

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES

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Abstract || Latin-American Cultural Studies arise under the Britain and North-American model, but as substratum they enclose an extensive tradition of critical, historiographic and technical studies on culture, as well as a different and very complex cultural reality, which provide its own specificity. I dedicate this article to formulated theories in the vast space of Latin America that arise from the necessity to theorize its own reality.

Key-words || Latin-American Cultural Studies | Transculturation | Literary System | Hybridity | Migrancy | Diaspora.

After a long way in research for a cultural and literary theory of their own –as I have studied in another article (Pulido Tirado, 2009)–, culturologists, together with literary critics and theorists in several countries, have proposed some fundamental concepts that lead to the formulation of theories that allow the seizure of the complex reality of the literatures and cultures from Latin America and the Caribbean. In this paper I will try to explain some key concepts, although not all, such as transculturation, literary system(s), hybridity or hybridization, heterogeneity, contradictory totality, *mestizaje* and migrancy, which, in my opinion, have originated specifically Latin American literary and culturological theories, and therefore its interest in the field of comparative literature is clear.

The concept of “transculturation” first appeared in the book *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y del azúcar*, published in 1940. Fernando Ortiz, a jurist who became an anthropologist and a cultural philosopher, was part of the Cuban rich cultural group from the 1930s and 1940s, and in 1936 founded, with Alejo Carpentier and Nicolás Guillén, the Society of Afro-Cuban Studies. Bronislaw Malinowski, an enthusiastic advocate of the idea, defines it in his Introduction to the work of the Cuban anthropologist:

Transculturación [...] es un proceso en el cual emerge una nueva realidad, compuesta y compleja; una realidad que no es una aglomeración mecánica de caracteres, ni siquiera un mosaico, sino un fenómeno nuevo, original e independiente. Para describir tal proceso, el vocablo de raíces latinas transculturación proporciona un término que no contiene la implicación de una cierta cultura hacia la cual tiene que tender la otra, sino una transición entre dos culturas, ambas activas, ambas contribuyentes con sendos aportes, y ambas cooperantes al advenimiento de una nueva realidad de civilización. (Malinowski, 1940: XII)

Fernando Ortiz formulates this thesis after decades of work as a researcher and historian of the popular Cuban culture. The basis from where he reaches that point is the assessment of the importance of social changes in America in two centuries, between 1500 and 1700, and again between 1850 and 1950. Ortiz, understanding that the radical novelty of a universal people, forecasted by the Mexican, was based in the extraordinary transculturizing action that took place in America since the sixteenth century, he studied the future prospect pointed out by José Vasconcelos in 1925 in *La raza cósmica*, in its historical dimension. According to Ortiz:

Entendemos que el vocablo «transculturación» expresa mejor las diferentes fases del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una distinta cultura, que es lo que en rigor indica la voz angloamericana «aculturation», sino que el proceso implica también necesariamente la pérdida o desarraigo de una cultura precedente, lo que pudiera decirse una parcial «desculturación», y además, significa la consiguiente creación de nuevos fenómenos culturales que pudieran denominarse «neoculturación» [...] En todo abrazo de culturas sucede lo que en la cópula genética de los individuos: la criatura siempre tiene algo de ambos progenitores, pero también siempre es distinta de cada uno de los dos. En conjunto, el proceso es una «transculturación», y este vocablo comprende todas las fases de su parábola. (Ortiz, 1940: 83).

Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation was welcomed in Latin America and we can find its trace in several works and authors, from *El sentimiento de lo humano en América* (1950-1953), from the Chilean Félix Schwartzmann to the Peruvian José María Arguedas, the Uruguayan Ángel Rama or, more recently, the Cuban American Román de la Campa. However, it might have not yet reached its full significance, or made the most of the interpretative potential of the concept, even if we must consider that a similar development of the idea, although without the same use of the term, can be found in the Brazilians Darcy Ribeiro and Sergio Buarque de Holanda.

However, in view of the intercultural debate of the last few decades, the concept developed by Ortiz regains a great relevance. Faced with the forecasts of intercultural wars or social models that try to turn coexisting cultural spheres into isolated and hostile ghettos, transculturation appears as a different response to interculturality.

This concept has been widely broadened. Ángel Rama assumed the idea of “transculturation” and started to develop it in his article of 1974, “Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”. In this article, he understands narrative transculturation as an alternative to regionalism, entrenched in the achievements of its own culture and rejecting all new and foreign contributions, as well as the avant-garde movement, which was, in his opinion, characterized by its cultural vulnerability.

On the other hand, according to Rama, narrative transculturation works thanks to a “cultural plasticity” that allows to integrate the traditions and the innovations, i.e., to incorporate the new external elements from the total rearticulation of the own cultural structure, “apelando a nuevas focalizaciones dentro de su herencia” (1974: 208). The author gives José María Arguedas, Juan Rulfo, J.

Guimarães Rosa and G. García Márquez as examples of narrators of the transculturation.

Some years later, in 1982, Rama broadened his article considerably, added other texts of the same and subsequent years, and wrote some new ones to the end of the book, making up the volume *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (1982). There, he refers initially to Ortiz's concept of transculturation, introducing some corrections. His vision seemed to Rama "geometrical according to three moments": the "partial of culturación", the incorporations from the external culture and, finally, the recovery effort made by manipulating the surviving elements from the original culture and the external ones. In his opinion, this design did not pay enough attention to the literary criteria of selectivity and invention, which characterize the "cultural plasticity". As regards selectivity, according to Rama, it is not only applied to the foreign culture, but, above all, to the own one. In fact, there are four main operations carried out in transculturation: loss, selection, rediscovery and incorporation. "Estas cuatro operaciones son concomitantes y se resuelven todas dentro de una reconstrucción general del sistema cultural, que es la función creadora más alta que se cumple en un proceso transculturante", clarifies Rama (idem). Then, the author shows how this operations are achieved in three basic categories applicable to literature: language, literary structure and cosmovision –before, in 1974, he had explained the existence of a literary system beside the social system, and that this could be analysed in three levels: the one of the linguistic discourse, the one of the literary system and the one of the "social imaginary"–.

In the second and third part of the book, the critic focuses on the analysis of the south-Andean region of Peru and on the work of José María Arguedas named *Los ríos profundos* (1958). He refers to this area, the category *mestizo* and the mythical intelligence. Finally, he shows how Arguedas recreated the Spanish language to suggest the Quechua syntax, and elaborated a literary structure with two main narrators and two own linguistic registers: history and myth, and lastly, he showed the coherence and beauty of the Andean world and expressed his own political thoughts, i.e., his support of socialism.

Despite its versatility and breadth, the concept of transculturation is not free from criticism. Antonio Cornejo Polar criticised the concept of transculturation in his work "Mestizaje, transculturación, heterogeneidad" of 1994. There, he argued that the concept of *mestizaje* had lost its explanatory strength, and wondered if "transculturation" was the theoretical device with a reasonable

epistemological basis expected to replace it. He declared himself against it, because he considered that the synthesis assumed in the concept of transculturation is not always fulfilled. Also, because the space chosen for this synthesis was that of the hegemonic culture, and, because, for that reason, those discourses that did not have had influenced in the system of the enlightened literature were excluded. Therefore, that's why he thought his own concept of literary heterogeneity was more suitable.

A year later, in 1995, Friedhelm Schmidt raised his criticism of Rama's "narrative transculturation" concept in his article "¿Literaturas heterogéneas o literatura de la transculturación?" His basic observation is that Rama, as well as the dependency theory, considered the Latin American culture as "one homogeneous culture" and, therefore, that it has just one literary system, reinforced by literature of transculturation:

Mediante la transculturación narrativa los materiales de la literatura regionalista son integrados en el discurso superior de la modernidad cultural. En este sentido, expresa [Rama] su opinión de que la «literatura de la región de América que excluye a los países de la colonización anglosajona no puede definirse sino como mestiza» [...]. La unidad cultural, que es el resultado de la dependencia de América Latina, se refleja en el discurso homogeneizante de su literatura, que es uno y el mismo en todos sus países. (Schmidt, 1995: 14).

Schmidt thinks that Antonio Colmenejo Polar's proposal is remarkably superior, mainly because in his opinion, there are several literary systems in each country: the high literature, the popular literature, and the literature in native languages.

Another key concept is hybridism or hybridization. Nestor García Canclini explains his concept of hybridization in *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (1989). In this work, the author starts from a vision that takes into account the new production and consumption circuits to which the symbolic goods are subject within the capitalist market and in the framework of economic globalization, to develop the concept of "cultural hybridization", i.e., the ways in which some forms separate from the existent traditional practices to recombine in new forms and new practices; this situation appears in García Canclini's book as very relevant with regard to the popular/folk (linked to the masses), to the point of stating that hybridization is its inherent feature.

García Canclini gives two basic observations: 1. Popular is not seen as the romantic expression of tradition anymore. 2. The pure preservation of tradition is not always the best way for the popular to reproduce itself and reelaborate a survival situation. Anyway, García Canclini shows that the danger for the traditional is not that it has transformed or readapted and interacted with modern symbolic orders –i.e., that it has hybridised due to the imbrications of economic and cultural–, but rather, that it stays away from this logical readaptation.

The hybridization phenomenon can be understood, according to García Canclini, as a dynamics of popular re-accommodating to a complex interaction with modernity. This is what he calls “reconversión cultural” (García Canclini, 1993): a process through which popular cultures, far from disappearing, rearticulate in new forms, thus reconverting its production in cultural capital that takes part in the new capitalist circuit. Traditional becomes modern-traditional and new hybrid practices are generated by the simultaneous coexistence of different symbolic subsystems. Thus, within this multiple economic, social and cultural logic, cultural hybridization affects all orders of symbolic production: hybridization reconciles “contradictions” between modern and traditional.

However, as Cornejo Polar himself points out, García Canclini’s hybridity theory is not merely cultural; it is immersed in History, even though this immersion poses some problems. By presenting some examples of hybridism that tend to “referirse preferentemente a ciertos estratos [los altos] de la sociedad latinoamericana” (Cornejo Polar, 1997: 342), as if they represented the whole society, García Canclini underestimates the growing inequality in Latin American societies. Not everyone practises hybridism to the same degree or with the same freedom. And, however much he insists in the conflictive nature of the concept, hybridity, on the contrary, suggests a harmonious, almost natural, combination of cultural elements, and therefore is open to an official multiculturalism carefully cleansed of references to conflicts of material interests, at least in the North American academy. The heterogeneity proposed by Cornejo Polar is, on the other hand, “un concepto firmemente anclado en la sociedad y en la historia, tanto como en la cultura” (Bueno, 1996: 22), which originates from the social inequalities and divisions of the Latin American societies, and is inconceivable without a clear awareness of them. The concept of contradictory totality, also from Antonio Cornejo Polar, allows us “no sólo destacar –o celebrar– las diferencias, sino descubrir que muchas de ellas encubren desigualdades, injusticia, marginación, explotación” (García-Bedoya, 1998: 85-86). Although Cornejo Polar

considers it as “la cobertura más sofisticada de la categoría de mestizaje” (*ibídem*: 341), the concept of transculturation, proposed by Ortiz and adapted by Rama to Latin American literature, also has its origin in the asymmetric power relationships that characterize the colonial and neo-colonial contact areas. These three complementary concepts –heterogeneity, contradictory totality and transculturation– point to the need of self-organization of subordinate groups, on the basis of its cultural identities and material interests, in order to collectively face inequality and subordination.

Antonio Cornejo Polar’s approach on heterogeneity was first formulated in 1977 in the article “El indigenismo y las literaturas heterogéneas. Su doble estatuto sociocultural.” Here Cornejo refers to homogeneous literature as that produced and read by writers and readers from the same social layer: “La producción literaria circula, entonces, dentro de un solo espacio social y cobra un muy alto grado de homogeneidad: es, podría decirse, una sociedad que se habla a sí misma” (Cornejo, 1977: 12). That is the case of Salazar Bondy’s, Ribeyro’s and Zavaleta’s work in Peru, and Donoso’s and Edwards’ in Chile. Heterogeneous literatures are characterized by the duplicity of sociocultural signs of its productive process: “se trata, en síntesis, de un proceso que tiene, por lo menos, un elemento que no coincide con la filiación de los otros y crea, necesariamente, una zona de ambigüedad y de conflicto” (*idem*). The chronicles of the Conquest, Melgar’s poetry, gaucho literature, Negro literature and the marvelous real, would be several examples of heterogeneous literatures. Later on, the author analyses in detail the cases of Melgar’s *yaraví* and indigenism.

In later works, the author will add the categories of “totality” and “system” (or rather, “systems”). In his 1982 speech, “La literatura peruana: totalidad contradictoria” (published in 1983), he introduced the first one. In his opinion, there is not just one literature in Peru, but a plurality of literatures, with contradictory features: the hegemonic literature written in Spanish, the popular literatures and the indigenous literatures. It is the category of totality that allows us to separate them and understand them in its specificity. In other words: History operates here as the totalizator factor of Peruvian literature. Apart from that, Cornejo thought that there was another virtue in the category of totality: it allowed placing the literary process in the Peruvian socio-historic process, out of which it could not be understood.

The concept of system (or systems) first appeared in the author's approach of 1989. This year, he published his book *La formación de la tradición literaria en el Perú*, and his paper "Los sistemas literarios como categorías históricas. Elementos para una discusión". In the book, he describes how the Peruvian literary tradition was formed: three hegemonic images of it were formed, the costumbrist's, Palma's and L.A. Sánchez's. The critic argues against them, based on Mariátegui's image, that there are in fact three systems. In his paper, raised "for a Latin American discussion", he exposes his results, rejecting the deceptive and simplistic sequential outline of positivism and the impoverishing outline of pluralism, stating instead that there is not just one literature in Latin America, but genuine literary systems with different subjects, times and spaces, which therefore raise contradictory relations.

Cornejo's ideas on heterogeneity appear again in his 1994 book *Escribir en el aire. Ensayo sobre la heterogeneidad socio-cultural en las literaturas andinas*. In the Introduction to this work, he insists on the concept of heterogeneity, but points out that he has discovered its limits: at first, he used it to detail the processes of production of literatures where two or more socio-cultural processes are in conflict. But later he understood that heterogeneity is introduced in the most internal configuration of the most important levels of such processes (speaker/speech-text/referent/recipient, etc.), and therefore these would become dispersed, unstable, contradictory. Hence, this book focuses on three problematic cores: speech, subject and representation. As regards speech, it operates in a variety of times: that in the case of the pre-Hispanic myth, the colonial evangelization sermon and the avant-garde proposal. He suggests facing this difficulty by historicizing synchrony, even though this may seem problematic. As for the subject, the usual in modern world is to present it as strong, confident of its identity and linked to power, but in other cultural fields we can find subjects enriched by other cultural-historical realities: as an heterogeneous subject. Finally, the individual or collective subject is made in relation to a world, but the author does not think that the mimesis is limited to a representative function of reality.

Cornejo Polar's theories have been generally accepted. The only objection made in some occasions was the lack of clarity and precision in the use of some terms such as "system" and "totality". His maturing process as a critic was determined by the influence of some Latin American literary critics such as Roberto Fernández Retamar, Ángel Rama, Nelson Osorio and especially Alejandro Losada, who

was in Peru and kept a close contact with Cornejo between 1971 and 1976. Through Losada, he gained a deeper knowledge of Marxist critics, such as Georg Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann. Later, Antônio Cândido was also a great influence in his work. But above all, his reflections on José Carlos Mariátegui's ideas were significant.

At this point, we have to make clear that the concepts of transculturation and heterogeneity are not opposites, as some authors think, but they complement each other, as heterogeneity is the widest of them, and the concept of transculturation designates a type of dynamics within the situation of heterogeneity –another well-known dynamics is acculturation–. In fact, in a situation of heterogeneity of cultures, one of them can be dominated by the other and receive its elements in a passive way –i.e., the acculturation dynamics–, or it can assimilate its elements in a creative way, from its own origin –i.e., the transculturation dynamics–. The truth is that in Cornejo's approach there lacks a proposal on this respect, so the categorial complementation can be accepted. Rama's and Cornejo's concepts are complementary in another sense too. The Uruguayan critic has been criticised because either if the cross of cultures leads to an acculturation process or to a transculturation one, the final result is always a synthesis. On the other hand, Cornejo pointed out that the cross of cultures usually leads to a conflictive, or even contradictory, totality. But reality does not choose just one of these two options; it can follow one or the other. As regards literature, a successful synthesis is the well-studied novel *Los ríos profundos* (1958), by José María Arguedas, and a conflictive one is *El Pez de Oro* (1957), by Gamaliel Churata.

Raúl Bueno supports the complementary of both concepts. For this author, Latin American countries are historically heterogeneous, that is, they have a basic or primary heterogeneity. A secondary or discursive heterogeneity would be elaborated on that basis: «en la heterogeneidad cultural todo signo referente a la otra cultura entraña homológicamente la heterogeneidad de base. Es, por naturaleza, un signo heterogéneo» (1996: 31). Transculturation would not be exactly a descriptive category of the Latin American reality, “como la heterogeneidad o –parcialmente– el mestizaje, sino una parte destacada de las dinámicas de la heterogeneidad” (*idem*), but it would rather involve the transfer of cultural components from one culture to another. There are several kinds: a tangible transculturation, if objects, technology, uses and habits are transferred; a “philosophical” transculturation, if values, conceptions, views and categories are transferred; or a semiotic transculturation, if signs, referents and

speeches are transferred.

Hybridism, on the other hand, as a convergence or concurrence of cultures, as ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, has not yet been used with all its theoretical potential. Several literary and cultural expressions throughout History can be studied under the concept of hybridism, but also present issues, such as the mechanisms that constitute identity and difference, the construction of the concepts of subject and gender in current literary theory, the relationship between writing and orality, the new literary and textual genres, etc.

Mestizaje originates from a race problem that was also approached early by Ortiz:

En la gran tragedia histórica de todas las razas subyugadas [...], uno de los sufrimientos más crueles ha tenido que ser el de tener con frecuencia que negarse a sí mismas para poder pasar y sobrevivir, el de esconder el alma en lo más recóndito de una caverna de conducta hecha de forzadas hipocresías, de defensivos mimetismos, de dolorosísimas renunciaciones. En Cuba, los negros tuvieron que abstenerse, aceptando, a la vez de grado y de fuerza, la posición distinta que el sojuzgamiento les señaló en la estratificación social que los explotaba. Pero el mestizo sufrió más, sufrió la presión centrífuga de dos mundos, del futuro que aún no lo aceptaba y del pasado que ya no lo reconocía. Y el alma mulata padeció la vida de lo inadaptado. O tenía que manifestarse ante el mundo como un negro, sin serlo; o como un blanco, sin serlo tampoco. En cualquiera de las dos posiciones, su expresión emocional hallaba obstáculos [...], uno de los obstáculos más resistentes [...] ha debido ser la resistencia despreciativa del blanco, debida en parte a los ancestrales prejuicios étnicos, reforzados por los privilegios económicos [...]. (Ortiz, 1940: 231)

As regards the regional specificities of transculturations and *mestizajes* in Latin America, Ortiz bases them on the process that Las Casas called “destruction of the Indies” are the result from the impact or violent crash between the preliterate continental and West Indian cultures, and the sixteenth-century European high culture. Since the twenties, the studies on this subject have outlined the thesis of cultural *mestizaje*, contributing to modify the space and meaning attributed by Ortiz to the “*mala vida*”, a notion that he maintained to the later stages of his thought. This modification becomes clear as marginalized people start to appear to Ortiz as a vehicle for cultural *mestizaje* and transculturation. “He would then stop seeing the “*mala vida*” strictly as a delinquency phenomenon (J. Le Riverend), but it becomes a way of integration, or rather, insertion in Cuban society for individual carrying cultural values that suffer a social imbalance for several reasons; those which were the first link between the

metropolis and the colony. Cultural *mestizaje* is an essential phase in the process of transculturation. In *Los negros curros* (1986) it is interpreted in differentiated and evolutionary historical phases, to the creation of new phenomena by degrees. Here we find the idea of the degrees of *mestizaje*, pointing to the historicity of the said process, in a retrospective of the events of *negro curro* as a human type –from its ancestors in Seville, origin of the *carrería*, through the marginalized life of the white people in Cuba that leads to the criminality which is in the origin of the *negro curro*, to the extinction of the type–.

In Cornejo Polar's work, *mestizaje* becomes a theoretical category that defines Latin American: people, literature, culture; and that must be taken into account in literary studies, as it is the main basis of most of the texts produced in these countries. Needless to say that the idea of *mestizaje* has had different formulations, from the Inca Garcilaso's to Fernandez Retamar's, through Vasconcelos' one. The predominant idea is that cultural *mestizaje* occurs when the elements of a transculturation lose its historical references of origin (for example, the European, the Indian, the African) to the common citizen, and reorganise in a relatively uniform system, which arises as a cultural alternative. That would mean that during the transcultural period of a given historical reality (as in the transculturation discourses themselves) the original elements keep its heterogeneous filiations (popular, indigenous, interior, etc., on one side; Hispanic, metropolitan, avant-garde, etc., on the other) and they work together, almost aware of their heterogeneity, in new relationships that not only intend to diversify the cultural landscape, but also to negotiate cultural subsistence outflows and subterfuges against domination. So, therefore, during the period of cultural *mestizaje*, the elements of heterogeneous origins dilute their differences, relaunch the system and create a new and distinct cultural filiation. This same network of relationships would, on the other hand, show how acculturation (in the sense used by J.M. Arguedas) and pluriculture constitute issues and categories quite different from transculturation and *mestizaje*.

In short, as Mabel Moraña summarizes (1998:234):

Desde la década de los años sesenta, los latinoamericanos asumimos que el concepto de hibridez captaba el rasgo más saliente de la experiencia cotidiana y de la producción cultural en formaciones sociales que desde la colonia a nuestros días han debido negociar su existencia a partir del entrecruzamiento de proyectos y agendas que definíamos en términos de lo propio y lo foráneo, aunque los intercambios entre uno y otro nivel implicaran la comprensión de complejos procesos de representación simbólica y la implementación de estrategias interpretativas que nos permitían, como hace mucho advirtiera Althusser, complementar nuestra ignorancia con el trasiego interdisciplinario. La noción de hibridez era utilizada de manera «plana», como sinónimo de sincretismo, cruce o intercambio cultural, y como forma de contrarrestar la ideología colonialista que desde el Descubrimiento aplicara, con pocas variaciones, el principio de «un dios, un rey, una lengua», como fórmula de sojuzgamiento político y homogeneización cultural.

Antonio Cornejo Polar also refers to Arguedas to begin his theorisation regarding to another of the most important concepts in current literary and cultural studies: heterogeneity, in this case indigenous, and by extension Latin American, heterogeneity. This theory will culminate in his most important book, already quoted in this paper, *Escribir en el aire. Ensayo sobre la heterogeneidad socio-cultural en las culturas andinas* (1994). Here, Cornejo traces an outlook that begins in the colonial times with the “dialog” between the Inca Atahualpa and father Vicente Valverde in Cajamarca, to end up in one of the most up-to-date discussions on subalternity, articulating his discussion on the basis of three problems: the speech, the subject, and the representation, to show the “guerra simbólica que tiene su correspondencia étnico-social en los mundos indígena y criollo” (Montaldo, 1999: 397). This allows him to give a new meaning to the symbolic content of the word/notion heterogeneity, taking it away from the merely ethnical and racial approaches, and to raise the hidden forces within certain approaches, only apparently open to real socio-cultural exchanges. Later on, he would state that this was the case of “la idea de transculturación [que] se ha convertido cada vez más en la cobertura más sofisticada de la categoría de mestizaje” (Cornejo, 1977:19). In the end, he would propose the need to accept the different/other and the contradictory as a part of the proper American routine:

quiero escapar del legado romántico –o, más genéricamente, moderno–, que nos exige ser lo que no somos: sujetos fuertes, sólidos y estables, capaces de configurar un yo que siempre es el mismo, para explorar –no sin temor– un horizonte en el que el sujeto renuncia al imantado poder que recoge en su seno –para desactivarlas– todas las disidencias y anomalías, y que –en cambio– se reconoce no en uno sino en varios rostros, inclusive en transformismos más agudos. (Cornejo, 1994b: 20)

We also owe Antonio Cornejo the formulation of the category of migrant subject, or migrancy, a category that is specially important for Latin Americans, who do not live emigration as a social phenomenon that affects some people on a more or less accidental way anymore, but have started to feel it as a general phenomenon that characterises a period, not only determined by political exiles, but mainly by huge population movements, caused by different reasons. In 1996, he published “Una heterogeneidad no dialéctica: sujeto y discurso migrantes en el Perú moderno”, where he begins by referring to generalised country-to-city emigration in Peru, and the subsequent social transformations –a year before, he had studied the phenomenon in Arguedas’ literature; see Cornejo (1995)–. This phenomenon appears in literature from Arguedas to Vargas Llosa, and it responds to deep conditioning factors pointed out by the critic:

Mi hipótesis primaria tiene que ver con el supuesto que el discurso migrante es radicalmente descentrado, en cuanto se construye alrededor de varios ejes asimétricos, de alguna manera incompatibles y contradictorios de un modo no dialéctico. Acoge no menos de dos experiencias de vida que la migración, contra lo que supone la categoría de mestizaje, y en cierto sentido en el concepto de transculturación, no intenta sintetizar en un espacio de resolución armónica; imagino –al contrario– que el allá y el aquí, que son también el ayer y el hoy, refuerzan su aptitud enunciativa y pueden tramar narrativas bifrontes y –hasta si se quiere, exagerando las cosas– esquizofrénicas. Contra ciertas tendencias que quieren ver la en la migración la celebración casi apoteósica de la desterritorialización (García Canclini, 1990 [se refiere a *Culturas híbridas*]), considero que el desplazamiento migratorio duplica (o más) el territorio del sujeto y le ofrece o lo condena a hablar desde más de un lugar. Es un discurso doble o múltiplemente situado. (Cornejo, 1996: 41)

Angel Rama studied years before “La riesgosa navegación del escritor exiliado”, where he remarks the dimensions of the phenomenon:

El exilio no es una invención reciente en la América Latina: toda su historia independiente de siglo y medio ha estado acompañada por obligados desplazamientos del equipo político e intelectual de los diversos países, que encontró en Estados Unidos y en Europa, temporaria acogida mientras en sus patrias se hacía imposible su tarea. (Rama, 1978: 235)

Rama considers both internal and external migrations, political and economical factors, to finally speak about a “verdadero pueblo de la diáspora” (Ibidem.: 236), made of people from all kinds of social layers: workers, peasants, etc. The work *Aves de paso: autores latinoamericanos entre exilio y transculturación* (1970-2002), edited by Mertz-Baumgarten and Pfeiffer, focuses only in the experience of writers, and is based, first, on the idea of an important and generalised

existence of exile, and, second, on the possibility that experiences of exile and experiences of transculturation could be different perceptions of the same reality. It is then clear the importance and potential involved in this theory in the twenty-first century.

Finally, I should mention that these Latin American contributions to the literary and cultural theory, and especially the concepts of heterogeneity and contradictory totality, or transculturation and hybridity, are the ones that capture better and more explicitly the inequalities and the asymmetric power relationships, even the colonial ones, which determine the cultural changes under the current neoliberal phase of capitalist expansion, called globalization (or mundialization). Therefore, we must take them into account, as they are the backdrop and, in many cases, the grip, of current theorists who discuss, in this specific historical juncture, the nature and the function of literature and literary studies.

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