

The Deterritorialised Transvanguard of Latin America in the Second Half of the 20th century

Nancy Calomarde¹, Marcos Eymar²

¹ Universidad Nacional de Córdoba

² Remelice

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Fellow: **Dra. Nancy Calomarde**

From Universidad Nacional de Córdoba

Host laboratory in region Centre-Val de Loire : Remelice

Host scientist: **Marcos Eymar**

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ABSTRACT

The notion of “avant-garde” has been widely used and revised since the emergence of a transdisciplinary aesthetic phenomenon that became known as historical avant-garde from the second half of the last century. This phenomenon, with differences, took place in both Latin America and Europe.

The idea of “avant-garde” refers to concepts of extreme experimentation and archive review, two pillars for which, most likely, it has been frequently used to refer to phenomena of metamorphosis, not only aesthetic ones. In the present research, focused on a set of texts by three Latin American authors (Virgilio Piñera, Elena Garro and Cristina Peri Rossi) who migrated to different metropolises in the second half of the 20th century, the focus was placed on the study of how aesthetic experimentation and the discussion linked to national archives - the avant-garde agency - is deepened in contexts of migration or deterritorialization. The relationship between migration and the avant-garde constituted the nodal point of this work.

1- Introduction

Despite a heterogeneous and extensive theoretical and critical bibliography that has dedicated itself to the study of the avant-garde as an aesthetic and political phenomenon (Bürger: 1974; Benjamin: 2003, Groys: 2016) and the prolific debate of Latin American literary criticism about its specificity (Rama, 1986 a,b,c, 1995, 2007; Osorio: 1980; Swartz: 2002; Verani: 1990; Contreras: 1996; Patiño: 2012) a set of relatively recent critical works, returns to wonder about the persistence and condition of “disturbing phenomenon” that seems to permeate the avant-garde and that are present in contemporary literature and art. Such

is the case of the works of Ricardo Piglia (2016), Julio Premat (2021) and Martin Kohan (2021). Its authors create, within the canon of a national literature, scenarios, only in appearance, incongruous. They organize strange repertoires in which not only the avant-garde power to challenge tradition, the multiple operations of rupture that it entails or the way of plotting futurities in aesthetic forms, but also their condition of anomaly and spectrality are played. The first question that emerges from these works is linked to the possibility of projecting these recurring ghosts to networks that transcend the frameworks of national literatures to promote other networks or religions within the expanded and uncertain

map of Latin American literatures. The second question is based on the key raised in Premat's study regarding its power and diversity of ways of "making the avant-garde."

To both questions, we try to add a third variable referring to the possibility of projecting another look on these forms that incorporates the plasticity of the migrant experience. We refer to the recurrences around the global deterritorialization movements that stage contemporary literature and art, not as a merely historical-political phenomenon but as the kinesthetic correlate of a certain avant-garde effect. So putting avant-garde forms into play within a series of deterritorialization movements that literature and art have been registering for decades, but with an increasingly noticeable emphasis, configures a transdisciplinary challenge willing to rethink the future of forms.

The choice to study the work of three Latin American writers of the 20th century has as a common point their commitment to experimentation and their literary writing produced in a condition of migration. Two women and a man who write in transit between their places of origin and the metropolises to which they travel (Paris, Barcelona, Buenos Aires). I am interested in thinking about them in their heterogeneity and in the way in which their writings process avant-garde experimentation and the geocultural transit that the migrant condition enables.

2- Experimental details

During my stay in Orleans during the months of August to November I was able to carry out a prolific process of consulting archives, sources and complementary bibliography that allowed me to redefine my working hypotheses and find

interesting links between three such diverse writers. Below I detail some steps of my study .

3- Results and discussion

This methodic treatment of the corpus and the categorization rubric adopted revealed a number of interesting points that speak to the diversity that marks this link between avant-garde and migration.

Firstly, I have been able to confirm that in the case of the works studied, the search for aesthetic experimentation is associated with the questioning of the limits of both national archives and the models of canonical literature. These three writers in their migrant writing produce a reevaluation of national literatures through openness to other forms of imagination that expand and become more complex in contact with other cultural repertoires, cosmopolitan debates and new forms of experimentation that the experience of foreignness enables.

Secondly, it was necessary to analyze the way in which each of these three metropolises (Paris, Barcelona and Buenos Aires) impacts his writing in various orders: both at the level of spatial and temporal imagination and in the "plastic" dimension of the work (Malabou). This process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze) produces cultural forms of foreignness that translate into aesthetic expression. In this way, migration processes are associated with modes of experimentation with aesthetic form and cultural memory.

Third, the corpus foregrounded the question of the body (delocalized, decentred from the anthropocentric locus, fragmented). The tools provided by feminist theory and contemporary reflections on other forms of life based on heterogeneous assemblages have allowed us to

think of these texts as avant-garde repertoires that discuss the philosophical perspectives of their time and anticipate anthropological, aesthetic and political reflections that will only be relevant decades later.

Conclusion

The main conclusions that I have approached from this work are linked to the analysis of the corpus texts where I was able to verify that the experience of transit and deterritorialization produces profound transformations in the work of these writers. These metamorphoses are linked to the debate around the frameworks and limits of national archives set by the Latin American canon as well as the search for experimental forms that create under conditions of migration. Contact with other literary debates and the experience of foreignness allows the reinvention of literary forms as an effect that I have called “avant-garde.”

4- Perspectives of future collaborations with the host laboratory

As a result of the stay in Orleans, possibilities for future work with the host laboratory have opened up. First of all, we have a Conference on avant-garde and migration planned for the year 2027, at the University of Orleans.

With Catherine Pelage, we have planned future collaborations within the framework of Caribbean studies and women's writing in Latin America through a visit by the French colleague to the National University of Córdoba (Argentina) as a guest at an International Congress, exchange of academic courses and joint publications.

In parallel, I made progress in writing two articles that will be published in 2026 in magazines specialized in Latin American Literature. The first of them is titled

“Elena Garro in her migrant fiction” where I address two Mexican texts in their discussion with the authors of the nationalist canon and in

the exploration of body forms unmarked from the debates in tone with the conception of life exclusively governed by biological or idealist norms. The relocation of the imagination triggers forms of aesthetic and philosophical exploration.

5- Articles published in the framework of the fellowship

In the context of my stay in Orleans I was able to finish a book that I worked on for several years and which is titled *Un destino sudamericano. Barroquismo y archivo plástico en la ficción de Virgilio Piñera* (A South American Destination. Baroqueism and plastic archive in the fiction of Virgilio Piñera) (EDUVIM:2025) where I have studied the fiction of the Cuban writer as a migrant, since the writing studied is crossed by the Argentine experience, by his knowledge of southern authors and by the search for new forms for his narrative.

In parallel, I made progress in writing two articles that will be published in 2026 in magazines specialized in Latin American Literature. The first of them is titled “Elena Garro in her migrant fiction” where I address two Mexican texts in their discussion with the authors of the nationalist canon and in the exploration of body forms unmarked from the debates in tone with the conception of life exclusively governed by biological or idealist norms. The relocation of the imagination triggers forms of aesthetic and philosophical exploration.

The other article I worked one is titled “Garro, Peri Rossi and Piñera: forms of the pilgrim avant-garde.” In it I discuss Rafael Rojas' idea about the pilgrim avant-garde in which he associates experimentation with displacement. Based on the study of brief stories by these three authors, I delve into their hypothesis and expand assumptions to show how aesthetic experimentation proposes a profound

questioning of the cultural parameters of their time and, especially, a fruitful discussion about the forms of the human.

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