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To the delightful company of Peter, Ali, and David
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In any project there are always more and less visible collaborators and individuals without whose generosity the project could have never taken place. In the case of this Companion the contributors gave this project more than their expertise; they freely gave of their spirit for the texts included here stand for the vast revamping of the study of Latin America that has taken place in the last forty years. Mario Valdes is absent from the table of contents, but the breath of his work and the force of his desire to see Latin America writ large in the world map is present in many ways here. There are also the other colleagues who, in one way or another, have been supportive of this enterprise, even though their commitment to other projects did not allow sufficient time for them to write here. Among them I want to thank Vicky Unruh, Beatriz Sarlo, Mabel Morana, and Julio Ortega. Most especially I appreciate the dialogue that I have been fortunate to have with my graduate students at Johns Hopkins and Georgetown University. Nothing moves without financial support, and I am grateful for the conference support of Dean Adam Falk at Johns Hopkins. Peter Klaren, my indefatigable companion, also plays a large role in the making of Latin American scholars and scholarships. And last but not least, I thank Martin Carrión without whose energy, organization, and electronic and social skills this volume would have simply not been possible. From the beginning to the end he managed and kept alive the myriad communications about large and small things, so that the making of the volume kept on chugging along, until, like the little engine that could, the Companion claimed the hill and was able to breathe the clean and fresh air at the top of the mountain.
Acknowledgments to Sources

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The idea of Latin American literature as a cultural system, anchored in time and space by texts of epoch-making writers who are, in turn, gathered together by contextualizing concepts of period and cultural movement, gave rise, in the 1940s, to the first attempt to produce a global view of the avatars of writing in Spanish America since the Spanish Conquest introduced the alphabet, print, and the culture of the book. The historians and essayists who interpreted the nation in the nineteenth century had spent a great deal of energy and no less talent in producing national literatures that, as powerful cultural constructs, would be capable of providing a rich and flexible, albeit contradictory, imaginary for the integration of the past into the future projection of the nascent republics.

Pedro Henríquez Ureña (1884–1946), a diasporic Dominican intellectual who lived most of his life in Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, and the United States, and who is probably one of the first Spanish Americans to obtain a PhD in literature (University of Minnesota, 1918), published, in 1945, the influential *Literary Currents in Spanish America* as a result of having been invited to Harvard University to give the Norton Lectures. These lectures, conceived to address a public on the whole ignorant of anything Latin American, had already been tried out in his much earlier *Seis ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión* (1928). Both the titles and the contents of the two works signal the bifurcated path that all future anthologies, histories, and even companions, such as the present one, ultimately face in thinking Latin America as a whole.

The historian and critic is, on the one hand, struck by a keen sense of basic facts, assumptions, recurrences, evolutions, reiterations and transformations, similarities, simultaneities, and epochal changes; that is to say, patterns. On the other hand, one also quickly discovers that all patterns and visions of unity are woven into a fabric that highlights vast and uneven heterogeneities, contradictions as well as endless dissemination. Mario Valdés, inspired perhaps by the felicitous findings of Antonio Cornejo Polar regarding the non-dialectical, heterogeneous condition of history and culture in the Andes (1994), has recently written that he conceives of this globalizing
endeavor as the writing of the cultural history of heterogeneity. As such, it demands a comparative method in which literature is analyzed and understood as one type of discourse engaged in dialogue with other forms of signification.¹ This contextualization of literature in relation to artistic, religious, political, philosophical, and oral discourses does not imply a cause-and-effect relationship between material “context” and literature. The perspective that combines deep cultural contextualization with a comparative method avoids the commonplace fallacy of situating authors next to one another as if they dangled from a string which holds them above the magma of the cultural matrix where they are formed. An approach that intertwines deep historical cuts with extensive cultural views of the space connoted by and inscribed in the great canonical works not only configures their emergence, but in fact submerges them into the historiography of their making and interpretation essayed through the ages. The idea of differences in dialogue, the notion of dialectic contextualization, the view that cultural texts of all kinds intersect constantly in contestatory spaces, has gained dominance over the previous historiography informed by notions of influences, cause, and effect arranged in a singular chronology still tied to the constructs of nineteenth-century European periodization. To a large extent the essays written for this volume take deep contextualization as the necessary norm for the understanding of literature and culture.

In Latin America thus far, one of the chief structures for understanding the cultural imaginary, that is to say the collective symbolic expressions of communities that create significations of identity, has been the national literary and cultural histories and genre anthologies. Rarely have literary critics, rooted in the cultural institutions of a given country, attempted histories or anthologies that aspired to account, in a systematic manner, for the whole of Latin America. Even in the case of the great cultural theorists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, José Enrique Rodó (1871–1917), Jose Martí (1853–95), and José Carlos Mariátegui (1884–1930), if they spoke of Latin America, they did so as an extension of the cultural problematic that they knew best; the region where they had been born, the geopolitical place from where they mounted their struggle and which they had thus learned to analyze with searing weapons. The great exception to this general situation is perhaps Ricardo Rojas (1882–1957), the Argentine intellectual and educator born in the northern province of Tucumán, who wrote with eloquence of the common threads that underlie the uniqueness of the Americas. Both his Blasón de plata (1912) and his Eurendia (1924) exhibit some of the most lasting, inspiring, irritating, provoking, and also wrongheaded ideas that have informed the constructions of national literatures and the idea of Latin America’s cultures as essentially mestizo conjunctions.

This reticence to engage “Latin America” in a larger geohistorical frame in part has been due to the fact that the republics in the nineteenth century and even throughout the twentieth century have had a curriculum that teaches history and literature either as a set of artistic and intellectual events defined and understood as part of a “national” history or a “universal” culture and literature. In the latter case literary studies mainly devolve around the Eurocentric canon, not infrequently portrayed in
a normative light. Only in the last 40 years, and perhaps owing to the “boom” of Latin American literature, have the universities in Latin America seen professorships dedicated to the study of the cultural history of the region as a whole.

Another reason for the lesser number of books dedicated in Latin America to “Latin America” as a whole has been the fact that, from colonial times, Spanish American and Brazilian artists and cultural agents have not traveled much to neighboring colonial countries, with the exception of Rubén Darío and other modernistas. Just four years ago, when the Universidad de San Martin in Buenos Aires held a symposium on the state of Latin American Studies as it inaugurated its new center for Latin American Studies, one of the invited scholars from Mexico informed the audience, which included me, that in Mexico there is not much interest in Latin America because Mexico considers itself to be the result of an exceptional history rather than part of a general Latin American history. In general, Latin American and Caribbean men and women of letters looked instead to Europe, if not as their interlocutor, at least as a desired place of learning and thinking. The fact that Brazil and Spanish America are generally regarded as parallel and different rather than similar or integrated literary and cultural systems also accounts for the absence of histories, anthologies, or collections of texts that attempt to encompass “Latin America” as a whole, imagined and conceived by intellectuals working in the region. There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as Darcy Ribeiro (1922–) who, in his As Ámeras e a Civilizaçao (1970), does develop some comparative perspectives for his study of the formative colonial period.

The larger or greater view of the region has been the project of diasporic intellectuals like Henríquez Ureña, Emir Rodriguez Monegal and, most recently, Roberto González Echeverría, Enrique Pupo-Walker, and Mario Valdés, all of whom eventually came to occupy influential positions in the US or Canadian academy. In several generational waves, many intellectuals left their motherland and went into exile to another Latin American country. I am thinking, for example, of Henríquez Ureña, Ángel Rama, and Nelson Osorio who, by virtue of their lengthy stay in Mexico, or Venezuela, in a way discovered the Latin America that the national agenda had occluded. Another example of diasporic intellectuals is provided by the academic trajectory of Roberto González Echeverría and Mario Valdés, who studied in the United States. And yet another by Walter Mignolo and Silvia Molloy, who spent many significant years in France before they migrated to the academy in the United States. The view from the North is, of course, not just the work of diasporic intellectuals from the South. English-speaking scholars such as John Englekirk and John Crow published some of the earliest anthologies and histories of Latin American literature destined for the classroom. These successful publications were followed by several others, as perspectives and criteria for inclusion changed with the impact of feminism, gay studies, testimonio, and the recognition of previously ignored cultural agents. Jean Franco’s An Introduction to Spanish American Literature (1969) circulated widely and David Foster’s anthology of Spanish American literature (1994), which has the picture of a young Indian woman in the cover, is often adopted for course
assignments. In a way, the Blackwell Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture is one of the first examples of North–South collaboration.

Of the group who migrated to the United States, the work of the Argentine Enrique Anderson Imbert (1910–98?) stands out because of the impact it had in canon formation. In the literary history and anthology that he authored in the 1950s, during his years at Harvard, Anderson Imbert expanded the Latin American literary archive tenfold. Because its objective was to be exhaustive of all genres, his history had a lasting impact in the dynamics of the canon. The sheer volume of literary production in Spanish America alone evidenced in Anderson Imbert’s history is enough to deter anyone from tackling any project dealing with a portrayal of the entirety of Spanish American lettered representation, let alone the history of orality or nonalphabetic representations. Such an endeavor would call for nothing less than the Borgean “Funes el memorioso” and the well-known descent into chaos that the Borgean conceit involves.

Himself a disciple of Henríquez Ureña, with whom he studied in his native Argentina, and probably in open breach with Ricardo Rojas, Anderson Imbert seemed not to be satisfied with the idea of literary and cultural patterns that cut across the boundaries of the newly created national literatures and regional histories which, by definition, left out the works that did not fit the patterns. In Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (1954) he tried to compile a literary history, but the sheer volume of what his research uncovered spelled out instead a chronology closer to the style of an inventory. The aim was to exhaust the published records of an ample if diffusely defined literary production. While Anderson Imbert’s generational and regional organization of the magma that emerged from his search left much to be desired in terms of a critical and historiographical approach, the immense body of the corpus that his history unearthed gave rise to a very large number of monographic studies that, in turn, produced a distinct sense of the profound heterogeneity of the corpus of Latin American literary production and the subsequent demand for scholarly specialization by literary categories of scholarly research: author (s), period, region, genre, movement, and nation. Major writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, César Vallejo, Alejo Carpentier, José María Arguedas, and Rubén Dario were the objects of entire books. The regional novel, the Mexican baroque, indigenismo, Spanish-American modernismo, and colonial satirical poetry also began to appear as clearly defined objects of critical inquiry. Minor writers from smaller countries also began receiving attention in monographs fully dedicated to them, and these studies came to enlarge and complicate both the views held on national literatures as well as the weight and expanse of literary production in Latin America from the very first day that Columbus began his diary, to the intervention of the many colonial subjects who, while not belonging to the lettered city, sought nevertheless to be heard in both public spaces, such as courts, churches, the stage, rituals, and bars/cafés, and domestic arenas such as salons and parties of all kinds. To a great extent, the corpus of Spanish-American letters was becoming unmanageable in its very richness and multiplicity.
But if the very multiplicity of the corpus threatened the discovery and sustain-
ability of the idea of common patterns, developments, and identities, the emergence
of the assumptions and critical methods of New Criticism served to check the poten-
tial dispersion and leveling of hierarchies implicit in the new thickness and hetero-
geneity of the corpus. New Criticism offered carefully crafted arguments and methods
that enabled students of literature to establish aesthetic distinctions of value between
literary objects in order to identify those texts so finely crafted as to have inscribed
within themselves the codes necessary to their interpretation. The finely crafted and
self-contained piece of art could then be contemplated in exemplary isolation, for it
represented the culmination of the possibilities of genre and genius. The dialogic
relations of literature to other circulating discourses were comfortably eschewed by
the notion that each literary gem contained within itself all the means for its inter-
pretation. Literature, in extreme cases of the New Criticism approach, existed in a
realm of its own, as this strict textual practice would reject the biographical and
emotional fallacies which had previously informed literary appreciations and which
had led to the confusion of the author’s ascribed life with the meaning of the text. It
would take the creation of a whole new hermeneutics to reintroduce psychological
and biographical problematics into the practice of textual analysis and appreciation
of highly crafted literary artifacts. As the highest point in a vertical line of ascendancy,
the idea of the well-wrought urn permitted the classification of a corpus that grew
retrospectively in time and also reached deeply below the surface in each specific zone.
A shapeless but definitely hierarchical order of artistic achievement informed by norms
still quite tied to European models began to emerge. In this order *indigenista* novels
were less accomplished than some of the “great” *novelas de la tierra*, and Alejo Carpen-
tier ranked higher than José María Arguedas in complexity and understanding of his
own baroque aesthetics.

Despite this tendentious use of New Criticism, the rigor of the method in some
ways prepared the way to read the testimonio texts that were soon to appear, as New
Criticism claimed a method of textual analysis of universal application. But in other
ways, the idea of the well-wrought urn blocked the aesthetic and historical apprecia-
tion of many texts whose “literary” status would be ranked very low, as some of these
texts were not intended to be “literary” or did not conform to the reading expectations
of “literary critics.” This was, for instance, the case with many texts authored during
the long centuries of colonial life, or some texts authored by women and other subal-
tern subjects whose plan of action was not so much to comply with the models offered,
but rather to interrupt the flow of the colonial power–knowledge complex, and
inscribe their memory or position. Despite Borges’s essays on the preeminence of the
reader in the hermeneutic circle, reader-response theory had not yet made its appear-
ance. It had not yet injected its corrective energy into the hermeneutics of text-based
criticism. Notwithstanding its often ahistorical approach, the legacy of New Criticism
in conjunction with an explosion in the field of Latin American literary studies owing
to the relentless appearance of captivating writers, the recovery of the past and the
boom of the Latin American novel was positive. The apogee of New Criticism
coincided with the opening of hundreds of positions for academic critics in both the United States and Latin America. This aperture in the American academy was, in part, owing to the impact of the Cuban Revolution and the institution of regional studies partially funded by the US government. This affluence of activity contributed to the creation of a professional, scholarly class of critics, who, for a number of different reasons, were poised to revamp the received understanding of Latin America’s cultural development, its variegated history, and above all its place in the world.

The Cold War brought about the inception of Regional Studies in the United States, and the growth of specialists on Latin America coincided with a multifaceted export and political exile of Latin American intellectuals to both the United States and Europe. The boom of Latin American writers in the international market and the self-identification of the major authors of the boom with a broad Latin American identity that spelled out a brotherhood beyond the countries where they had been born contributed greatly to advance the idea, both at home and overseas, of a shared and indeed cohesive, if uneven, Latin American culture and literature. The Cuban Revolution, with the romantic figure of the Argentine Che Guevara, underlined further the idea of a common Latin American identity capable of overarching differing histories and distinct regional traditions cast in contrasting colors, and even the language diversity that constitutes the different histories of the Amerindian linguistic legacies.

However, at the scholarly foundries of knowledge, the problematic, multiple, and heterogeneous immensity of the Latin American canon and processes of cultural formation grew more evident every day. Not one single individual, not one lifetime, could attempt at this juncture what Anderson Imbert had tried and in fact failed to do in the 1950s. As philology and positivist historiography came under intense critique, it became clear that his *Historia* was not really a history. It did not account for either change as part of internal processes in Latin America itself, nor did it provide for the multiple plays of differences that construct the heterogeneous dynamic of Latin American culture, a space where literary works did play a huge, even disproportionate role in political and cultural life. Above all, Anderson Imbert’s general organization of breaking up the magna of literary production into generations of authors neither confronted nor resolved the problem of periodization, inherited from the colonial perspective, which had failed to understand that periodization based on European models only distorts the picture and bars the way to understanding.

The need for a major work that could critically account for the uneven development of the forms and contents of Latin American literature was indeed pressing. Readers of the boom the world over needed, just as a sick man needs a doctor’s prescription, an overarching account of Latin American literature. It was painfully insufficient to simply offer a discussion based on the perceived similarities and differences with other “great writers” of the European canon. Something other, something else had to account for the flaming brilliance and consuming stories of *Cien años de soledad* (1967; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1970), or *Rayuela* (1963; *Hopscotch*, 1969). The intricate connection between the Mexican Revolution and *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962;