</sup>” He also argues that this dissemination leads to a linguistic hierarchy in which English is implicitly seen as superior to Spanish and Portuguese: “[t]he massive use of a foreign language for the study of Hispano-American literature is generating—even though perhaps nobody wants it—a strange hierarchy in which texts written in a foreign language end up leading the common field of Hispano-American studies.<sup>28</sup>” Moreover, “[criticism] in English usually uses a bibliography in the same language and disregards, or does not mention, what has been done in Latin America with so much effort during so many years. Besides, its extreme preference for the narrow, theoretical postmodern canon is a compulsion that verges on the preposterous.<sup>29</sup>”

In direct response to Klor de Alva, Beverley, and the critical “common sense” that would basically throw Latin American intellectual production into the dustbin of history, Cornejo Polar adds the following: “cultural, postcolonial, and/or subaltern studies have not calibrated the implications of practicing these disciplines predominantly in English regardless of the language of the discourses under study.<sup>30</sup>” He even compares this English-only scholarship on Latin American culture as resembling a neocolonial economic relation that “seems to take Hispano-American literature as a raw material to be turned



into sophisticated critical artifacts.<sup>31</sup> This linguistic hierarchy is not limited to texts, since “it is absolutely erroneous that the majority of professors of Hispano-American literature are proficient in English.<sup>32</sup>” For the Peruvian critic, scholarship written in the languages of Latin America and within Latin America has implicitly a kind of insider knowledge, regardless of its historical flaws.

It is also worth remembering that the alarm expressed by the Peruvian critic is precisely the negative image of the celebration of writing in English expressed by many Latin Americanists at the time. According to Argentine-born Walter Mignolo, in his influential *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, published, significantly, in 1995, “[w]riting in Spanish means . . . to remain at the margin of contemporary theoretical discussions. In the world in which scholarly publications are meaningful, there are more readers in English and French than in Spanish.<sup>33</sup>” While objectively true, it is impossible not to see Mignolo’s arguments as accepting and ultimately reinforcing the linguistic hierarchy that places English over Spanish.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, given this logic, why not stop using Spanish altogether as a language of culture not only in “theoretical discussions” but also in creative work? *Mutatis mutandis* the same conditions of reception are to be found in the “world republic of letters.”

In addition to mentioning the destructive effect of the brutal Southern cone military dictatorships, Cornejo Polar notes the manner in which neoliberal policies—which led to the underfunding of education in Latin America and often opened book markets to foreign publishers—have played a role in depressing the intellectual production of the region:<sup>35</sup> “the military dictatorships, through censorship or even more brutal methods, and afterward neoliberalism with its politics of depletion of public cultural institutions (universities, libraries, archives) have practically destroyed the material basis for the development of the discipline.<sup>36</sup>”

The conclusion of the essay makes clear the depth of Cornejo Polar’s pessimism: “I would not want my words to be considered now as a premonition, but instead as a distressed and cordial indication of what could be the frayed and not very honorable ending of Hispano-Americanism.<sup>37</sup>” After all, while he refuses to consider his article a premonition, he gives no reasons why this dishonorable ending would not take place.

### *Reading Cornejo Polar in the Twenty-First Century*

Reading Cornejo Polar’s essay in 2025, one cannot avoid the conclusion that his belief in the end of *hispanoamericanismo*—understood as a tradition of critical writing—was mostly wrong. Despite the continuous downgrading of higher education—under the impact of dictatorship, neoliberalism, and now neo-fascism—Spanish language critics have continued publishing major works. In fact, around the time “Mestizaje e hibridez” came out, Nelly Rich-

ard's *La insubordinación de los signos* [*The Insubordination of Signs*] (1994); Beatriz Sarlo's *Borges, un escritor en las orillas* [*Borges: A Writer on the Edge*] (1993) and *Escenas de la vida postmoderna* [*Scenes from Postmodern Life*] (1994); and, from a younger generation, Christopher Domínguez Michael's *La utopía de la hospitalidad* [*The Utopia of Hospitality*] (1993) and *Tiros en el concierto* [*Gunshots at the Concert*] (1997) were all published. Obviously, major critical work has continued to the present.<sup>38</sup>

However, unlike Rama, García Canclini, and Roberto Fernández Retamar, to limit ourselves to the authors mentioned by Cornejo Polar, these, as well as others, mostly reflect on national literatures rather than Spanish America or Latin America. In that sense, the Peruvian critic who, after all, founded and led the *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* in 1975,<sup>39</sup> and who precisely during that period wrote several programmatic articles for a regional literary criticism,<sup>40</sup> could be seen as lamenting the end of a Spanish-language and implicitly Portuguese-language scholarship that not only was written by authors who lived in the region and were impacted by this experience, but also one that analyzed the region as a whole. Even though one could very well argue that criticism in Spanish is alive and well, it reflects different concerns than those that guided Cornejo Polar in this essay. That said, despite his stress on the need for a criticism focused on the specificity of Latin America's literatures, looking back on Cornejo Polar's writings as a whole, one would classify him primarily as a scholar of Peruvian and Andean literatures and cultures. Not only are his key concepts, such as *la totalidad contradictoria* (contradictory totality) or *la heterogeneidad* (heterogeneity) the product of his study of Peru's cultural tensions, so are his major studies, such as *Vigencia y universalidad de José María Arguedas* [*Continued Relevance and Universality of José María Arguedas*] (1984) and *Escribir en el aire. Ensayo sobre la heterogeneidad socio-cultural en las literaturas andinas* [*Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures*] (1994).

Furthermore, as Cornejo Polar predicted, since the 1990s, a clearly distinct Anglophone Latin Americanism has developed; one which understandably responds to its own logic and fads: going from postcolonial to subaltern studies to gender theory to affect theory to sound studies to an approach based on world literature to eco-criticism, etc. However, there are many connections between, English and Spanish language scholarship. Not only are there U.S.-based Latin American scholars who publish in Latin American presses, such as Mariano Siskind or Efraín Kristal, but many Latin American scholars writing in Spanish and publishing primarily in the region trained in the U.S. Finally, many of the trends that developed in the U.S. have resonated in the region. One can single out the previously-mentioned approaches centered on gender studies, world literature, and eco-criticism as dealing with topics of urgent global relevance and not only Latin American or U.S. American relevance.

## Rejecting The Lettered City

### *Transculturation*

Beverley's antipathy towards the Boom is, arguably, the major divergence between his own and Latin Americanism's Anglophone trajectory. For many in Latin American Studies and beyond, the embrace of the Boom and that of theory coincided not only chronologically—Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, originally published in 1967, came out in English translation as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1971—but was also seen as reflecting many of the same critical concerns. For instance, in 1992, Lucille Kerr reminisced about an unnamed scholar in French literature, who once remarked, "The Spanish Americans are actually doing what the French are only talking about."<sup>41</sup> Kerr lucidly analyzes the possible implications of this putative relationship between Latin American literature and French theory: whether it implied subordination or superiority of either theory or the Boom. However, what should be clear is that the novelty of the Boom—as a break with a previous Latin American literature often caricaturized as simplistic rural narrative if not simplistic socialist realism—was one of the central views held at the time not only by U.S. academics, but also by Latin American scholars, such as Emir Rodríguez-Monegal,<sup>42</sup> and even writers, such as future Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, as insinuated by Kerr, while Latin American literature was seen as having theoretical import, a similar interest was not expressed in the region's scholarship.

Beverley rejected the Boom as a product of what, borrowing from Ángel Rama, he calls the "lettered city," that is, the intellectuals and the cultural institutions that, in the first instance, were the intellectual substratum that made possible Spain's colonial rule, and later justified the neocolonial structures of independent Latin America. However, he also sees it as an example of Rama's other major theoretical concept: transculturation. Following Rama, Beverley defines transculturation as "the possibility that the diverse cultural and linguistic forms involved in Latin America would, in their process of interaction, come together in a new, 'national' synthesis, including both European and non-Western indigenous, African, and Asian elements" (12). After distinguishing between transculturation as "a process of cultural creolization that . . . takes place in all multicultural societies and transculturation as a specific cultural program . . . related to 'development' and the achievement of a Latin American form of modernity" (12), Beverley then identifies the Boom with this modernizing version of transculturation: "[o]ne of the models Rama suggested for transculturation was the novel of the Latin American Boom: García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Fuentes, and so on" (12).

However, while Beverley is correct in noting that transculturation privileges the intellectual, he doesn't take into account, at least in this specific text, that one of the keys of *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* [*Writing Across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*] (1982) is that rather than being primarily a celebration of elite writers, Rama highlights the work of regionalist writers and how they appropriate "modern" tools to update their works and, therefore, renew their local culture: "a strengthening of what we can call the continent's hinterland cultures, not to the degree that they held rigidly to their old traditions but to the degree that they transculturated without giving up their souls, as Arguedas would have said."<sup>44</sup> This passage from *Transculturación narrativa* also shows that Cornejo Polar is simplifying Rama's actual position. This is something that the Peruvian scholar may be acknowledging by noting that "transculturation has more and more become the most sophisticated disguise of the category of *mestizaje*," that is, that Rama's proposal has been simplified in its use by other authors. However, Cornejo Polar clearly insinuates that this simplification is made possible by flaws present in the notion of transculturation.

The mention of José María Arguedas reminds us that, among other things, *Transculturación narrativa* is a study of the Peruvian *indigenista's* masterpiece *Los ríos profundos* [*Deep Rivers*] (1958).<sup>45</sup> To complicate things further, Arguedas was seen by Cortázar and progressively by Vargas Llosa as precisely an intellectual and cultural rival, if not enemy.<sup>46</sup> In fact, of the Boom authors, only García Márquez was seen by Rama as being a *transculturator*, but of a different kind from Arguedas or Juan Rulfo. Rama writes of "the particular cultural situation into which Rulfo tried to insert the mediating function. In its drama and frustration, Rulfo's work can be linked to that of Arguedas, but it differs from the solutions reached by Guimarães Rosa and García Márquez."<sup>47</sup>

### ***The Lettered City***

As Beverley notes, the "intelligentsia is also a new ruling class, or a key part of it, which persists into modernity—this is the core argument of Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada*" (67). However, it is not clear to me how Rama's seamless view of the "lettered city" as always imbricated with colonialism and neocolonialism relates to his earlier views expressed in *Transculturación narrativa*. Jose Eduardo González convincingly notes that "Rama had already begun to doubt his own view of literature as a democratizing tool, and of literature as a 'weapon' . . . and I believe this is evident in his pessimistic view of Latin America's past and future in his posthumously published *The Lettered City*."<sup>48</sup> However, the fact that *La ciudad letrada* [*The Lettered City*] is posthumous, and, to a degree, unfinished, undermines any definite conclusion about how Rama saw the relation between the ideas expressed in these two texts that, it

must be remembered, were only published two years apart: *Transculturación narrativa* (1982) and *La ciudad letrada* (1984). Even if González is right and Rama had changed his position regarding the role of the intellectual and the effects of literature on society, we as readers are obviously free to use the Uruguayan critic's insights in these two classic texts as makes sense to us, regardless of the author's intention.

The seamless nature of the "lettered city" is clearly a problematic aspect of Rama's posthumous work. As Fernanda Beigel writes, "[i]n this text, Rama left no cracks in his characterization of the literary system and ended up stigmatizing Latin American intellectuals under the sign of the collusion of writing with power."<sup>49</sup> However, if we see *La ciudad letrada* and *Transculturación narrativa* as complementary rather than opposed texts, one could view the "republic of letters" as composed of hierarchically different and culturally divergent "lettered spaces." One is tempted to use Cornejo Polar's term and talk about heterogeneity, though, of course, within Spanish and Portuguese literatures, rather than cultures, races, and languages.

### *The Subaltern*

Beverley's rejection of Latin American thought, as being always already neocolonial, and his rejection of the Boom as being imbricated with the nation, seen as an elite project, are complementary. After all, Boom writers and Latin American scholars would belong to the same lettered city. However, the popularity of the Boom and especially *Cien años de soledad*, often seen as a key to understanding Latin American history and reality, had been partly a response to the curiosity raised about the region by the Cuban revolution.<sup>50</sup> In the case of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* [*I, Rigoberta Menchú*] (1983), a similar interest in the then-ongoing revolutionary uprising in Central America, as well as the overlap of this particular text with questions about indigeneity and ethnic identity that were beginning to become central for U.S. progressives, helped create its canonicity. As Beverley notes about the indigenous activism depicted in Menchú's *testimonio*, "[t]hey were struggling to limit their subjection to capitalist modernization of agriculture and forced acculturation" (9). The celebration of Menchú's *testimonio* by Beverley and others thus continued the interest in Latin America as the space of radical politics that had underlaid the growth of academic interest in the region during the 1970s, as well as connecting it with the rise of issues of gender, culture, and ethnicity as the bases of progressive action.

Given Beverley's rejection of the mainstream of Latin American literature and culture, it is not surprising that *The Failure of Latin America* looks at works that are described as being produced outside the lettered city, that is, outside the world of literature and of high culture, or, at least, that present

subaltern views, such as Lurgio Gavilán's (self) *testimonio*, *Memorias del soldado desconocido*, and Víctor Gaviria's films *Rodrigo D. No futuro* [*Rodrigo D: No Future*] (1990) and *La vendedora de rosas* [*The Rose Seller*] (1994). As Beverley notes, he reflects on these "subaltern" works—as well as Gayatri Spivak's classic essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and, surprisingly, Roberto Bolaño's *2666*—in order to examine "the way a subaltern 'life' can (or cannot) be represented adequately as subaltern within the framework of the dominant culture without becoming itself part of that culture" (107).

For Beverley, Gavilán's (self) *testimonio* is of particular importance. As he notes, "*One Hundred Years of Solitude* was the novel that best represented the moment of the Latin American Boom in the 1960s and '70s; in a similar way, *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* is (in my view) the book that best represents the present moment in Latin America, its affective charge, its struggle to find a new style and form, its political limits and possibilities" (121). A difficulty raised by *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* is that while the text began as a *testimonio*, Gavilán—whose extraordinary life trajectory took him from rural Quechua youth to Shining Path militant to soldier to priest to anthropologist—is today a "traditional intellectual" (121). He is now an "explainer of his own text" (121), even if his text is marked by "the deep experience of Quechua culture and language, of peasant and subproletarian life" (122). This is why for Beverley, without denying Gavilán's current role as a "traditional intellectual," Gavilán exemplifies a "kind of balancing point" between subaltern voice and lettered intellectual (122). One can add that according to Ulises Zevallos Aguilar, *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* is proof that "in the twenty-first century, bilingual Quechua, with college education or political power, have written their own memoirs, or changed the title of the *testimonio* and diminished the presence of the *gestor* [interviewer]."<sup>51</sup> As this critic argues, Gavilán's text reflects the genre's trajectory from representation to self-representation.<sup>52</sup>

### **In Lieu of Conclusion: About Endings and Failures.**

In *The Failure of Latin America*, Beverley rues,

If *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was translated into many languages and sold millions of copies globally and regionally . . . the second 2017 Spanish edition of *Memorias* appeared in a press run of five thousand, which I think was probably considered ambitious by its publisher. It is not only the Pink Tide that is at an ebb: literature itself is ebbing, not to a zero degree but certainly to a level where it is a lot less significant as a practice and signifier of cultural identity than it was in earlier phases of capitalism, where it was more closely bound up with colo-

nialism, the nation-state, and secular modernity. (122)

This passage echoes Cornejo Polar's concerns about the effects of neoliberalism and dictatorship on Spanish-American cultural production. According to Beverley, twenty years later similar forces—radical free market policies and extreme right wing movements and the cultural values these promote—are undermining not only humanistic scholarship, but the impact and relevance of literature itself in the United States. Accepting Beverley's and Huntington's notion of multiple civilizations, one could posit that the economic, social, and cultural forces that threatened Latin American culture were in themselves a precedent for a more general (pan) civilizational failure. But of course, one could also argue that what this proves is that even if uneven, we are dealing with one civilization rather than many.<sup>53</sup>

Beverley finds a justification for his turn towards postcolonial theory in the putative failure of *hispanoamericanismo*, or, better said *latinoamericanismo*, to face its colonial heritage. However, for Beverley, the failure of Latin America also has an economic basis:

Failed in relation to what? Failed in relation to China and India in particular, in the period that extends from the end of the Second World War to the present. If in 1945 Latin America as a whole, especially Brazil, the Southern Cone, and Mexico, was somewhat ahead of China and India, it is now clearly behind, in terms of demographic and economic growth, on the one hand, and status or influence in the world, on the other. (123)

This is the kind of reasoning that, taken to its extreme, has led some U.S.-based Latin Americanists to celebrate Russia, China, India, and even Turkey, despite the repressive nature of those “civilizations.” One should question whether GDP should constitute the ultimate measure of civilizational success. If we did so, wouldn't the fact that India is today a right wing semi-fascist regime under Modi undermine the country's claim to civilizational success? Wouldn't the past and, at the time of writing, even more aggressive success of Trump and the semi-fascist politics he represents undermine similar claims to the success of U.S. civilization?

For his part, Beverley does not take to celebrating Russia, China, or India, but instead concludes that “Latin America . . . precisely in its failure carries the possibility of another form of modernity that points beyond the logic and current ubiquity of market capitalism” (139). Economic failure would thus present an opportunity for the return of progressive politics. However, the ubiquity of market capitalism, alas, also characterizes Latin America. In fact, one could argue that in many countries—in particular, Peru, Ecuador, and now Argen-

tina—neoliberalism reigns supreme, though now associated with right wing governments growing ever more repressive. Latin American and Latin Americanist criticism must deal with the ever tighter embrace between fascism and neoliberal policies, which is a relationship that clearly feeds on economic failure. Instead of holding on to the idea of distinct civilizations, the participation of Latin America (however we define it) in this ever more right wing global reality has to be a starting point for thinking about the region. As Korean film director Bong Joon-ho has argued: “maybe there is no borderline between countries now because we all live in the same country, it’s called capitalism.<sup>54</sup>” And as the encroaching climate apocalypse proves, this global capitalist civilization is also headed for failure, if it hasn’t already failed.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Beverley, *The Failure of Latin America: Postcolonialism in Bad Times* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Or, if the reader prefers, Latin Americanists writing in Latin America.

<sup>3</sup> For the published translation into English, see Antonio Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity: The Risks of Metaphors—Notes,” Translated by Christopher Dennis, In *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*, Edited by Ana del Sarto, Alicia Ríos, and Abril Trigo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 760-764. Consult the original in Spanish as Antonio Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez: los riesgos de las metáforas. Apuntes,” *Crítica de la razón heterogénea. Textos esenciales (I)*, Edited by Jose Antonio Mazzotti (Lima: Fondo editorial de la asamblea nacional de rectores, 2013), pp. 155-161.

<sup>4</sup> As Michel Gobat notes, “France’s appropriation of ‘Latin America’ to justify its imperial ambitions led Francisco Bilbao and other Spanish Americans to turn against the concept” (1371). See Michel Gobat, “The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism,” *The American Historical Review* 118.5 (2013): pp. 1345-1375.

<sup>5</sup> I am putting aside any discussion of Haiti and the Francophone Caribbean’s “Latin Americanness.” Though conceptually these would definitely be Latin, in practice they have been marginal to most definitions of Latin America.

<sup>6</sup> See Laura López, “Los brasileños no se reconocen como latinoamericanos,” *Infobae* May 17, 2019, <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2019/05/17/los-brasilenos-no-se-reconocen-como-latinoamericanos/>.

<sup>7</sup> See López, “Los brasileños.”

<sup>8</sup> Caetano Veloso, one of his country’s most celebrated singers, songwriters, and public intellectuals, has noted that Brazilians usually think of their country “as an independent continent, a huge island in the middle of the South Atlantic.” See Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*, Translated by Isabel da Cena (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> See Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995); and, Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> All page references to Beverley, *Failure* will be cited in the main text.

<sup>11</sup> In “The Hispanic Challenge” Huntington notes: “In this new era, the single most

immediate and most serious challenge to America's traditional identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico . . . . The extent and nature of this immigration differ fundamentally from those of previous immigration, and the assimilation successes of the past are unlikely to be duplicated with the contemporary flood of immigrants from Latin America. This reality poses a fundamental question: Will the United States remain a country with a single national language and a core Anglo-Protestant culture? By ignoring this question, Americans acquiesce to their eventual transformation into two peoples with two cultures (Anglo and Hispanic) and two languages (English and Spanish)" (31). See Samuel Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy* 141 (2004): pp. 30-45.

<sup>12</sup> According to Palma, "As Bolívar made clear later, he wanted the crown, the dictatorship, or the presidency for life; for he, who with his sword in the battlefields, glorified by victory and by the halo of glory, had won the right to occupy, not the place of a man, but the pedestal of a semi-god." ("Bolívar, como lo probó más tarde, quería la corona, la dictadura ó la presidencia vitalicia (cuestión de nombre) para el que, con su espada en los campos de batalla y engrandecido por el éxito y la aureola de gloria, conquistase el derecho de ocupar, no el asiento de un hombre, sino el pedestal de un semidiós"). See Ricardo Palma, *Mis últimas tradiciones peruanas* (Buenos Aires: Maucchi Hermanos, 1906), p. 549.

<sup>13</sup> "// Bolívar lanzó una estrella / que junto a Martí brilló. / Fidel la dignificó / para andar por estas tierras. //" (Milanés n.p.). See Pablo Milanés, "Canción por la unidad latinoamericana," *Pablo Milanés* (Areito, 1976).

<sup>14</sup> One could argue for a Latin American right wing genealogy that goes back to independence, if not earlier. For instance, writing in 1934 about nineteenth-century Peruvian conservative Bartolomé Herrera, self-confessed fascist historian José de la Riva Agüero describes him as "inspiration and guide of our predecessors and whose program coincided in its essential points with that brought to use by the healthiest and most modern European currents" ("inspirador y guía de nuestros predecesores y cuyo programa coincidió en sus puntos esenciales con el que ahora nos traen las más saludables y modernas corrientes europeas") (55). These healthy and modern currents are, for Riva Agüero, fascism. See José Riva Agüero, "Tradicionalismo y elitismo," *El pensamiento fascista, 1930-1945*, Edited by José Ignacio López-Soria (Lima: Francisco Campodónico, 1981), pp. 51-61.

<sup>15</sup> José Antonio Mazzotti, "Creole Agencies and the (Post) Colonial Debate in Spanish America," in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Edited by Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos Jáuregui (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Dirks, "Postcolonialism," *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Edited by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 268.

<sup>17</sup> Dirks, "Postcolonialism," 268.

<sup>18</sup> In his earlier *Latin Americanism after 9/11*, Beverley had been more cautious regarding the political implications of "theory:" "Politically, the character of this first-wave intervention of deconstruction in the Latin American field was ambiguous. On the whole its practitioners could be described as sympathizers of the Left or left-liberals, although in some cases they took a position that was more explicitly critical of the Left (Santí and González Echevarría, for example, were products of Cuban exile culture after the revolution)." See John Beverley, *Latinamericanism After 9/11* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> According to Ahmad, "[s]ince nationalism had been designated during this phase as the determinate source of ideological energy in the Third World by those same critics who had themselves been influenced mainly by poststructuralism, the disillusionment with the (national-bourgeois) state of the said Third World which began to set in towards the later 1980s then led those avant-garde theorists to declare that post-structuralism and deconstruction were the determinate theoretical positions for the critique of nationalism itself. Edward Said is thus quite astute in describing Ranajit Guha, and by extension the Subalternist project as a whole, as 'poststructuralist.' This same tendency can be witnessed in a great many of the more recent theorists themselves, as exemplified by Homi K. Bhabha among others." See Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> "Poststructuralism,' if I may reinvoké that curious term, as a form of epistemic violence always represented one echo of the violence of Algeria playing itself out in an insurrection against the calm philosophical and political certainties of the metropolis, a revolution initiated, as you argued, just 'at the moment when the fundamental conceptual system produced by the Greco-European adventure is in the process of taking over all of humanity' and achieving 'worldwide dominance.'" Young, *Postcolonialism*, 412.

<sup>22</sup> Klor de Alva in Beverley, *Failure*, 128.

<sup>23</sup> García Canclini's best-known work *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (1990) had been translated as *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* and published in 1995. See Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (México, D.F.: DeBolsillo, 2009); and, Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, Translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Cornejo Polar, "Mestizaje and Hybridity," 760. "Es evidente que categorías como mestizaje e hibridez toman pie en disciplinas ajenas al análisis cultural y literario,

básicamente en la biología, con el agravante—en el caso del mestizaje—que se trata de un concepto ideologizado en extremo.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 341.

<sup>25</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 760-61. “El concepto de mestizaje, pese a su tradición y prestigio, es el que falsifica de una manera más drástica la condición de nuestra cultura y literatura. En efecto lo que hace es ofrecer imágenes armónicas de lo que obviamente es desgajado y beligerante, proponiendo figuraciones que en el fondo solo son pertinentes a quienes conviene imaginar nuestras sociedades como tersos y nada conflictivos espacios de convivencia.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 156.

<sup>26</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 761. Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 761. “Añado que—pese a mi irrestricto respeto por Ángel Rama—la idea de transculturación se ha convertido cada vez más en la cobertura más sofisticada de la categoría de mestizaje.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 156.

<sup>27</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 762. “La difícil convivencia de textos y discursos en español y portugués (y eventualmente en lenguas amerindias) con la incontenible diseminación de textos críticos en inglés (o en otros idiomas europeos).” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 158.

<sup>28</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 763. “El masivo empleo de una lengua extranjera para el estudio de la literatura hispanoamericana está suscitando además —aunque tal vez nadie lo quiera— una extraña jerarquía en la que los textos de esta condición resultan gobernando el campo general de los estudios hispanoamericanos.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 159.

<sup>29</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 763. “Los textos críticos en inglés suelen utilizar bibliografía en el mismo idioma y prescindir, o no citar, lo que trabajosamente se hizo en América Latina durante largos años. Por lo demás su extrema preferencia por el estrecho canon teórico posmoderno es una compulsión que puede llegar hasta el ridículo.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 159.

<sup>30</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 763. “Estudios culturales, poscoloniales y/o subalternos no han calibrado lo que implica el practicar esas disciplinas en una sola lengua cualquiera que sea el idioma de los discursos examinados.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 160.

<sup>31</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 762. “que parece. . . tomar como materia prima la literatura hispanoamericana y devolverla en artefactos críticos sofisticados.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 158.

<sup>32</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 763. “es absolutamente erróneo que la mayoría de profesores hispanoamericanos de su literatura conozcan suficientemente el idioma inglés.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 159.

<sup>33</sup> Mignolo, *Darker Side*, viii.

<sup>34</sup> Alberto Moreiras has recently made similar comments about the role of Spanish in U.S. academia: “Theoretical reflection in Spanish has not reached legitimation in the U.S. academic world—and let me make it clear: it is not enough for me or others to write in English, because an English-speaking Latin Americanist is still someone who translates and is perceived as a mere translator” (17). However, as should be clear, Moreiras not only seems skeptical about the value of writing “theory” in Spanish, but also seems to believe that even writing about Latin America in English is seen as a second-rate activity. See Alberto Moreiras, *Against Abstraction: Notes from an Ex-Latin Americanist* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 764. Furthermore, the Spanish-language academic book industry is such that even a major press could possibly ask the would-be author to cover all or part of the publishing costs.

<sup>36</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 764. “Las dictaduras primero, con la censura o métodos harto más brutales y el neoliberalismo después con su política de pauperización de las instituciones culturales públicas (universidades, bibliotecas, archivos) prácticamente han destruido las bases materiales para el desarrollo de la disciplina.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 160-161.

<sup>37</sup> Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje and Hybridity,” 764. “No quisiera que mis palabras fueran consideradas como un presagio sino como un preocupado y cordial señalamiento de los que pudiera ser el deshilachado y poco honroso final del hispanoamericanismo.” Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje e hibridez,” 161.

<sup>38</sup> Limiting ourselves to works by literary scholars, one can mention, such important studies written and published in Latin America as Marcel Vélazquez Castro’s *Hijos de la peste* (Children of the Plague, 2020), Carlos Gamerro’s *Facundo o Martín Fierro. Los libros que inventaron Argentina* (Facundo or Martín Fierro: The Books that Invented Argentina, 2015), or Francesca Denegri’s *Ni amar, ni odiar con firmeza. Cultura y emociones en el Perú* (Not to Love or to Hate with Passion. Culture and Emotions in Peru, 2020).

<sup>39</sup> However, giving validity to Cornejo Polar’s concerns, *La Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* has been housed at Tufts University. Perhaps significantly it is currently being relocated to the historic Peruvian University of San Marcos.

<sup>40</sup> See, among other possible texts, his 1974 essay: Antonio Cornejo Polar, “Problemas y perspectivas de la crítica literaria latinoamericana,” *Crítica de la razón heterogénea. Textos esenciales (I)*, Edited by Jose Antonio Mazzotti (Lima: Fondo editorial de la asamblea nacional de rectores, 2013), pp. 133-137.

<sup>41</sup> Lucille Kerr, *Reclaiming the Author: Figures and Fictions from Spanish America* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1992), p. vii.

<sup>42</sup> Comparing earlier narrative of the region with “the new Latin American novel,” Rodríguez Monegal argues: “Whereas, for the older novelists, the city was no more than a remote presence, arbitrary and mysterious, for these new writers the city is the axis, the place to which the protagonist of the new novels is drawn, ineluctably. The somewhat depersonalized vision of the novelists of the beginning of the century has reacquired flesh and blood. Suddenly, powerful complex fictional beings are emerging from the anonymous masses of the great cities” (45). See Emir Rodríguez Monegal, “The New Latin American Novel.” *Books Abroad* 44.1 (1970): pp 45-50.

<sup>43</sup> Referring to the creative novel—the name he uses for the modernist Latin American novel—in contrast with the earlier “primitive novel,” Vargas Llosa writes: “The creative novel is . . . a relative recent phenomenon in Latin America. Only within the last twenty years has narration come to occupy the same plane of dignity and originality that the poem and the essay had already achieved previously” (7-8). See Mario Vargas Llosa, “The Latin American Novel Today,” *Books Abroad* vol. 44.1 (1970): pp. 7-16.

<sup>44</sup> Ángel Rama, *Writing Across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*, Edited and Translated by David Frye (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 46. (“un fortalecimiento de las que podemos llamar culturas interiores del continente, no en la medida en que se atrincheran rígidamente en sus tradiciones, sino en la medida en que se transculturán sin renunciar al alma, como habría dicho Arguedas.” Ángel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Andariego, 2008), 83.

<sup>45</sup> Rama’s admiration for Arguedas never waned. In his diary entry for March 8, 1980, three years, before his tragic death in an airplane crash, he compares *Los ríos profundos* favorably to *Cien años de soledad*. He mentions a “Tense and and pleasant rereading of Arguedas’s novel *Deep Rivers*. . . [It is] better written than *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, with an essential poetic gift, violent, original, it manages astounding visions” (“Relectura tensa y jocunda de la novela de Arguedas, *Los ríos profundos* . . . Mejor escrita que los *Cien años*, con un don poético esencial, ríspido, original, que maneja pasmosas visiones”). See Ángel Rama, *Diario 1974-1983* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2001), pp. 136-137.

<sup>46</sup> According to Mabel Moraña, who’s writing about Vargas Llosa’s growing antipathy towards Arguedas during the 1970s and 1980s: “a dilemma emerged in which the national, regional, and/ or autochthonous were pitted against the foreign, modernizing, and transnational—to say nothing of the entire gamut of possible relations between both outcomes. In this sense, the Arguedas/Vargas Llosa relation recalls the polemic that Arguedas maintained with Cortázar between 1967 and 1969, during which the Argentine writer, who defined himself as ‘a moral being,’ contrasted the ‘planetary vision’ that he supported (which was facilitated by the distance of exile) to the narrow ‘national mission’ he ascribed to other writers, like Arguedas, based on their rootedness in ‘homeland values.’ . . . Vargas Llosa referred to Arguedas as a ‘cultural

ecologist' . . . because of his desire to preserve indigenous culture from 'modernizing depredation'" (29). See Mabel Moraña, *Arguedas/Vargas Llosa: Dilemmas and Assemblages*, Translated by Andrew Ascheri (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Rama, *Writing Across Cultures*, 68. "la particular situación cultural en la cual Rulfo trata de insertar la función mediadora, cuya dramaticidad y frustración puede vincularse a la de Arguedas, pero en cambio es distinta de las soluciones que alcanzan Guimarães Rosa o García Márquez." Rama, *Transculturación narrativa*, 117.

<sup>48</sup> José Eduardo González, *Appropriating Theory: Angel Rama's Critical Work* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), p. 120.

<sup>49</sup> "En este texto, Rama no dejó resquicios en su caracterización del sistema literario y terminó estigmatizando a los intelectuales latinoamericanos bajo el signo de la transacción con el poder de la escritura." See Fernanda Beigel, *El itinerario y la brújula. El vanguardismo estético político de José Carlos Mariátegui* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2003), p. 37.

<sup>50</sup> For instance, noted British Latin Americanist James Higgins argued that "*Cien años* . . . is a demystifying rewriting of the history of the continent" (40). James Higgins, "Gabriel García Márquez: *Cien años de soledad*," *Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: A Casebook*, Edited by Gene Bell-Villada (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 33-51.

<sup>51</sup> "en el siglo XXI quechuas bilingües con educación universitaria o poder político han escrito sus propias memorias o cambiado el título del testimonio y disminuido la presencia del gestor" (Zevallos 227). See Ulises Juan Zevallos Aguilar, "El testimonio. De la representación a la autorepresentación." *Contrapunto ideológico y perspectivas dramáticas en el Perú contemporáneo*, Edited by Juan E. De Castro and Leticia Robles-Moreno (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2018), pp. 211-238.

<sup>52</sup> Zevallos Aguilar is actually critical of readings of testimonio, such as Beverly's, that see in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* a paradigm with which to understand the genre. As he notes, "when literary criticism focuses on testimonial texts it pays excessive attention to the interpretation of canonical *testimonios* and forgets about the vast and diverse archive of *testimonio* produced in Latin America. . . . For example, when it comes to exploring the relations between the lettered and the subaltern, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* . . . (1985) is almost always taken as object of study reaching conclusions that don't apply to a good number of Latin American *testimonios*" ("cuando la crítica literaria aborda los textos testimoniales centra demasiado su atención en la interpretación de testimonios canónicos y olvida el amplio y diverso archivo del testimonio producido en Latinoamérica . . . . Por ejemplo, cuando se trata de explorar las relaciones de letrados y subalternos, casi siempre se toma como objeto de estudio a *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1985) y se llegan a conclusiones que no se aplican a un buen número de testimonios latinoamericanos"). See Zevallos Aguilar, "Testimonio," 116.

<sup>53</sup> It is worth noting, however, that one of the literary texts seen by Beverley as representative of Latin America—*Cien años de soledad*—can be seen as undermining the notion of distinct civilizations. After all, García Márquez was particularly influenced by Western modernism: Joyce, Faulkner, who he considered his master, Woolf, Kafka, Hemingway. On García Márquez's links with the modernist canon, see Juan E. De Castro, "Gabriel García Márquez and the Remaking of the World Canon," *The Oxford Handbook of Gabriel García Márquez*, Edited by Gene Bell-Villada and Ignacio López-Calvo, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 96-109. While the connections with the world canon are less obvious in the case of *Memorias de un soldado desconocido*, as befits a less explicitly literary text, there are references to the Peruvian canon, César Vallejo, Arguedas, Alejandro Romualdo, even Vargas Llosa. Furthermore, according to Orin Starn, in his introduction to the English-language translation, Gavilán "lists Franz Kafka and José Saramago among his literary inspirations" (xxii). Perhaps, for this reason, Starn adds: "This, then, is a son of the Andes, and yet no 'typical' anything" (xxii). See Orin Starn, "Introduction," *When Rains Became Floods: A Child's Soldier Story*, by Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez, translated by Margaret Randall (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. xiii-xxiii.

<sup>54</sup> Bong Joon-ho, "The Black List Interview. Bong Jong-ho on *Parasite*," Interview by Alci Rengifo, *The Black List*, Oct 11, 2019, <https://blog.blcklst.com/the-black-list-interview-bong-joon-ho-on-parasite-5fd0cb0baa12>.