

## THE PARADOXES OF LATIN AMERICAN ARTS ET RESEARCH IN THEIR QUEST FOR AUTONOMY

### *Las paradojas del arte y la investigación latinoamericanas en su búsqueda de autonomía*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to show that the power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South that can be observed in the artistic world can also be seen in the academic world in general, and in Latin American literary studies in particular. Multiple paradoxes are analysed: A first aspect is the importance of the human capital flight from the universities of the South to the universities of the North, and the consequent co-optation of the criticisms against the hegemony of the Global North academia by that same academia. Another paradox is found in the fact that the Latin American social sciences field is imbued with Continental Philosophy and with theoretical frameworks originated in the North. These contradictions end up generating a very delicate situation for the intellectuals of the Global North who pretend to develop a critical analysis of the Latin American cultural world, without getting involved in any form of coloniality.

**Keywords:** Internal coloniality of knowledge; Latin American literary field; Continental Philosophy; Decolonial Studies; Autonomy of Art.

**Resumen:** El propósito de este trabajo es mostrar que las dinámicas de poder entre Norte Global y Sur Global que se observan en el mundo artístico también pueden verse en el mundo académico en general, y en los estudios literarios latinoamericanos en particular. Se analizan múltiples paradojas: un primer aspecto es la importancia de la fuga de capital humano de las universidades del Sur hacia las universidades del Norte, y la consecuente cooptación de las críticas contra la hegemonía de la academia del Norte Global por parte de esa misma academia. Otra paradoja se encuentra en el hecho de que el campo de las ciencias sociales latinoamericanas está impregnado de la filosofía continental, y de marcos teóricos originados en el Norte Global. Estas contradicciones terminan generando una situación muy delicada para los intelectuales del Norte Global que pretenden desarrollar un análisis crítico del mundo cultural latinoamericano, sin involucrarse en ninguna forma de colonialidad.

**Palabras clave:** Colonialidad interna del saber; Campo literario latinoamericano; Filosofía continental; Estudios decoloniales; Autonomía del arte.

## INTRODUCTION

In a 2019 interview, the Chilean, New York-based poet and visual artist Cecilia Vicuña (b. 1948) talks to Kevin Moore about the decolonial dimension of her texts and artworks. She then explains that “Chile has been destroyed by the U.S. So, people always ask [her]: ‘how come that [she] is here, when this is the country that destroyed [her] family.’” (Vicuña, 2019). Indeed, as a militant artist born in the Global South and established in one of the cities that best symbolises the economic and cultural hegemony of the Global North, Cecilia Vicuña often faces criticisms regarding her choice to live in New York. As a matter of fact, one could find an apparent contradiction between Vicuña’s will to denounce the neo-colonial exploitation of South America by North America and the way in which she benefits from the cultural system of the Global North. The worldwide celebrity that she enjoys today is to a large extent due to the grants, awards and exhibition proposals she received from hegemonic cultural institutions, like the Velázquez Award for Plastic Arts (Spain), the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement (Italy), or the multiple collaborations with the MoMA (USA) and the Tate Modern (UK). The rising popularity of the artist, which is at its best in 2024, naturally goes together with disapproving comments that can be read on social media or heard in academic conferences about her work and artistic positions. According to those criticisms, her creations embody the perfect product for an artistic marketing that efficiently sells its politicised pieces to the feminist, leftist bourgeois audiences of the Global North.

In this paper, my purpose is not to justify or to condemn the choices that many artists, like Vicuña, make and that ascertain their fame. In a non-prescriptive way, I rather point out the contradictions that these artists often face in a world of growing inequalities between North and South. This will then lead me to report a series of related paradoxes that exist in connected fields of activity and knowledge. The situation of artists born in the Global South cannot be understood without considering a key element: the survival of their artistic practices sometimes depends on material resources that they are not always able to find in their native countries. In this sense, the cultural systems of the

Global South seem to have less autonomy than ever with respect to the economic domination of the Global North.

In fact, while that kind of paradox is more likely to occur in the globalised, hyper-connected society that we live in today, the phenomenon is not new. As Claudia Gilman clearly showed in her investigation on the Latin American literary field of the 60s and 70s, the early 60s was a period of ideological convergence for a large, transnational community of Latin American intellectuals and artists who massively supported the Cuban Revolution against the U.S.-backed regime of Fulgencio Batista. (Gilman, 2013)<sup>i</sup> Later in the 60s, the Latin American literary boom created a divide between the intellectuals who continued to defend the autonomy of Latin American culture with regard to the Global North, and those who benefitted from a sudden sales success in the growing international literary market, like Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez. The latter were soon criticised by the former for abandoning their moral commitments against the multi-layered hegemony of the Global North, and for preferring the comfortable life of acclaimed artists from the South established in Europe (Gilman, 2023). Unsurprisingly enough, the canonical history of literature remembers Cortázar and García Márquez much more than those who claimed to remain faithful to their pro-Latin-American, non-cosmopolitan ideologies. It is highly likely that Cecilia Vicuña will be canonized in the same way. Beyond the downright aesthetic quality of her work, such a consecration will probably be partly due to the specificities of her New York-based life.

Yet, among many other elements, one criterion should be considered when analysing the factors that favour the inclusion of an artist into the canon, alongside her economic success. Namely, the influence of the academia needs to be measured. Indeed, the amount of investigation done on a given writer, the quantity of papers that study her books, and the number of occurrences of her name on Google Scholar – among other platforms – play nowadays an important role in the symbolic recognition of her work. In that respect, it is also necessary to emphasise that the academic world suffers from the same lack of horizontality between the intellectual production financed by institutions in the Global South, and its equivalent in the Global North. Notably owing to their better funding, the Global North universities are the cradle of further-reaching theories and investigations that are endowed with a greater prestige at a world scale, as many rankings show, and even when the selection criteria of those rankings could sometimes be called into question.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the extent to which the above-mentioned paradoxes of the artistic field – and more specifically, the literary field – also apply to the academic field, particularly in research focused on artists from the Global South. The assumption that a mirror-like relationship exists will serve as a starting point: the different kinds of hierarchies between North and South that can be observed in the art world and in the literary world can also be analysed in the academic world, especially in Latin American literary studies. I will address some of the difficulties that Latin American universities face in their desire to foment knowledge in an autonomous fashion and independently of the intellectual dominance of the North American and European universities. More precisely, and without claiming to be exhaustive, I will analyse the contradictions that necessarily arise in the Latin American social sciences field. A first aspect to consider is the human capital flight from the South to the North. Academic positions in the Global North often appear to be more attractive than those in the Global South, and this is true even for researchers who work in counter-hegemonic fields like decolonial studies. I will then address the fact that the Latin American social sciences field is imbued with theoretical frameworks originating in the North. The presence of Continental Philosophy in these branches of scholarship is significant, as my focus on the notion and umbrella term of “autonomy of art” will make evident. The reported paradoxes deserve emphasis, especially when they appear in research that seek to defend the autonomy of Latin American arts and literatures that challenge the hegemony of the Global North<sup>ii</sup>. Finally, I will show that these two paradoxes end up generating a very delicate situation for the intellectuals of the Global North who aim to develop a critical analysis of the Latin American cultural landscape, without getting involved in any form of coloniality.

### **1.0. First Paradox. When Global North Academia co-opts the criticisms against Global North Academia**

If there is a school of thought that can emblematically serve as a case study to frame a first aspect of the problem, it is certainly that of decolonial theory. The Collective Modernidad/Colonialidad, incorporated by multiple Latin American thinkers such as Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, Santiago Castro Gómez, etc. can be taken as one of the major forums of development of that theory in the Latin American social sciences field. One of the key objectives of the group Modernidad/Colonialidad,

that has been active since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is to show that the end of European colonialism and the creation of Nation-States in the formerly colonised lands has not led to the end of the unequal international division of work between the so-called “centre” and “peripheries” of the world, neither has it flattened the hierarchies that structure populations in an ethno-racial fashion. On the contrary, what can be observed is a shift from modern *colonialism* to contemporary *coloniality*. A variety of aspects of the concept of coloniality have been developed by the collective. Among them, three kinds of coloniality can be highlighted: in a nutshell, the *coloniality of power* designates the way in which the hegemony of the capitalistic world-system has historically been linked to the discourses of the European patriarchy (Castro-Gómez, Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 19); the *coloniality of knowledge* refers to the reproduction of educational and ideological frames that exclusively perpetuate understandings of the world inherited from European and Northern cultures (Castro-Gómez, 2007, p. 79); and the *coloniality of being* alludes to the effects of the former two on the lived experience of subaltern subjects (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

The coloniality of knowledge has a lot to do with the lack of autonomy of the Latin American literary field, and of the field of academia that studies it. As Walter D. Mignolo points out, “canons, in literature or in scholarly disciplines, provide the points of reference, the foundation, and the form of control in literary studies as well as other scholarly disciplines, in the human as well as in the natural sciences.” (Mignolo, 2000) This leads Mignolo to underline that canons are imperial attributes, and that the very differentiation of literature from “serious” theoretical, scientific knowledge is, in itself, a colonial way of categorising the products of human intelligence (Mignolo, 2000). The scientific distribution of the planet in the North American academia is also a colonial remainder, says Mignolo, referring to the asymmetrical division of the humanities. As a matter of fact, whereas the literatures written in hegemonic languages – like English, French or German – are studied in the branch of scholarship called “Literary Studies”, the subaltern position of the Spanish Language and of Latin America in the world system drives the Latin American literary production to only be studied as a small part of a bigger whole known as the “Latin American Studies” (Mignolo, 2000). Incidentally, it is likely that it is precisely that lasting position of subalternity that many Latin American writers and artists like Cecilia Vicuña try to avoid, not as a desire for more individual power, but as a means to enhance their freedom of artistic creation.

There is no doubt that the decolonial intentions of the Collective Modernidad/Colonialidad are honest, and that its members, like Walter D. Mignolo, really wish to denounce the ethical flaws of a planetary system that is based on severe inequalities. One aspect that can be underlined is the consistency with which the adherents of the group try to build a form of knowledge that is intellectually autonomous from the mainstream sources of Continental and Analytic philosophy. They reclaim some famous philosophical works, like the thought of Lyotard or Levinas, as sources of inspiration. However, a revision of the bibliographies of their publications shows that, contrary to the most common practices, they are based on a much bigger proportion of theories originated in the Global South. In any case, the broad circulation of the theories of the group reveals that the ideas of Modernidad/Colonialidad have proven useful for a large number of scholars. And yet, just as Cecilia Vicuña faces criticisms for creating decolonial poems and artworks while living in New York, the Collective has been blamed for its establishment in universities of the United States of America. Indeed, Aníbal Quijano worked at Binghamton University, Walter D. Mignolo worked at Duke University, Javier Sanjinés works at the University of Michigan, Ramón Grosfoguel works at the University of California-Berkeley, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres works at the University of Connecticut-Storrs.

One of the main detractors of the Group is certainly the sociologist and activist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. In her book *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. A reflection on decolonizing practices and discourses*, the Bolivian-Aymara theorist puts forward a sharp condemnation of the Collective. According to her, Mignolo and his colleagues are guilty of appropriating indigenous knowledges that they use out of context in their elitist, North American environments (Cusicanqui, 2019):

Equipped with cultural and symbolic capital, thanks to the recognition and certification from the academic centres of the United States, this new structure of academic power is realized in practice through a network of guest lectureships and visiting professorships between universities and also through the flow – from the South to the North – of students of indigenous and African descent from Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, who are responsible for providing theoretical support for racialized and exoticized multiculturalism in the academies (Cusicanqui, 2019, p. 114).

According to Rivera Cusicanqui, these supposedly decolonial approaches are actually a sign of internal colonialism (Cusicanqui, 2019, p. 115). The verbose language and reductionist discourses transmitted in those elitist environments funded by the

universities of the North reveal nothing more than the superiority complex of Latin American intellectuals of the middle class over indigenous people. The major problem with this recuperation of decolonial thought by the Global North academia, says Rivera Cusicanqui, is that it does not originate in a dialogue with indigenous communities, and that it depoliticises its discourses, neutralising the real activist impulses. She deplors that, despite all of that, the theoretical productions of *Modernidad/Colonialidad* end up forming a new academic, hegemonic canon.

Again, my purpose here is not to take sides, but rather to underline some paradoxes. There are hundreds of Latin American researchers who work and teach in universities of the Global North, and whose investigations are precisely meant to denounce the neo-colonial system of circulation of knowledge through the world. For good and bad reasons, Global North academia definitely has an interest in funding these investigations. If we had to phrase the dilemma in a plain way, the issue at stake is whether the end justifies the means. For Rivera Cusicanqui, the answer is negative: she states that “it is our collective responsibility not to contribute to the reproduction of this domination. By participating in these forums and contributing to the exchange of ideas, we could be, unwittingly, providing the enemy with ammunition.” (Cusicanqui, 2019, p. 113). Her assertion sounds morally right. But is it really possible to have a far-reaching voice while at the same time avoiding any kind of co-optation? Rivera Cusicanqui herself benefited from a Guggenheim grant in 1989, and accepted multiple invitations to teach in North American universities. Had she not done so, she could hardly have avoided having her books and papers translated into English, or prevented them from circulating in the academia of the Global North. On another level, she does mention Foucault, Barthes, or Sontag as sources of inspiration for some of her works (Cusicanqui, 2015). This shows that even the most radical scholars run the risk of having their ideas recuperated without having control over the use made of their knowledge, and that the cancellation of intellectual resources from the Global North does not always appear as a productive solution to them.

Whether we choose to call that problem the “coloniality of knowledge” – following Quijano’s term – or the “internal colonialism in terms of knowledge-power” – following Rivera Cusicanqui’s term –, it remains clear that one of the main issues addressed by these theories is the question of the autonomy of the Latin American universities with respect to the North American and European universities. In parallel with this, the concern is about the autonomous development of an expertise that fits the

context of the Global South at various levels, like economy, politics, climate, spiritualities or, in the case that interests me here, cultural and artistic life.

## **2.0. Second Paradox. When Latin American Academia uses Continental Philosophy as its main tool to analyse Latin American Arts and Literatures**

At this stage, it will not appear as an overstatement to say that both Latin American academia and the Latin American artistic/literary canon are subject to multiple power relations that limit their autonomy. This observation gains in complexity when we operate a *mise en abyme* and try to understand how autonomous Latin American academia is when it studies the links between arts and politics in the Latin American world, and when these investigations lead it to examine the Latin American specificity of artistic autonomy. I should specify that this question is not guided by the desire to perform some kind of intellectual somersault. Rather, I believe that studying the autonomy of the notion of autonomy represents a good and clear example of the issues at stake. The problem lies in knowing what we mean exactly when we use that concept, and what it implies to apply an idea originating in Continental Philosophy to an artistic context of the Global South.

Continental Philosophy has been largely developed by European, white, male philosophers who elaborated their systems of thinking based on the specificities of European history, geography, class systems, etc. If Donna Haraway's epistemological assumptions are true, any knowledge should always be situated (Haraway, 1988). Continental Philosophy has not always been good at doing so, and by not making its origins explicit, it sometimes looks like the theoretical frameworks it provides can be applied to any non-European context in a relevant way. This is a problematic bias that decolonial studies have largely demonstrated. But does it mean that if we are to resist the hegemony of the Global North, Continental Philosophy should never be applied in academic investigation in the South? A positive answer to that question does not seem to be widely accepted. On the contrary, the truth is that Continental Philosophy is omnipresent in the Latin American art and literature departments, sometimes much more than any other theory developed from and for Latin America, and even when the intellectuals who mobilise it demonstrate a clear anti-colonial posture.

Let us take a concrete example. The Puerto Rican essayist Julio Ramos states that “the ideology of ‘art for art’s sake’ [...] has had very few supporters in Latin America” (Ramos, 2021). On the contrary, Latin America has a much more important tradition of militant art and political literature. As a consequence, the theoretical convergence of aesthetics and politics has long been and still is a major object of investigation in many Latin American universities. One of the main concepts that is often applied in this research is precisely that of artistic/literary autonomy, whether in a sociological or philosophical way, both being of course related. The sociological approach focuses primarily on the description of the material conditions of artistic production, and on how the economic constraints faced by the artist orient their aesthetic choices. The philosophical approach tends to frame the problem in a more abstract way: it usually tries to position itself among various ideologies that either defend or criticise the inclusion of sociopolitical ideas in artworks, and reflects on the consequences that those can have at multiple levels. The sociological approach is largely dominated by a European – bourdieusian – methodology. However, I am mainly interested here in the extent to which the philosophical approach is even more clearly based on European frames of thought. Today, the study of the autonomy of art is often seen as an inheritance of Kantian aesthetics, and is hence developed based on the approach of Continental Philosophy, such as the works of Theodor Adorno’s or Jacques Rancière’s.

Plenty of examples could be given, so I will limit myself to an old, famous one. In 1990, the Argentinian writer Ricardo Piglia conducted research on the Argentinian avant-garde of his times, and especially on the works of Manuel Puig, Rodolfo Walsh and Juan José Saer. In this investigation, Piglia explicitly states that his theoretical framework is Walter Benjamin’s conception of the autonomy of art (Piglia, 2016), found in his philosophy of media. Yet, it is well known that Benjamin’s analysis of the avant-garde, which appears in *The work of Art at the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) and in other works, is based on the European art world of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ricardo Piglia is a left-wing intellectual who is well aware of the imperialism of the Global North, and of what he names the “subterranean evolution of europeism (europeísmo) as a basic element of the Argentinian culture since its origins” (Piglia, 2012). Should it come as a surprise that he mainly uses Continental Philosophy of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to conduct his analysis of the political dimension of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentinian novel? Probably not. Moreover, affirming that this is merely the sign of his inner coloniality of knowledge would be too simple an answer.

The reasoning should be done with a more nuanced perspective. As an example, let us take Piglia's analysis of Juan José Saer's *Cicatrices*, a novel set shortly after the end of the first long-term presidency of Juan Domingo Perón, and whose characters are Peronist activists and ex-activists. Piglia argues – and praises – that although the novel never addresses explicitly that political situation, it remains nonetheless a deeply political text. In order to demonstrate it, he shows how Saer goes against Benjamin's wish to develop technical reproducibility so as to make art accessible to the masses, and hence to limit the autonomy of art understood as an auratic and hermetic condition that alienates art from popular audiences. For Benjamin, it is necessary to distance oneself from the modernist conception of art as a unicity that accomplishes a ritual function. According to Piglia, Saer's project goes in the exact opposite direction: in a way that we could describe as very Adornian, Saer develops a poetics of negativity which must be seen as a resistance statement. But that resistance is not to be found in the narrative content of the novels, or in the ideologies of the depicted characters. The political action situates itself in the form of the novel and in the way the writing style goes against mass culture, which Saer sees as a kind of manipulation (Piglia, 2012, p. 89).

What does all this have to do with our original questioning regarding the validity of using philosophical frameworks from the Global North to understand the relations between art and politics in a specific context of the Global South? The answer is that the logic adopted by Saer, in Piglia's reading, is the same logic he applies in his conception of the power relations between the literary fields of the North and those of the South. Indeed, this Adornian negativity manifests itself again when Saer explains in *The Concept of Fiction* his desire to negate, through his writing, a mainstream tendency in the literary field of his times:

Latin American literature is assigned the characteristics of force, aesthetic innocence, healthy primitivism, political commitment. Most authors – knowingly or not – fall in the trap of that overdetermination, acting and writing according to the expectations of the public (not to say, more crudely, of the market). As in the golden age of colonial exploitation, the majority of Latin American writers provide the European reader with specific products that, as the experts pretend, are in short supply in the metropole and remind one of the raw materials and the tropical fruits that the European climate cannot produce: exuberance, freshness, strength, innocence, return to the sources (Piglia, 2012, p. 266).

In that sense, Saer's way of resisting the domination of Northern markets and literary fields over Southern literary productions is not to accept the position he has been

unwillingly assigned, and hence not write novels that correspond with fantasies of an explicit, primitive, strong, and innocent Latin American literature – let us note that those harmful stereotypes are equally denounced by the decolonial theory of both Modernidad/Colonialidad and Rivera Cusicanqui –. On the contrary, even if they are set in Argentina, Saer’s novels present a rather cosmopolitan aesthetics. If we adopt Piglia’s lenses, this is to be read as a sign of resistance against the cultural domination of the Global North. In the same fashion, we could state that there is something wrong in expecting the intellectuals of the Global South to work exclusively with theories that have been developed from and for their own context, excluding them from the global circulation of knowledge. Such a demand for a complete intellectual autonomy could be seen as an assignment to remain isolated in their so-called “underdeveloped” context, or in their position of subalternity.

Among many possible examples, Piglia’s case is representative of how the Latin American critique often conceptualises the notion of autonomy of art and applies it to literature in a way that is not autonomous with regard to Continental Philosophy. Not accepting to remain in the position of subalternity that Southern academia has been assigned is only one of the many reasons that can lead intellectuals to use theoretical frameworks originating in the hegemonic Global North. This applies even when they adopt a decolonial perspective or when they study decolonial artistic creations. Among the many reasons that could justify the cosmopolitan approach, a central one leads us to reflect on the fact that cancelling Continental Philosophy seldom seems to be the chosen path. When analysing the relation between art/literature and politics in Latin America through notions such as the autonomy of art, a more useful perspective is to explicitly recognise that the Northern origin of theoretical frameworks reflects global power dynamics in which not only the art world is involved, but also the academic world.

### **3.0. Third Paradox. When Global North academia investigates the literary field of the Global South, trying to escape a neo-colonial perspective**

Decolonial theories have worked their way through South American universities since Piglia’s times, and it seems that the preference for endogenous theories that some researchers have always had is now more widespread. The question remains whether the

same can be observed in another specific context: what happens in Global North academia, when its local researchers seek to develop knowledge about the Global South in general, and more specifically about the Latin American literary field? Given the cultural domination of the Global North over the Global South explained above, one might wonder whether the Global North academia is ethically legitimate to lead such investigations. Although things never cease to evolve, it can be said that the philosophical training of the intellectuals who are born and educated in the Global North is very likely to consist largely of Continental philosophy. Again, it is essential that those who wish to analyse the political dimension of Latin American literature by using notions such as that of “autonomy of art” recognise that Continental Philosophy is not meant to explain the realities of the Global South in an exhaustive manner. Kant first spoke of autonomy as the independence of aesthetic appreciation with respect to moral or religious appreciation. The European modernist writers defended autonomy as the independence of the literary language against the extra-artistic discursive contents. Adorno perceived autonomy as an ideological freedom of the work of art with regard to immediate social intervention, whereas Peter Bürger saw it as the self-determination of the artistic and literary institutions. For his part, Jacques Rancière discusses the autonomous experience of a new distribution of the sensible.

Of course, none of those continental philosophers primarily considers the notion of autonomy as a possible tool to describe the multi-layered quest for independence of a literary field or artistic ideology of the Global South with respect to its equivalent in the Global North. Hence, it is my contention that, if Continental Philosophy should not be completely set aside, it should at least be completed with theoretical works that address the question from a corresponding angle. In that sense, Julio Ramos’ investigation on the constitution of the Latin American literary field during the 19<sup>th</sup> century is an inevitable reference. In his book *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina. Literatura y política en el siglo XIX* (“*Divergent Modernities. Culture and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*”<sup>iii</sup>), Ramos largely shows that the late and uneven processes of modernisation and institutionalisation of the young Latin American States of the 19<sup>th</sup> century make it impossible for literature to constitute itself as an autonomous field. As a result, alongside traditional forms such as poetry and novels, Latin American writers of that time explore hybrid forms of writing: chronicles, journalism and essays. This leads Latin American literature to be originally thought of as a strong political authority, much more than its European equivalent. This explains the historical importance of the

heteronomous relationship between politics and culture in that part of the world. Octavio Paz's famous essay *Los hijos del limo* ("Children of the Mire") equally tries to show that the Latin American literary modernity is, in a sense, a "second-hand" modernity, since "the only experience of the modern age which a Spanish American could have in those days was of imperialism. The reality of our nations was not a modern one: not industry, democracy, or bourgeoisie, only feudal oligarchies and militarism." (Paz, 1974, p. 91). According to Paz, the Latin American literary avant-garde of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is equally built as a movement of oscillation between a cosmopolitan tendency and a nativist tendency, showing that even when the late developments of European literature serve as a model for some writers, the will to develop an autonomous identity for Latin American literature is predominant among others. It is the latter tendency that Colombian essayist Nelson Osorio tries to bring to the fore in his work on the same topic. While he explains that the creative incentives of avant-garde literature cannot be seen as autonomous from the Latin American political context, he defends, above all, that the spotlight must be put on the autonomy of the Latin American literary field in relation to the European one, in terms of creation and identity (Osório, 1988). Let us note that his analysis, although dedicated to Hispano-American literature, could be applied to a certain extent to Brazilian literature: for example, as K. David Jackson showed, the Brazilian writers and artists of the avant-garde cultural magazine *Revista de Antropofagia* (1928-1929) "reject an intermediary identity that would cross Europe with Brazil, and instead rebel against Europe, while at the same time, paradoxically, drawing on their European experiences and education to define Brazil as pure difference" (Jackson, 1994). Claudia Gilman's work on the Latin American field of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century complements the investigations of Ramos, Paz and Osorio chronologically. The Argentinian scholar shows how, in the context of the Cuban Revolution and in the early 1960s, there is a massive predominance of revolutionary and anti-imperialist values among Latin American writers. Their intellectual recognition often depends on the demonstration of their leftist, progressive ideology, and their will to denounce the U.S. interferences in Latin America (Gilman, 2023). Again, this leads to a kind of literature that is simultaneously asserting its heteronomy in terms of political ideology, and its autonomy in terms of regional identity. Such a situation persists until the Padilla affair and the Latin American literary boom happen in the late 60s and early 70s. At that time, famous novelists enter the global literary market and begin to differentiate themselves from the revolutionary, anti-imperialist consensus (Gilman, 2023). Subsequently, the rise

of a global publishing market makes it increasingly difficult for any kind of literature to be autonomous in terms of ideology and identity while being simultaneously widely disseminated (Localne, 2019).

All of those investigations show that Latin American literature has a historical evolution that differs significantly from that of North American and European literature. The fact that its difficult modernisation led it to always be, as a whole, more clearly politicised than its Northern equivalents has inevitable consequences for the contemporary creations, which necessarily inherit this situation. For this reason, academic investigations will give a full account of the autonomy of past and present Latin American literatures only if they take into account endogenous theoretical frameworks built for their own context, and ideally, for the regional fields that are studied. This is especially valid for researchers based in Global North academia, who do not run the above-mentioned risk of intellectual isolation when they choose to work with Southern-based theoretical frameworks, but who do run a higher risk of conducting research that could be perceived as perpetuating a form of coloniality of knowledge. In addition to helping understand the North-South power relations that guide the evolution of any cultural field of the Global South, the systematic inclusion of endogenous theories in the research is in itself a means to resist the intellectual hegemony of the Global North, without preventing any productive dialogue with Continental Philosophy.

Such an approach could arguably be seen as a moral responsibility of the scholars based in academia in the Global North. If decolonial theories cannot always be taken as an object of study, decolonial approaches should be normalised as a *methodology*. Among progressive intellectuals, the more radical ones will often find themselves caught in a paradoxical tension between the urge to be fully aligned with their decolonial values by cancelling Northern-based sources of knowledge, and the evidence that this cancellation will lead them to cancel themselves. Therefore, the revocation of a North-South dialogue does not appear to be a possibility. As I have tried to show, many paradoxes are linked to the problem of internal coloniality of knowledge. What is at stake here is also the fact that, at a global scale, this coloniality will often give preferential treatment to scholars born, educated, or based in the Global North, when they try to find their place in the Latin American social sciences field. Those researchers can come to ask themselves how ethical it is for them to easily benefit from a position that could have been occupied by a scholar from the Global South. Obviously, naming the problem does not solve it. However, it should be acknowledged that, in response to this situation, rebalancing the sources of

knowledge is an achievable objective. Taking advantage of the material privileges offered by academia in the Global North to research, find access to, and disseminate knowledge originating in the Global South is the least that can be done.

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<sup>i</sup> Claudia Gilman, *Entre la pluma y el fusil* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno editores Argentina, 2023), hereafter *Pluma*, p. 13-142.

<sup>ii</sup> Because of my linguistic limitations, this investigation focuses on literature written in Spanish. However, similar research can be found concerning the Brazilian art world. See for example Artur Freitas, “A autonomia social da arte no caso brasileiro: os limites históricos de um conceito”, in *Artcultura: Revista de História, Cultura e Arte* (7: 11) 2005, p. 13.

<sup>iii</sup> As translated by John D. Blanco.