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**El giro marginal: desradicalización del compromiso del intelectual
en Venezuela entre 1950 y 1980**

**[The Marginal Turn: Deradicalization of the Intellectuals Commitment
in Venezuela between 1950 and 1980]**

Thesis

There is an important question behind this thesis proposal, which deals with the approach to Latin American cultural objects which were created with specific political goals. The so called Cultural Left in Venezuela produced, between the 1960s and the 1970s many different cultural objects more or less involved in politics. At that time, it was believed that the intellectual had a moral duty with society. But in the next decade, the left movements entered a crisis that was a tipping point to what I consider the transformation of the intellectuals into academics. Most of the Latin American intellectuals emigrated during the dictatorial periods in the region and that entailed the emergence of the Cultural or Area Studies, specially in North America. Since then, they have been developing interesting theories together with the Post-colonial Studies and the Subaltern Studies and borrowing also concepts of the Post-Structuralism. But, the difference with the past decades is, that nowadays these theories have become more valued and known than the present cultural objects that Latin America still produce. It is true that there is a kind of solidarity approach that wants to retake the forgotten cultural objects that were collapsed by the “Latin American Literature Boom”. But at the same time, these theories also defend that there have always been resistance elements from the beginning of the colonial period, as they recognize that 1492 was the birth of the globalisation process. Then, it may be asked, why is it necessary to read past cultural objects with these new theories, instead still doing research with an historical perspective, using the coetaneous theories of the time in they were produced.

Cultural Studies can be described as a research field developed from the critical tradition of Latin America (ideas history, dependence theory or liberation theology) together with some foreign schools of thought: structuralism, post-structuralism, cultural sociology, Frankfurt school, semiotics, feminism and marxism. If we map quickly some of the topics of Latin American critical tradition, it is true that we find a mistrust of universalism concerning about the nation construction, also known as the centre/periphery problem, and the bigger difference between the urban and the rural, also

linked to the oral and the written. It mainly researches the symbolic production of the region reality (both past and present): art, literature, law, behaviour manuals, sports, music, television, etcetera. But its study objects are not as important as its methodology, which is inter- or trans-disciplinary and claim for a constant critical revision. Nowadays, most of the academics and researchers are settled down in North America. So this de-territorialisation of knowledge production must also be explained.

During the 1960s and 1970s Latin America conceptualised the neo-colonialism encouraged by the national dependence. The polarised atmosphere of these decades moved intellectuals to get involved with the political scene. Violence and poverty made them sympathise with the left movement. But as soon as the revolutionary projects were repressed during the dictatorial regimes and were displaced during the re-democratisation process, a line was drawn between the knowledge institutions and the government. Since the 1980s emerged both in North and South America a lot of think tank institutions which tried to analyse the symbolic elements of the region. The political function of the intellectuals was now replace for an expert knowledge and academic training. Their goal was no more to fix the world but to explain it. It can be said that during the 1960s and 1970s there was a kind of antithesis to the metropolitan centres taking as identity the Other. But at the time the identity topic is thought from the academy which is a contact zone crossed by global networks, academics who theorise about it talk form a double hegemonic position: over their origin countries/societies and over other immigrants. Post-colonial studies are a result of this new situation: global process, translocated speeches and the inability to represent the Other. This paradoxical condition does not mean that there is no good intentions on Cultural Studies. In fact they constitute the attempt of getting over the no-border-capitalism.

Although Latin American problem is still the same: how to think the relation between centre/periphery and local/global. This new approach offered by Cultural Studies turns its gaze to the epistemological foundations of the speech. Both Subaltern theory and Decolonial thought try to interpret social and political elements and not to reproduce the subaltern voices:

La diferencia entre el “Latinoamericanismo primero” y el “Latinoamericanismo segundo” no radica, pues, en sus vínculos más o menos próximos con un espacio incontaminado de exterioridad, sino en el grado de reflexividad frente a su propia actividad discursiva. Mientras que el “Latinoamericanismo primero” homogeneizó las diferencias en el acto mismo de representarlas (Vertreten), el “Latinoamericanismo segundo” representa (Darstellen) la imposibilidad de representar diferencias y obra, de esta manera, como un importante correctivo (político) al interior de la teaching machine. De lo que se trata, [...] es de poner bajo control la “violencia epistémica” a través de la metacrítica. (Castro-Gómez, 1998: 136)

But although it seems to be that these theories provide a better perspective to discuss Venezuelan cultural objects between the 1960s and 1980s, it must be also discussed if they are a good parameter. There is of course a rational and still universal element in them as they try to create abstract systems for global context, borrowing concepts and categories of sociology, literary critique and philosophy. Is the emergence of these studies a readjustment to protect the local in the global context? Are still the academics the ones able to organize knowledge with this new society inspection? Is this understanding of the modern-world-system and the reflexivity theories the only way to readjust the global effect in culture?

It is necessary, if not mandatory, to call into question every centralist theory or speech. I agree what Mabel Moraña maintain about all these new theories emerged from the left crisis of the 1980s. Latin America representation was already a problem and is in fact a *déjà vu* in the region thought. There are conceptualisations from the beginning of the century that still can explain the present conditions. For her, it is a new wave or refreshment that could be called “subaltern boom”.

Hereafter it must be researched the radical extra-sistemacity of local speeches in their historical context, specially in the artistic turmoil of this period. A context where cultural critique tried to analyse it with located concepts that today are out of the institution. As literature is not an unchanging object that can be always read with new perspectives, I will exercise to read the dissident and alternative elements both in its time and in our, never forgetting my enunciation place.

Theories discussed and approach

- Immanuel Wallerstein globalisation understanding: Modern-World-System.
- Cultural Studies critique or the “Subaltern boom”: Mabel Moraña and Nelly Richard.
- Transculturation or hybridisation processes: Ángel Rama, Antonio Cornejo Polar and Martin Lienhard literary theories.
- Left crisis and left reinvention. North-South dialogue: José Luis Coraggio and Jean-Louis Laville.
- Venezuelan cultural left: Sardio (1958-1961), Tabla Redonda (1959-1965), Rayado sobre el Techo (1961-1964) and El Techo de la Ballena (1961-1965).

Some important questions that underline this thesis are: where and who are today the main cultural agencies? How to turn subaltern or marginal, which means, how to restore the unvalued narratives, the vindications and the political agenda of subaltern voices? How to understand heterogeneity in the global context? How to define the dialogue North/South and the enunciation places of Latinoamericanism? Is it possible to restore the intellectuals commitment? How to defend this new

left reinvention from the academy?

Methodology

First it will be discussed the approach to the cultural objects tracking the intellectuals role and the emergence of the Cultural Studies. Second, and linked to that discussion, it will be researched the social and political conditions of Venezuela between the 1960s and the 1970s, specially the literary critique and theories developed at the same time, just to put it into context the cultural objects I would like to analyse. And third, it will be analysed the cultural production of the cultural left from artistic groups such as Sardio, El Techo de la Ballena, Rayado sobre el techo and Tabla Redonda. For this analysis it will be necessary some linguistics tools for the correct approach to the dialectal inflection. Regarding the aesthetics, I pretend to silhouette the possibility to read the same objects with different political implications depending on the time in which they are read, but with the certainty that there are always emphasising the dichotomy of Latin American traditional thought: centre/periphery, local/global, oral/written, rural/urban.

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