

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Cruz Previously Published Works

Title

The Boom, the Literary, and Cultural Critique

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/20k7n68f>

Journal

Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, 28(2)

ISSN

1356-9325

Author

Poblete, Juan

Publication Date

2019-04-03

DOI

10.1080/13569325.2018.1528440

Peer reviewed

The Boom, the Literary, and Cultural Critique.

This essay is an effort to think the Boom of Latin American literature in the 1960s and 1970s within the context of Angel Rama's critical writing, especially his essays on the development of twentieth century narrative (first part) and his *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (second part), which their author saw as critical attempts to deal with the discursive, cultural, and political effects generated by the Boom. Running parallel to, and later, defining the Boom, Rama's thinking is here posited as both an organic critique of, and a historico-anthropological correction to the movement. I will highlight the relationships among Rama's central concepts (i.e., transculturation and modern literary system, involving notions of authorship, readership, text and book); and his two main methodological perspectives (i.e., the sociological and the anthropological). The essay will consider how Rama's critical readings demonstrated that Boom textual products, in the decade between 1962 and 1972, were constituted through the tensions between mass, elite and popular cultures, which also involved a re-thinking of authorship, readership, textuality and context.ⁱ This reading of the Boom through Rama will be developed with references to the works of Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, Donoso, García Márquez, and Arguedas.ⁱⁱ

The Latin American Boom has always required advanced cartographies for its decipherment. Maps capable of representing and considering the multiplicity of factors combining intra/national/ international dimensions, traditional/modern and popular/elite cultures based on expanded or restricted circuits of production, circulation, and consumption. It should come as no surprise that a significant aspect of the Boom texts, and even more so their authors' non-fictional public discourse, were, in fact, devoted to developing a theory of and for reading the Boom itself. Observing this tendency, this struggle over interpretative power, Jean Franco has stated that the Boom writers:

"...introduced theories of reading and understanding to elucidate not only their own work but also that of their forerunners and contemporaries. They created canons and produced a corpus of criticism that included essays, monographs, speeches, and journalism, that provided a serious evaluation of contemporary culture, and that revamped literary genealogy in a way that transgressed narrow national boundaries." (Franco, *Decline*, 4)ⁱⁱⁱ

Julio Cortázar accomplished this with a series of essays on poetics, the nature of the short story, a famous polemic with Oscar Collazos about what is revolutionary (in) literature, and the Morelli notes of his opus magnum, *Rayuela (Hopscotch)*. Jorge

Luis Borges wrote his essays impersonating short stories interrogating what is an author, what is the nature of literary history, how can a canonical author rewrite the literary past, and how does reading work; to which one should add his innumerable mass mediated pronouncements. In addition to famous polemical interventions in the Cortázar/Collazos dialogue and his own with Angel Rama, Mario Vargas Llosa contributed a full book on Gabriel García Márquez' *Cien años de soledad* (*A Hundred Years of Solitude*) to which he added later many more, including books on the nature of realism and fiction, and the work of José María Arguedas. The latter himself produced, in addition to his polemics with Julio Cortázar on what kind of writer the Latin American ought to be, lengthy journals chronicling his creative efforts and his struggles to do literary justice to what he saw as the real cultural complexity of his native Peru.

No critical mapping was at the time or has continued to be more influential than that provided by Uruguayan critic Angel Rama during and after the Boom. ^{iv}

Within a decade of complaining, in one of his seminal essays of 1964 in *Marcha* at the very start of the Boom, about the lack of information on Latin American literature, Rama and others (including, in addition to the Boom writers themselves, critics such as Luis Harss and Emir Rodríguez Monegal) would

produce a significant body of critical work attempting to fill the gap. (Rama, "La Generación", 26)

For the purposes of this essay, as already stated, I will divide Rama's writing on the Boom in two parts. The first will privilege a sociological approach while the second will highlight a longer and deeper historico-anthropological process. Both will be seen as correctives to the perils or challenges of the Boom; both will involve a cultural dynamic engaging two poles of Latin American cultural modernization: one regionalist, another cosmopolitan. In charting Rama's complex response to and participation in the Boom of Latin American narrative, I would like to highlight some of the constitutive aporias of this literary phenomenon. In 1964, describing the development of Latin American literature since the 1940's, Rama alluded to some of them:

"Su afán central implica una universalización interior de las vivencias propias, regionales, de las distintas sociedades, tratando de zafarse del dilema contradictorio que se le ofreciera -o regionalismo o universalismo-. Por lo tanto, esta literatura corresponde a una maduración: al inicio -apenas- del período adulto de la cultura latinoamericana" (Rama. Generación, 32)

"Its central effort involves an internal universalization of the lived, regional experiences of different societies,

attempting to escape the contradictory dilemma that it was faced with: either regionalism or universalism. Thus, this literature corresponds to a maturation: just the beginning of the adult period of Latin American culture."

That, for Rama, was the alluring promise of the new Latin American literature since the 1940's on^v. In order to secure the full unfolding of that potential, Rama elaborated two forms of corrections to the Boom as it developed. Both dealt with issues of form and technique in the literary work, but the first did so from a sociological perspective that used the national/international axis to probe the relations among writer, form and technique, and *a reading public*; while the second privileged an anthropological rural/urban axis to probe on the nexus connecting writer, form, and text with a deep, cultural source, *an originating people*. Like the new narrative, those corrections were meant to allow for that "internal universalization of the lived, regional experiences" of each society, as a way of overcoming the false dilemma of "regionalism or universalism." The tense space between those terms animated the Cortázar/Arguedas polemic as well as José Donoso's descriptions of the Boom, its antecedents and influences (Donoso, 15-19). To move beyond the antinomy was the goal of Rama's whole critical production.

First Part: Technological Renovation.

While sharing a general materialist approach to literature, Rama separated himself from a certain form of Lukács-inflected Marxist criticism for which the central category of analysis is that of representation, understood here as the degree of connection/separation between the world out there (the social context) and the literary text with its own verbally constructed rendition/distortion of that world. This kind of representational demand on literature became, however, one of the most important and recurrent made of the Latin American Boom writer from inside and outside revolutionary Cuba.^{vi} Instead, taking his guidance from the Marxism of Walter Benjamin in his analysis of "The Author as Producer," "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction," and the studies on Baudelaire and urban modernity in Paris, Rama asked less what are the relationships of the literary work *with* the social world, understood as sets of relations and forces of production, (a question of representation), to interrogate instead what is the position of the work, the means of production, and the producer, *within* those social relations (a question of material production).^{vii} This also meant exploring what was the capacity of literature, and more specifically of form and technique, to channel the literary and political energies of the present. In the case of Rama's analysis of the works and authors of the Latin American Boom this involved, finally and sociologically,

establishing the precise contours of a modern literary system, including concepts of author, reader, text and book.

Rama's 1981 "Tecnificación narrativa" essay on the Boom begins by stating:

"Nunca se afirmará suficientemente que la nueva narrativa latinoamericana es un movimiento, más que una estética, por lo cual admite plurales orientaciones dentro de un abanico artístico e ideológico..." (Rama, *Tecnificación*, 294) "It will never be emphasized enough that the new Latin American narrative is a movement, more than an aesthetic. Thus, it admits plural orientations within a wide artistic and ideological spectrum..."

This variety within the new narrative is further multiplied by the existence, horizontally, of diverse cultural areas, and vertically, by sociocultural stratifications within those areas. At stake for Rama is producing an analysis capable of accounting for what he perceived as the true history and composition of what, by then, had been confirmed as the Boom. This is why during the 1960's his first insistence had been to define the object of study as "the new narrative" or even "the new novel" rather as the Boom of that narrative. Riding on that distinction was not simply Rama's dislike for the economics and English-based nature of the term Boom, but more importantly, what was the proper historical framework for its understanding.

Rama then preferred the phrase "nueva novela latinoamericana," that he had already proposed by 1964. Carlos Fuentes used a similar phrase later in his well-known *La Nueva Novela Hispanoamericana* (1969). Defining the Boom, Rama famously stated:

"Yo no conozco nada igual a lo que se ha llamado el boom. Es el club más exclusivista que haya existido jamás en la historia de la cultura hispanoamericana. Es un club con cinco personas y no tiene más que cinco asientos: pueden entrar algunos pero de pie. De estos cinco, cuatro tienen sillones con nombre y apellido; (...) Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, Fuentes y García Márquez. El quinto sillón es variable: algunos se lo dan a Donoso, otros a Lezama Lima..." (Rama, *Angel Rama tira la piedra*, 16)

"I have never seen anything like the so-called Boom. It is the most exclusive club ever in the history of Spanish American culture. It is a club with five members and it only has five seats: others may attend but only standing. Of these five, four have designated seats; (...) Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, Fuentes, and García Márquez. The fifth seat is variable: some give it to Donoso, other to Lezama Lima..."

Contrary to the Boom, which concentrated on four or five writers to the exclusion of others, the concept of the "nueva novela latinoamericana" allowed and called for a deeper

historical analysis, linking the Boom writers to their many antecedents since the 1940's, their non-canonized contemporaries, and their successors (which Rama christened "los novísimos") (Rama, Boom, 84)

In an early and programmatic 1960 essay titled "La Construcción de una literatura" Rama quoted Brazilian critic Antonio Candido in order to define what literature as a system could mean:

"... un sistema de obras ligadas por denominadores comunes (...) Estos denominadores son, aparte de las características internas (lengua, temas, imágenes), ciertos elementos de naturaleza social y psíquica, literariamente organizados que se manifiestan históricamente y hacen de la literatura un aspecto orgánico de la civilización. Entre ellos distínguense: la existencia de un conjunto de productores literarios más o menos conscientes de su papel; un conjunto de receptores formando los diferentes tipos de público (...); un mecanismo transmisor (en forma general una lengua traducida a estilos) que liga unos con otros." (quoted by Rama, Construcción, 23)

"... a system of connected works linked by common denominators (...) They include, in addition to the internal characteristics (language, themes, images), certain social and psychic elements organized literarily that manifest historically and make of literature an organic aspect of civilization.

Prominent among them are: the existence of a group of literary producers more or less conscious of their own role; a group of consumers constituting the different types of publics (...); a transmitting mechanism (in the way of a language turned into styles) that connects all of the components with each other."

Already evident in the citation are Rama's two approaches to the Boom as a literary phenomenon: the sociological, connecting materially a circuit of producers, products and consumers; and the anthropological, probing the link between a people, its literature, and its civilization. Missing, but implied, is the role criticism itself would have to play in the system. This latter role was as crucial as the systemic and long historical view, since one of the dangers Rama saw manifesting in the Boom was the replacement of serious, independent critical evaluation of the literary, by the mechanisms of the market, including the new mass mediated role of the writer to explain his works to the public in interviews and essays.^{viii}

Sociologically, Rama analyzed the Boom along three lines: its literary techniques as productive technologies; its commercial nature as mediated by publishers and mass media coverage; and, finally, its concepts of the writer and the literary work in relation to an expanded public.

At the level of technique, for Rama, the Boom repeats the history of economic productive configurations and their

relations with technologies on the continent. The long process of modernization –with two big epochs, the industrial revolution and the more recent ‘technological revolution’– has seen a dialectics between inward and outward looking productive arrangements, generating what Rama, following contemporary theories of economic underdevelopment, calls a “modelo operativo técnico” “a technical operative model” and a “modelo productivo técnico” “a technical productive model.” The first, while still producing interesting results, is controlled by foreign investment, foreign technologies and works on local materials. The second, locally controlled, is much more autonomous and “contributes to strengthening the concept of a nation-for-itself” (Rama, *Tecnificación*, 317). While the first model has had many literary avatars in the continent, the second one is still a project. The Boom, however, may have indicated, Rama suggests, the possibility of a transition in literature and culture from one model to the other. For that purpose, he draws a line connecting Rubén Darío (and the first effort to modernize Latin American poetry and literary writing), with the poetic avant-gardes of Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo which attempted to connect universalism and regionalism, then with a transitional moment marked by the production of authors such as Juan Carlos Onetti, Miguel Angel Asturias and Alejo Carpentier; and finally, with the Boom itself.

What is being negotiated throughout this process is, in all cases, the degree of relevance and interdependence between literary technologies for the production and manipulation of language and representation of reality, and that reality itself, as an original and originating culture. In this scheme, the worst possible sin for the Boom writers was, in Rama's view, a fetishization of (foreign) technique itself, as manifested in what he deems failed experiments, such as Fuentes' *Cambio de Piel* and Cortázar's *62 Modelo para armar*. Instead, technique, Rama suggests, should be a neutral if necessary instrument. In the end, the limit to the technological experimentalism is the reading public. In that regard, Rama quotes approvingly the following words from his compatriot, Juan Carlos Onetti:

"En la primera etapa de aquel tiempo adoptamos una posición, un estado de espíritu que se resumía en la frase o lema: aquel que no entienda es un idiota. Años después, una forma de la serenidad (...) nos obligó a modificar la fe, el lema que sintetiza: aquel que no logre hacerse entender es un idiota." (Quoted by Rama, *Tecnificación*, 335)^{ix}

"In the first period of that time we adopted a position, a spiritual state synthesized in the phrase or slogan: he who cannot understand is an idiot. Years later, a form of serenity (...) forced us to change that faith or slogan now synthesized as: he who cannot make himself understood is an idiot."

This reference to the public leads us to Rama's second focus considering the Boom sociologically. One of the defining undercurrents of the Boom –stemming at least partly from socially transformative developments in Latin America, from Cuba to Chile, and from the impact of the Sartrean 'engagement' problematic in the context of Third World liberational struggles worldwide– was that of the role and definition of revolutionary literature versus its possible corruption by market forces.^x

While the 1970 polemic between Oscar Collazos, Julio Cortázar, and Mario Vargas Llosa –compiled under the title of one of Cortázar's contributions, *Literatura en la revolución y revolución en la literatura*– has been analyzed elsewhere, I will briefly refer to it here. Collazos original charge, leveled specially against Vargas Llosa and Cortázar, was that there was:

“una proliferación creciente de nuevas obras y la emergencia de nuevos narradores que –desesperadamente–buscan su inserción en un mercado continental; la ‘actualización’ de un lenguaje narrativo; el abordar estructuras narrativas retomadas de la novelística europea y norteamericana; el acercamiento a una manera de concebir la literatura como ejercicio autónomo del contexto sociocultural y político...” (Collazos, *Encrucijada*, 7)

“...a proliferation of new works and the emergence of new fiction writers who –desperately–search for their insertion in a continental market; the ‘bringing up to date’ of narrative

language; the use of narrative structures taken from European and American novels; the approach conceiving literature as an autonomous exercise separate from the sociocultural and political context"

While Vargas Llosa responded in his own way to the charge of "el olvido de la realidad" 'forgetting reality' (16) and 'la mistificación del hecho creador' 'the mystification of the creative process' (Collazos, Encrucijada, 10), it is Cortázar's answer that matters here, insofar as it is another affirmation of the materiality of the creative process and its resulting work. In nuce, Cortázar's view is that rather than limiting the Latin American writer to the faithful representation of revolutionary processes such as the Cuban or the Chilean one, the first obligation of every revolutionary writer was to revolutionize the means of creative production, the materiality of languages and techniques constituting the building blocks of literature. (Cortázar, "Literatura en la revolución") Rama reads this as Cortázar's way of affirming "la internacionalización de las técnicas literarias que habrían constituido una suerte de gran mercado común de las letras..." (Rama, Tecnificación, 312) "the internationalization of literary techniques which would have constituted in some sense a big, common market of letters", i.e. another way of claiming the arrival of a cultural time in

which technique can finally become a more neutral element at the service of original creative endeavors in Latin America.

In another important text written between 1969 and 1971 for the Cuban journal *Casa de las Américas* but never published until 2009, Cortázar directly addresses the topic "El Creador y la formación del público" (The Creator and the Formation of the Public) number 5.4 in the agenda of the Congreso Cultural de La Habana to which he was invited in 1968:

"¿Qué es el público a los fines del tema 5.4? ¿La totalidad del pueblo? ¿Los recién alfabetizados + los escolares + los universitarios + los obreros y profesionales y empleados y guagueros? (...) Digamos que el tema 5.4 atrapa la cosa por lo alto, o sea que cuando dice *creador* dice por ejemplo Alejo Carpentier, y que cuando dice *público* habla de jóvenes y de adultos que han alcanzado un nivel cultural a partir del cual la acción de ese creador puede ser eficaz." (Cortázar, *La Creación*, 253)^{xi}

"What is the public in topic 5.4? The totality of the people? The recently literate + school children + college students + workers and professionals and employees and bus drivers? (...) Let us say that the 5.4 topic catches the issue at a high level, i.e. when it says *creator* it means, for example, Alejo Carpentier; and when it says *public* it refers to young

people and adults who have reached a cultural level from which the action of that creator can be effective."

In disposing of the populist view that the Latin American writer ought to address itself to all the people, Cortázar is also alluding to the final aspect in Rama's sociological view of the Boom: its dependence, as both a cultural and commercial phenomenon, on the previous existence of a reading public. Here Rama is trying to counter the common impression, back in the 1960's and later, that the Boom was simply the result of the modern marketing machinery of Spanish publishers, especially of Seix Barral.

If the reading public was the limit of experimentalism at the level of technique, and the source of a demand of relevance at the political one, it was also, obviously, the condition of possibility of the Boom as a social phenomenon. Here Rama insisted that the new reading public could not have been created suddenly and ex-nihilo by the institutionalization of a literary prize (the Biblioteca Breve prize by Seix Barral) and the interest of a few Spanish publishers. It was, instead, the result of a decades long process of modernization.^{xii}

Although Rama does not provide specific data to back up his statements regarding the main outlines of this process of modernization, they are confirmed by currently available studies on the continent. Illiteracy rates in Latin America as a whole,

for example, go from 61% in 1930 to 26.9% in 1970 (including 55% in 1940, 46.5% in 1950, and 35% in 1960) and they are of course significantly lower in some countries that provided stronger readerships to the Boom texts, in general, and to their national publishing efforts, in particular. Thus Argentina goes from a 13.6% illiteracy rate in 1950 to a 7.4% in 1970; Chile from 19.8 to 11%, Colombia from 37.7 to 19.2%, and Mexico from 43.2 to 25.8% for the same decades) If those data are considered in the light of a population growth that goes from 107 million people in 1930 to 285 million in 1970 and from an urban population of 17% in 1930 to a 65% in 1980 the size and the nature of this new actual and potential public for the "new Latin American narrative" can be more precisely gauged. (Merrick, 7 and 31; de Oliveira and Roberts, 289; Thorp, 36)

It is in this context that one can begin to understand both the pre-Boom flourishing of literary and textbook publishing in Latin America and Rama's insistence on recuperating that history (and thus the role of Latin American publishers) to counterbalance the 60's and 70's narrative, insofar as the latter was based on the exaggerated relevance given to the commercial machinations of Spanish publishers and the singular importance and alleged founding quality of the Seix Barral prize from 1962 on.^{xiii}

In fact, while their moment of national and international full expansion is reached in the sixties, the publishing industries of Mexico and Argentina, the two most powerful in Spanish America at the time, have their "golden age" before the arrival of the Boom. (de Diego, Aguado) It is the case of Emecé and Sudamericana publishers in Argentina, Zig-Zag and Nascimento in Chile, and Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico. Others like Joaquín Mortiz, founded in 1962, in Mexico and Arca –co-founded in the same year by Rama– in Uruguay, rode the wave of the Boom as it unfolded.

Studying in 1981 the history of local Latin American publishing trajectories and sales, and the foreign translations of Boom texts, Sara Castro-Klarén and Héctor Campos added another important correction to the simplified story of the Boom—as the result-of metropolitan endorsement. With the exception of *Cien años de soledad*, during the 1960's and the first half of 70's the sales of translated Latin American authors worldwide, outside of the region, are not nearly as significant as those within the region.^{xiv}

Like Cortázar, Rama was ready to admit that the literary public was much smaller than the potential indicated by the total population of the continent. But, at the same time, like Rodríguez Monegal,^{xv} he insisted that the new expanded reading public was not the result of a few years of marketing campaigns.

At stake in this insistence was recuperating, historically, Latin American people's agency in their own cultural development. The concept of transculturation would be Rama's anthropological effort to make this point, not sociologically, but culturally.

Second Part: Transculturation

While Rama's first consideration of the Boom, in the context of the modernization of Latin American narrative, posited the problem precisely in terms of modernity: i.e. how to modernize the national by connecting our epoch, "la patria temporal a la que todos pertenecemos (este final del siglo XX)" (Rama, *Contestatarios*, 464) ("the temporal patria to which we all belong (in this end of the 20th century)") with "la patria espacial" or our nationally specific situation (with its "intimate flavors, its rich traditions, its essential identity"); his second view of Latin American narrative after 1940 (and thus of the Boom) would aim for a deeper "transculturating integration" which is:

"la única que puede evitar los prejuicios del provincianismo, con sus dos caras opuestas aunque en definitiva una y la misma: la regresión conservadora hacia el pasado nacional, repitiendo sus modelos ya fuera de tiempo, o la copia servil, de pueril vanguardismo, de las más recientes modas extranjeras, para tratar de ser modernos y estar al día de la

hora universal" (Rama, *Contestatarios*, 464) "the only one that can avoid the prejudices of provincialism, with its two opposing yet connected faces: the conservative regression towards a national past, repeating its model in an anachronistic way, or the servile copy of childish avant-gardism, of the most recent foreign fashions, in order to be modern and be up to date in this universal hour."

If, sociologically, Rama's analysis of the Latin American Boom considered it as a literary and commercial system involving the work, the means of production, and the producer, *within* social relations; anthropologically, on the other hand, Rama's second perspective involved asking not just what kind of material field had produced the producers themselves, but what type of deeper cultural process was manifesting in the producer's aesthetic, formal and, generally, cultural preoccupations, in their work on languages and structures, in their concepts of the world represented, and in their relationship with a specific community (and not just a reading public). What kind of cultural work was the writer truly performing?^{xvi}

While I have elsewhere analyzed *Transculturación narrativa* in detail, I would like to reconstruct now some basic points for my reading of Rama's view of the Latin American Boom. The

central, historically long, cultural conflict Rama pursues in that book opposes "regionalismo" and "modernización":

"nuestro propósito es registrar los exitosos esfuerzos de componer un discurso literario a partir de fuertes tradiciones propias mediante plásticas transculturaciones que no se rinden a la modernización sino que la utilizan para fines propios. Si la transculturación es la norma de todo el continente, tanto en la que llamamos línea cosmopolita como en la que específicamente designamos como transculturada, es en esta última donde entendemos que se ha cumplido una hazaña aun superior a la de los cosmopolitas, que ha consistido en la continuidad histórica de formas culturales profundamente elaboradas por la masa social, ajustándola con la menor pérdida de identidad, a las nuevas condiciones fijadas por el marco internacional de la hora" (Rama, *Transculturación*, 5).

"our purpose is to register the successful efforts to compose a literary discourse from our own strong traditions, through plastic transculturations which do not surrender to modernization but use it for their own ends. If transculturation is the norm for the whole continent, both in the line we call cosmopolitan as in that which we specifically designate as transculturated, it is in the latter where, in our view, a bigger endeavor than in the case of the cosmopolitans has been accomplished. It has consisted of the historical continuity of cultural forms, deeply elaborated by the

social masses, adjusting it, with the least loss of identity, to the new conditions set by the international framework of this epoch."

In an excellent analysis of *Transculturación*, Patricia D'Allemand suggests that in Rama's oeuvre there are at least two contending discourses on the national (D'Allemand, 143) and that in *Transculturación* Rama sides unilaterally with the transculturators and denies the internationalists their claim to embody a national project. Contrary to D'Allemand's thesis, I would like to propose here that Rama's analysis of the Boom and the category of transculturation are co-dependant; that what Rama saw as perils in the former made for strengths in the latter. But also, and paradoxically, that this genealogy may account for some of the weaknesses of the transculturating model as proposed by Rama. I think it is clear from that last long quote from Rama that the cosmopolitans are for him an example of the forms of regional transculturating culture in Latin America, not their opposite^{xvii}. My hypothesis is that Rama's 1982 emphasis on the so-called 'transculturadores' has to do with two epochal factors. On the one hand, with the critical distortions produced by a certain climate associated with the Boom and their successors (the novísimos), in which the international attention fell almost exclusively on the authors that were more easily translated, culturally and linguistically, to the forms and mental schemes of metropolitan

recognition. Neither Borges, nor Cortázar, certainly not Vargas Llosa, was in danger of being excluded. The same could not be said of Juan Rulfo, José María Arguedas and Augusto Roa Bastos. Manuel Puig and Guillermo Cabrera Infante wrote on urban, modern Latin America, while popular rural cultures seemed condemned to oblivion, overcome by the power of the modernizing fashion. On the other hand, Rama's emphasis on the regional transculturators—at a time experienced as suffused by cultural imperialism through the mass media—is connected to what Rama perceived as a more balanced relation of forces between technological innovations and Latin American cultural materials.

In this sense, Rama's *Transculturación* must be understood as a strategic intervention, as a corrective effort that more than accomplished its rectifying goals. When Rama refers to the 1960's and 1970's as "una época de cosmopolitismo algo pueril" "an epoch of a certain childish cosmopolitanism," he is thinking, especially, of the amnesic and excluding, although not long lasting, effect that the publishing explosion known as the Boom had on the contemporary and previous Latin American literary production.^{xviii} There was a paradox here: in a previous book on Rubén Darío, Rama had studied the professionalization of the Latin American writer in its mutually dependent relations with the demands of the publishing market of journals and newspapers at the turn of the century. The Latin American Boom, sixty or seventy

years later was, clearly, another stage in that same professionalizing development of the writer; a writer now dependent on a publishing industry specialized on the massive production and distribution of narrative books by authors turned into superstars and brand names. (Rama, "La Novela en América", "Angel Rama tira la piedra", Franco, "Narrador") What this second professionalization brought along and Rama attempted to correct, was what he deemed the almost exclusive privilege of certain forms of writing and the imposition of a form of legibility that, although based on complex modern metropolitan narrative techniques, resulted on a reduction of the real, wider spectrum of Latin American writing. It is this reactive and corrective effort to address a historical injustice that could have incalculable, long-term effects, what motivated the preferential attention Rama granted to one of the two basic types of transculturators he describes. Those he sometimes refers to as, simply, the transculturators: Roa Bastos, Guimaraes Rosa, Rulfo and Arguedas. And, in a special place, as we will see shortly, Gabriel García Márquez.

Thus, the full second part of *Transculturación* is devoted to an analysis of the narrative of José María Arguedas. For our purposes here it will suffice to say that in Rama's reading of Arguedas' novels, what the Uruguayan critic calls "la gesta del mestizo" ("the epic of the mestizo") focused on Arguedas' effort

to bend and reshape the novel to accommodate in one hybrid narrative the vision, languages, and experiences of both the Quechua and Spanish speaking people of Peru. Such work emerges in a double-faced shape. The creative mestizo is both the humble compiler of a deeper cultural work performed by popular culture and a people as a whole, and a heroic national bard singularly capable of giving literary expression to the so far unarticulated voice of that people. The novel, then, shares this duality by being, simultaneously, the result of collective forms of telling experience and using language, and the individually produced formal culmination of the expressive powers of that people. In the case of Arguedas, the national mestizo Peruvian culture capable of appreciating and using the wealth of native cultures and languages in general, and a national bicultural reading public capable of processing such texts, were still projects for a more democratic future. Rama saw Arguedas as writing for that future, when the people would finally be in a position to become a reading public of truly national texts.

In *Transculturación*, then, Rama developed a partially contradictory movement his full *oeuvre* on the Boom had insistently explored. On the one hand, it situated literature as the highest form of creation a people could produce, envisioning an ideal development scenario within which, finally, *pueblo* and *público* coincide as a *national public* in their participation in and

enjoyment of the aesthetic work of the transculturator; on the other, he conceived of the novel as a discursive space of collective cultural production stemming as much from the creating genius of the writer (the transculturator) as from the latter's capacity to process the cultural forms the people elaborate and propose. My hypothesis here is that this relative contradiction is the result of the dialectics between Rama's evolving thought and the pressures and corrections, skepticisms and enthusiasms, motivated by the so-called Boom of the Latin American novel. *Transculturación* corrects the Boom in at least the way here described, going against its reductive and Eurocentric focus; but the Boom also impacts *Transculturación*, by suggesting that literature, in general, and the novel, in particular, may actually hold the potential key to a truly national Latin American culture. The writer, then, emerges in Rama, simultaneously, as an original creator and as a "compilador" (a compiler, the one that puts together) (Rama, *Transculturación*, 19); while culture oscillates between sometimes an ascending process with privileged forms and actors, and others an always already heterogeneous and multiple process in which the crosses between peoples (*pueblos*) and *publics* (now in plural) follow multifarious ways. If, at the macrolevel, the literature-centric nature of Rama's vision confirmed the privilege of educated forms and the man of letters (*letrado*) who can use them; at the microlevel, his analysis tried hard to show

how the original forms are never the isolated result of an act of genius but, instead, the cultural work of a secular imaginary empowered by elements that activate or reactivate it at a given time.

If the case of Arguedas showed the exclusions and biases resulting from the Boom, and the difficulties and, perhaps, radical impossibility of a fully transculturating project for some cultural areas, García Márquez embodied its other face, its promise and historical viability in other areas of the continent, and thus, potentially, in the whole region.

Gabriel García Márquez: A National and Popular Art?

In a series of five lectures given at the Centro de Investigaciones Lingüístico-Literarias of the Universidad Veracruzana in 1972, and later posthumously published in 1985 under the title "La Narrativa de Gabriel García Márquez: Edificación de un arte nacional y popular", Rama began by pointing out that literature —and, one could add, in the case of the Boom, the novel— has by nature a totalizing tendency and shows "una falsa autonomía que deriva de su afán de suplantar a la cultura, a la cual, sin embargo, sirve y elabora, pero como uno de sus resortes centrales" "a false autonomy stemming from the attempt to supplant culture, which, in fact, it serves and elaborates, but as one of its central aspects." (Rama, *La Narrativa de Gabriel*, 149) Thus, he was, once again, reaffirming both the need to correct literary mirages ("una

falsa autonomía"), sociologically and anthropologically; and highly valuing the centrality of literature not just to the restricted circuit of high cultural consumption but also to culture in general.

Rama's transculturating take on the Latin American novel as represented by Arguedas was, in fact, in many ways, the opposite of, and yet, connected to, Antonio Gramsci's reading of the (absence of) the national-popular novel and culture in Italy. The novel in Italy in the 1920's and 1930's had already had, for this political theorist, this double capacity: that of engaging an existing national reading public, if mostly, in the Italian case, through foreign, especially French, products; and that of announcing, in its desired nationalized version, the potential emergence of an alternative cultural and political configuration, a truly national and revolutionary one containing an expanded set of producers and consumers. (Gramsci)

Rather than reviewing Rama's full reading of García Márquez' work, I would like to highlight a few of its central issues relevant for our context here. The question of to what extent that new national-popular novel would have to or could be different from the cultural and narrative presuppositions of the bourgeois or elite novel, was then, more specifically, the challenge that in their own ways Rama's readings of the works of Roa Bastos, Arguedas, Rulfo, Guimarães Rosa, and Gabriel García Márquez set

out to explore. The dialectic of a national culture in search of itself could be seen in its full complexity as it played out in the Colombian author's literary project. That project is precisely "el proyecto de representar una literatura nacional y popular" "the project of representing a national and popular literature" (Rama, *La Narrativa*, 150)

That narrative project, according to Rama, follows, objectively, a dialectical process:

"...un avance dialéctico en el campo de la literatura corresponde efectivamente al enfrentamiento de materiales que se destruyen a sí mismos, y que, simultáneamente, generan la posibilidad de unas formas superiores de las cuales emerja la línea interna zigzagueante que va desarrollando la cultura." "a dialectical advance in the field of literature corresponds, in fact, to a confrontation among materials that destroy themselves but, simultaneously, generate the possibility of superior forms, from which can emerge the sinuous line that develops culture." (Rama, *La Narrativa*, 151)

This dialectic, in the case of García Márquez, is neither simple nor exclusively national. In fact, Rama credits the Barranquilla group to which García Márquez belongs (along with Alvaro Cepeda Samudio, Alfonso Fuenmayor, and Germán Vargas) with discovering in Colombia –but outside of the cultural centers of the country, still dominated by a literature of social costumbrismo

and local color— the signal importance of the Euroamerican modernist novelist. In 1950 García Márquez wrote: “Todavía no se ha escrito en Colombia la novela que esté indudable y afortunadamente influida por Joyce, por Faulkner, o por Virginia Woolf” “In Colombia the novel undoubtedly and fortunately influenced by Joyce, Faulkner or Virginia Woolf is still to be written.”(quoted by Rama, *La Narrativa de Gabriel*, 161)

Rama’s thesis in reading García Márquez’ narrative was precisely that it would be his regional work, inflected by foreign, modern, avant-garde narrative techniques —and not that of those cultural centers-based Colombian writers, seemingly advocating a clearer option for a national popular literature of costumbrismo—the one that ended up delivering on the promise of such a project.^{xix}

Without having yet recourse to the language of transculturation, Rama would in fact show how complex and multidirectional the literary process, considered as a national cultural process, could be. Distancing himself from the nationally dominant centers and their writing, influenced by the new forms of those Euroamerican modernist writers as well as the objectifying language of journalism (his day time occupation) and Hemingway, García Márquez would try over and over —in a trajectory that goes from *La Hojarasca* to *El Coronel no tiene quien le escriba*, from *La Mala hora* to *Relato de un naufrago*, and culminates in *Cien años de soledad*— to find the right mix, in a formal, structural, and

perspectival laboratory of trial and error. The successful combination, climatically reached with *Cien años*, would include Colombian history and myths, the author's own autobiography, and an original intervention in a national genre, the literature of violence, which, instead of directly representing it, would question its long roots and effects on the daily life of human beings. Through a family saga covering a hundred years, and using forces involved in a dialectic between matrilineal and women-centered issues (centripetal) and male dominated political power figures (centrifugal), García Márquez would show, for Rama, the true potential of a national-popular literature. That it would also become an international best-seller would additionally, and nicely, confirm for Rama the overcoming of the simple opposition between the regional and the cosmopolitan, the national and the universal.

While *Cien años*, and other Boom novels to a lesser degree, could be said to herald the emergence, out of the Latin American peoples, of a finally expanded mesocratic reading public, located at the proper intersection between a cosmopolitan and a regional-internal pole of literary and cultural development; the Boom itself, in Rama's view, threatened with destabilizing the whole literary system by leaning too heavily on the cosmopolitan side; thus, exacerbating the separation or distance between the two poles of a needed cultural dialectic. Everything that Rama wrote from

the 1960's on, was meant, first, to correct this peril the Boom signaled, and, secondly, to harness its energies for broader transcultural purposes.

Bibliography

- Aguado, Amelia. "1956-1975. La Consolidación del mercado interno", in José Luis de Diego, editor, *Editores y políticas editoriales en Argentina, 1880-2000*, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006, 125-162.
- Blixen, Carina y Alvaro Barros Lemez. *Cronología y Bibliografía. Angel Rama*, Montevideo: Fundación Angel Rama, 1986.
- Castro-Klarén, Sara and Héctor Campos. "Traducciones, tirajes, ventas y estrellas: el Boom". *I&L*, 17, September-October, 1983, 319-338.
- Collazos, Oscar. "Encrucijada del lenguaje", in Oscar Collazos, Julio Cortázar, and Mario Vargas Llosa, *Literatura en la revolución y revolución en la literatura*, México: Siglo Veintiuno, 1970, 7-37.
- Cortázar, Julio. "El Creador y la formación del público", in *Papeles inesperados*, Bogotá: Alfaguara, 2009, 249-260.
- "Literatura en la revolución y revolución en la literatura. Algunos malentendidos a liquidar", in Oscar Collazos, Julio Cortázar, and Mario Vargas Llosa, *Literatura en la revolución y revolución en la literatura*, México: Siglo Veintiuno, 1970, 38-77.

- D'Allemand, Patricia. "Angel Rama: el discurso de la transculturación", *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, VIII, 16/17, 1996: 133-151.
- de Diego, José Luis, "1938-1955. 'La Epoca de oro' de la industria editorial", in José Luis de Diego, editor, *Editores y políticas editoriales en Argentina, 1880-2000*, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006, 91-124.
- de Oliveira, Orlandina and Bryan Roberts. "Urban Social Structures in Latin America, 1930-1990," in Leslie Bethell, editor, *Latin America. Economy and Society since 1930*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 241-312.
- Donoso, José. *Historia personal del 'Boom.' Con Apéndices del autor y de María Pilar Donoso*, Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1987.
- Franco, Jean. "Narrador, autor, superestrella: la narrativa latinoamericana en la época de la cultura de masas", *Revista Iberoamericana*, 47, 1981: 115-116.
- *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City. Latin America in the Cold War*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Gilman, Claudia. *Entre la pluma y el fusil. Debates y dilemas del escritor revolucionario en América Latina*, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "On Popular Culture", in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, edited by David

Forgacs, New York: New York University Press, 2000, 363-378.

Harss, Luis and Barbara Dohmann. *Los Nuestros*, Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1968.

- *Into the Mainstream. Conversations with Latin American Writers*. New York: Harper, 1969.

Herrero-Olaizola, Alejandro. *The Censorship Files. Latin American Writers and Franco's Spain*, State University of New York Press, 2007.

Kerr, Lucille. "Imagining Narrative Territories", in Mario J. Valdés and Djelal Kadir (editors), *Latin American Literary Cultures: A Comparative History of Cultural Formations*, Oxford University Press, Vol. III, 594-610.

Marco Joaquín and Jordi Gracia (editors). *La Llegada de los bárbaros. La Recepción de la literatura hispanoamericana en España, 1960-1981*, Barcelona: Edhasa, 2004.

Martin, Gerald. *Journeys through the Labyrinth. Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century*, London: Verso, 1989.

Merrick, Thomas W. "The Population of Latin America 1930-1990," in Leslie Bethell, editor, *Latin America. Economy and Society since 1930*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 3-64.

- Moraña, Mabel (editor). *Angel Rama y los estudios latinoamericanos*, Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura, 1997.
- Moraña, Mabel. 1997, "Ideología de la transculturación", in Moraña (editor), 137-145.
- Poblete, Juan. "Trayectoria crítica de Angel Rama: La Dialéctica de la producción cultural entre autores y públicos", in Daniel Mato (editor), *Estudios y otras preactivas intelectuales latinoamericanas en cultura y poder*, Caracas: CLACSO/Faces-UCV, 2002, 235-245.
- Rama, Angel. "Angel Rama o la crítica de la transculturación. (Ultima entrevista)", interviewed by Jesús Diaz-Caballero, in Mabel Moraña (editor). *Angel Rama y los estudios latinoamericanos*, Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura, 1997, 325-343.
- *La Novela en América Latina. Panoramas 1920-1980*, Montevideo: Fundación Angel Rama/Universidad Veracruzana, 1986.
 - *Las Máscaras democráticas del Modernismo*, Montevideo: Fundación Angel Rama, 1985.
 - "La narrativa de Gabriel García Márquez: Edificación de un arte nacional y popular" *Texto Crítico*, X:31/32, 1985, 147-245.

- *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina*, México: Siglo XXI, 1982.
- "Los Contestatarios del poder", originally published in 1981. Reproduced in *La Novela en América Latina*, 455-494.
- "La Tecnificación narrativa", originally published in 1981. Reproduced in *La Novela en América Latina*, 294-360.
- "El Boom en perspectiva", originally published in 1980. Reproduced in *La Novela en América Latina*, 235-293.
- *Rubén Darío y el Modernismo: circunstancias socio-económicas de un arte americano*, Caracas: Ediciones de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1970.
- "La Generación del medio siglo", originally published in 1964. Reproduced in *La Novela en América Latina*, 26-32.
- "Diez problemas para el novelista latinoamericano. Originally published in 1964. Reproduced in *La Novela en América Latina*, 33-98.

Rodríguez Monegal, Emir. *El Boom de la novela latinoamericana*, Caracas: Editorial Tiempo Nuevo, 1972.

Sanchez, Pablo. *La Emancipación engañosa. Una crónica trasatlántica del Boom (1963-1972)*, `Cuadernos de América sin nombre, Universitat d'Alacant, 2009.

Sánchez Prado, Ignacio (editor). *América Latina en la 'literatura mundial'*, Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2006.

Thorp, Rosemary. *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion. An Economic History of Latin America in the 20th Century*. New York: Inter-American Development Bank, 1998.

Vargas Llosa, Mario "The Boom Twenty Years Later: An Interview with Mario Vargas Llosa", interviewed by Raymond Leslie Williams, *Latin American Literary Review*, XV, 29, 1987, 201-206.

¹ Since I originally wrote this article at least four important volumes dealing with the Latin American Boom have appeared that, due to the length of this essay, I can now only mention here. They are *Teaching the Latin American Boom*, edited by Lucille Kerr and Alejandro Herrero Olaizola, MLA, 2015 (for which, in fact, this essay was originally intended) which provides an excellent overview of both the times and the movement; *Beyond Bolaño: The Global Latin American Novel*, by Héctor Hoyos, Columbia U.P., 2016, which suggests the usefulness of a world literature paradigm for a consideration of the Boom; *El Intelectual y la cultura*, by Javier García Liendo, Purdue U.P., 2016, which usefully reminds us that intellectuals like Angel Rama and José María Arguedas, through both their writing and editorial work, developed complex forms of engagement with mass culture; and, finally, *Appropriating Theory. Angel Rama's Critical Work*, by José Eduardo González, Pittsburgh U.P., 2017, which, by focusing on Walter Benjamin's impact on the development of Rama's idea of narrative transculturation, invites us to think alternative genealogies to some of Rama's central concepts.

² I use Rama's *Transculturación Narrativa*, and his critical *oeuvre* in general, in at least two courses I offer regularly at the undergraduate level at the University of California in Santa Cruz, where I teach: The Latin American Boom and Latin/o American Popular Culture. In my view, it is a crucial body of work to show how the Boom writers re-elaborate narrative forms coming from the folk, national elite and international traditions while being fully dependant on the emergence of new mass-mediated forms of culture. At the same time, Rama's texts illuminate important transformations in the concepts of authorship and readership in the continent. In general, *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* and his other essays on the Boom, show the literary text in two important facets: as a cultural artifact/text, i.e. the result of the meeting of the historical, sociological and anthropological; and as a form of discourse itself capable of creating deep ideological and cultural effects. Latin American narrative comes from culture and history but is itself trying to deal with and solve some of the historical and cultural issues posited by modernization/modernity in the continent.

³ On this, see also Kerr's excellent overview.

⁴ Angel Rama (Uruguay, 1926 -Spain, 1983) is already a classic of Latin American culture. An honor, one should add, rarely conceded to cultural critics. There are very few if any intellectuals in the continent that better embody, in their own biography and in such a clear way, the continental dimension of the Latin American sixties and seventies which saw, first, the

emergence of the Latin American narrative Boom, and, then, its end. He wrote, gave talks, published, and taught throughout Latin America and lived and worked in Montevideo, Bogotá, San Juan de Puerto Rico, Paris, Stanford, Maryland, and Caracas. In the latter, he became a national Venezuelan given the Uruguayan dictatorship's decision to deny the renewal of his passport. He would have become a US resident had it not been for the Reagan administration's decision to deny his application sponsored by the University of Maryland, which had offered him a permanent position among its faculty. Not long after this denial, Rama died in a plane accident in Spain that also took the lives of novelist and art critic Marta Traba (his partner) and other famous Latin American intellectuals.

v Its constitutive internal tensions are nicely manifested in the space between the Spanish and English titles of the first book-length panoramic view of the Boom. Luis Harss' 1967 book in Spanish was titled: *Los Nuestrros* (literally, Ours or Those Who are Ours), while its 1969 American English translation, was titled: *Into the Mainstream: Conversations with Latin-American Writers*. This is the space between what we would call today the Boom as an autonomy-claiming, internal-looking, world-regional affirmation of Latin American identity in literature; and an external-looking incorporation into the mainstream of so-called World Literature. On the latter see Sánchez Prado.

vi See below for Julio Cortázar's famous position on this issue.

vii Rama stated towards the end of his life: "si tengo que decir cuál ha sido la figura que ha tenido más impacto e influencia sobre mi dentro del pensamiento crítico es Walter Benjamin, porque para mi ha sido capital descubrirlo. Lo descubrí hace veinte o treinta años y desde entonces tuve la sensación de que efectivamente su pensamiento me marcaba una línea." (Rama, "Angel Rama o la crítica", 332-333) "if I have to say who has been the author, within critical theorists, who has had the biggest impact and influence on me, that is Walter Benjamin. For me it has been a crucial discovery. I discovered him twenty or thirty years ago and, since then, I had the impression that, in fact, his thought marked a line for me."

viii "En el régimen de un mercado, la propaganda determina el producto y el producto es fijar un objeto con un nombre. (...) Y ese sistema lleva al escritor a convertirse en una actriz, en una vedette (...) El exhibicionismo del escritor hace que el escritor termina sustituyendo al crítico. Con el auge del reportaje, hemos llegado a que sea el autor y no el crítico el que opina sobre su propia obra." (Rama, "Angel Rama tira la piedra, 16) "In a market regime, publicity determines the product, and the product is to attach a name to an object. (...) And that system turns the author into an actress, a *vedette* (...) The exhibitionism of the writer makes the writer to substitute the critic. With the vogue of the interview, we have come to the point where it is the writer, not the critic, who judges his own work"

ix Twenty years after his first Boom novels, Vargas Llosa came to agree with Rama's view about the somewhat naïve and, in a sense, neocolonial nature of the formal displays of some Boom texts: "I was so thrilled with form that it was very visible. In *The Green House* form was ever present and quite evident. As was the case with many Latin American novels of the sixties, for me was almost like a theme or a character in the novel. (...) When I wrote my first novels, I wanted very much to be modern. I wanted to differentiate myself from previous Latin American writers (...) writers who didn't pay much attention to formal problems." (Vargas Llosa, "The Boom Twenty Years", 201-202)

x On the political function of literature and the writer in this period, see Gilman and Franco, *Decline*.

^{xi} In 1964, at the beginning of his writing on the Boom, Rama had described the relation between the Latin American novelist and their public in the following terms:

“De ningún modo escribe para la sociedad entera de su país, y menos aún, para la comarca hispanoparlante. Ello se patentiza comprobando que: no hay lectores campesinos; no hay, prácticamente, lectores obreros, salvo algunos cuadros chilenos y, ahora, algunos cuadros cubanos; no hay lectores de la baja clase media.” (Rama, “Diez problemas”, 48)

“In no way does [the Latin American writer] write for the whole of society in his country, and less so for the hispanophone area. This becomes evident when considering that: there are no campesino [peasant] readers, nor, practically, working class readers, except a few groups of Chilean and, now, Cuban workers; there are no readers from the lower-middle class.”

^{xii} Rama perceives well that it is not just the literary market in Latin America that is changing as a result of the literary Boom. In fact, the global publishing industry was, many will say, collapsing in its old modern form, and giving way to its new, highly concentrated, massive best-seller-oriented global form.

^{xiii} Excellent explorations of the Boom within the Spanish publishing industry in Sánchez, and especially of its relation to the Franco regime’s censorship, Herrero-Olaizola. Pablo Sánchez in *La Emancipación engañosa. Una crónica trasatlántica del Boom (1963-1972)* considers Rama’s insistence on the importance of Latin American publishers and a pre-existing readership, at least partly, an example of the Uruguayan critic’s nationalism. More interestingly, Sanchez also highlights “dos aspectos sistémicos menos conocidos” “two less well known systemic aspects” of the Boom: the construction of a critical literary discourse (including Rama, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Roberto Fernández Retamar, and José María Castellet) and the interconnected “sistemas culturales latinoamericano y español en el contexto del franquismo” “Latin American and Spanish cultural systems in the context of the Franco regime” (Sánchez, “Emancipación”, 38) On the second aspect, see also Marco and Gracia.

^{xiv} “El asunto de las cifras desmiente una de las principales premisas del ‘boom’: ventas voluminosas en la metropoli” Castro-Klarén and Campos, 326) “The issue of numbers belies one the main premises of the ‘boom’: high sales in the metropolises”

^{xv} At the very beginning of his *El Boom de la novela latinoamericana*, Emir Rodríguez Monegal clearly states that the first and one of the most important agents of the Boom could not have been improvised, but was, in fact, the result of a longer historical process. He is referring to the reading public: “...como todo fenómeno cultural, el boom tiene no sólo un origen sino varios orígenes. Y el primero es naturalmente el público. Sin el lector no hay boom. (...) a partir de la segunda guerra mundial una nueva generación de lectores aparece en América Latina y determina (por su número, por su orientación, por su dinamismo) el primer boom de la novela latinoamericana.” (Rodríguez Monegal, 13-14) “like all cultural phenomena, the boom has multiple origins. And the first one is, naturally, the public. Without readers there is no boom. (...) since the second world war a new generation of readers emerges in Latin America, and marks (by its numbers, its orientation, its dynamism) the first boom of the Latin American novel.”

^{xvi} “Estamos diciendo que ningún escritor, absolutamente ninguno, inventa una obra, crea una construcción literaria en forma ajena al medio cultural en el cual nace; que al contrario, todo lo que puede hacer es trabajar un régimen de réplica y de enfrentamiento con los materiales que van integrando su cosmovisión, y que, desde luego, implican una opción dentro de la pluralidad que le allega el medio en el cual se encuentra.” “I am saying that no writer, absolutely none, invents a work, a literary creation, in a way that is independent from the cultural context within which s/he

is born; that, instead, all s/he can do is work within a regime of reply and confrontation with the materials that come to integrate his or her worldview, which of course imply an option within the plurality that context makes available to him or her” (Rama, “La Narrativa de Gabriel”, 151)

^{xvii} To that quote one could add the following “...la existencia de dos diálogos culturales simultáneos que se tramaban entre términos distintos: uno, interno, religaba zonas desequilibradas de la cultura del continente, pretendiendo alcanzar su modernización sin pérdida de los factores constitutivos tradicionales (...); y otro externo, establecía una comunidad directa con los centros exteriores (...) Ambos son diálogos auténticamente americanos, con un desarrollo varias veces secular...” (Rama, “Tecnificación”, 339). “the existence of two simultaneous cultural dialogues that were woven in different terms; one, internal, reconnected unbalanced zones in the culture of the continent, attempting their modernization without losing the constitutive traditional factors (...); and another, external, established a direct community with the external centers (...) Both are authentically American dialogues, many centuries in the making...”

^{xviii} The title of the paper originating the article “El Boom en perspectiva” was, “Informe logístico (anti-boom) sobre las armas, las estrategias y el campo de batalla de la nueva narrativa latinoamericana”. “Logistical (anti-Boom) report on the weapons, the strategies and the battle field of the new Latin American narrative” (Blixen and Barros Lemez, 200.)

^{xix} For a more totalizing reading of the Boom along similar lines, see Martin.