LALR **Latin American Literary Review**
Volume 47 / Number 94 2020
Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell University • Ithaca, NY 14853 • 607-255-4155
E-mail: latamlitrevpress@gmail.com • Website: www.lalrp.net

Debris and Poetry: A Critique of Violence and Race in the Peruvian Eighties

Olga Rodríguez-Ulloa
Lafayette College

ABSTRACT: By turning the figure of the colonial chronicler Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala into an indigenous migrant during the tumultuous nineteen eighties in the poem "His Body Was an Island of Debris" (1987), Domingo de Ramos critiqued the transhistorical nature of colonialism as it manifests through the displacement and killing of thousands of indigenous peoples. I interpret de Ramos' work as an opportunity to center ideas about race, an analytic overlooked in the literary criticism of the time. His portrayal of migration mobilizes a poetic critique of the main discourses of Peruvian literary studies that conveniently left racial hierarchies unchallenged, even while being invested in the new political potential of migrants. This specular relationship that de Ramos creates between himself and Guamán Poma allows him to ponder about his own positionality in the literary field of the eighties, which was uncritically participating in the migrant trend almost exclusively through de Ramos' personae.

KEYWORDS: migration, coloniality, race, Domingo de Ramos, Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala

Domingo de Ramos' poetic discourse equates the nation to ruins while his literary practice maintains a profound confidence in the communicating and aesthetic power of poetic language. Conversational poetry and a strong use of colloquialisms support his representation of the tumultuous migrant in the Lima of the eighties.[1] A prolific career with numerous publications, a sustained participation in recitals, and his visibility in cultural and literary media outlets have allowed him to maintain a fruitful literary practice. Loud and strong, the piercing quality of his voice sets the tone for a critique of the systemic violence of colonialism in contemporary Peru.[2] From the very onset of his career De Ramos explored the transhistorical, racialized violence of modern Peru, placing race at the center of his poetic discourse through his treatment of migrants and shanty towns (*pueblos jóvenes*). I interpret this aspect of his project via his use of the indigenous chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala (~1535-1616) in the poem "His Body Was an Island of Debris" ["Su cuerpo era una isla de escombros"].[3] This text's engagement with colonial history resonates with the political violence of the war-torn eighties, set into motion by the Shining Path and aggravated by the counterinsurgency policies of the Peruvian state during the democratic governments of Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1980-1985), Alan García (1985-1990), and Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000). Even though migration of rural Peruvians to the city of Lima preceded the war, starting as early as the 1940s, it massified due to the conditions of violence and dispossession made worse by the armed conflict. Amidst this social climate, academic discourses about the nation coalesced around the figure of the migrant, propagating an image of economic and/or political promise that served political agendas on the right and left alike.[4] "His Body," as I will refer to the poem in the following pages, opens up a decolonial critique of the racial politics that guided everyday social interactions in the street and in the cultural world, including the literary field and academia at large where de Ramos was being assimilated as the migrant poet or the "voice of the proletariat."[5]

Social scientific analyses fantasized about an urban landscape where Indians finally conquered the city of kings (*la ciudad de los reyes*).[6] Nonetheless, for many of these intellectuals this meant the assimilation of indigenous people as *cholo* (Quijano, 1964;1980), later subsumed by the idea of *chicha culture*, which in the 2000s became a staple to sell and analyze art and architecture. By definition, and especially in Peru, these are fields dominated by white elites.[7] The cultural and academic celebration of the migrant's social manifestations was proportionate to the maintenance of racial and social hierarchies that secured intellectuals' place as culturally superior, as we will see in the following pages. Aníbal Quijano's seminal study *Dominación y cultura. Lo cholo y el conflicto cultural en el Perú* was first written in the 60's and then modified for its eventual publication in 1980. It explored the racialized notion of *cholo*, the majority of urbanized brown-skinned indigenous people and their culture. This first social analysis lacks the systemic critique of whiteness and Eurocentrism developed in his later studies (Quijano, 1995, 1999, 2005). The racial analysis that Quijano developed with his concept of coloniality of power was not fully embraced by the literary critics that cited his work apropos of migration. Moreover, race was a difficult subject, especially when it came to situating oneself in class and racial terms, an uncommon practice for Peruvian literary scholars. As I will develop further in this article, my scholarship is invested in a political intervention into the figure of the literary scholar, in particular within the Peruvian literary world.

De Ramos' poetry and presence re-centers racial tensions in

the literary field, explicitly introducing a cholo identity and implicitly inquiring into the critical racial selves of the reader and critic. I agree with Victor Vich's interpretation of a poetic imagery that represents a dissent as opposed to that broader chorus of tales about an uplifting migration, self-made men and women, and popular political organization (217). I add that de Ramos' representation of migration critically centers race as part of everyday life, including the quotidian dynamics between intellectuals and cholos. In that sense, his early use of Guamán Poma allows him to elaborate on the racial politics of the eighties, while also recreating a gallery of images where the racial violence of the war sustains a specular relation to colonial racial violence. With "His Body…" the poet retells a colonial history of racialized violence that discards indigenous bodies as waste. He elaborates on the distinctive dimensions of racialized violence, in which the symbolic violence of the stereotyping of migrants extends into his own position within the literary field. A biographical approach to de Ramos' work, focused on his poor migrant cholo identity, guided the dominant reception of his poetry. By contrast, my reading takes on his use of race to unveil the systemic critique of the racial and social dynamics of the country, which constitutes his primary intervention into the Peruvian poetic tradition. The critics' biographical gaze has represented him as a foreign marginal (Ángeles 2001), elusive (Mazzotti 2002; 2013), decentered (Vich, 2013), schizophrenic (Chueca 2013) cholo. Even though there are important differences among these interpretations, they coincide in reading de Ramos' poetry as the manifestation of an individualized gaze, and insider of another world, that of the shanty town. He is therefore understood as a foreigner, an infiltrator within mainstream literature. In de Ramos own words: "They [academics] have always wanted to label me as part of the underground (*subterráneo*) discourse, the social discourse; I am more than that, I am more than a marginal guy." [8]

In order to fully develop the possibilities of the decolonial critique that I read in de Ramos' poetry, I translate and analyze "His Body," drawing connections between De Ramos' poetic approach to the social realities of migration and the main ideas about this phenomenon that guided political thought, social practices, and literary criticism. In this poem Guamán Poma returns to experience the persistence of a Peruvian soil fundamentally hostile to indigenous existence. I provide in this text an interpretation of the poem, a reflection of the figure of the colonial chronicler and his importance to contemporary decolonial thinkers, concluding my argument with a close look into the literary criticism of de Ramos.

His Body is an Island of Debris

He flies
    1500 or 1600 Huamán Poma de Ayala
he tells us about his love affairs
and his entrails recently dissected for our museum
in our history books
Huamán Poma with his ancient garb
represents a caste of items for tourism
and social and economic races in a land that
he now treads on and his drawings and the chronicle
can be read in the news
And he is also advertised by
Coca Cola in a leftist newspaper
Huamán Poma speaks Quechua
                sells newspapers
and potatoes
        he works on a construction site like
Machu Picchu
He prepares his strategy
of how to sacrifice himself before the sun

Su cuerpo es una isla en escombros[9]

Vuela
1500 o 1600 Huamán Poma de Ayala
nos cuenta de sus amoríos
de sus vísceras recientemente disecadas para nuestro museo
en nuestros textos de historia
Huamán Poma con su antigua indumentaria
representa una casta de artículos para el turismo
y las razas sociales y económicas en la tierra que
ahora pisa y sus dibujos y la crónica
se pueden leer en los noticieros
y también lo anuncian por
la Coca-Cola en un periódico de izquierda
Huamán Poma habla quechua
                vende diarios
y papas
    trabaja en una construcción como la
de Machu Picchu
Prepara su estrategia
de cómo inmolarse ante el sol

con una carga
through the center of Lima, heading for the Tower[10]
he doubts he will hit his mark
and he takes a minibus to the
sea he just met
and that makes him dizzy and he vomits
all the beer while dancing *chicha*[11] with his girl
in a *cortamontes*[12] where they hung
the heads of those who died in 1986 approximately
when the empire was felled by the viceroy Lurigancho
And that day he held it
between his hands
The sea a salty serpent
that flew between the clouds
That crowned his head
monolithic
And pitched in fury and made a mural to the
Sun God and the world was reborn
among the remains that were leaving the embers
The Sun asked for him discovered his whereabouts
he found out that they caught him in the vicinity of
the palace]
he tied his chains to the columns
he illuminated the dark vaults
where a kraken was strangling its prey and devoured him
but Huamán Poma was tortured hollowed out into the sea
deposited in a pit and finally
his body is an island of debris

with a load
por el centro de Lima intentándolo en la Torre
pero duda de acertar su objetivo
y toma un microbús para irse al
mar que acaba de conocer
y que le da mareos y vomita
toda la cerveza mientras bailaba chicha con su chica
en un cortamontes de donde pendían
las cabezas de los que murieron en 1986 aproximadamente
cuando cayó el imperio por el virrey Lurigancho
Y ese día lo tuvo
entre las manos
La mar una serpiente salada
que volaba entre las nubes
Que coronaba su cabeza
monolítica
Y montó en cólera e hizo un mural al
Dios Sol y el mundo volvió a nacer
entre los despojos que salían en las brasas
El Sol preguntó averiguó su paradero

se enteró que lo apresaron por las cercanías del palacio
ató sus cadenas en las columnas
iluminó sus bóvedas
oscuras donde un pulpo estrangulaba una presa y lo devoró
pero Haumán Poma fue torturado vaciado al mar
depositado en una fosa y finalmente
su cuerpo es una isla en escombros

"He flies" references the Quechua meaning of *huaman/guamán/waman*, the falcon.[13] The epic tone of the poem derives from the hypermobility of the figure of the anonymous migrant: street seller, brick-layer, subversive, party-goer, and political prisoner. This multiepisodic tale is not built on the reputation and heroism of its protagonist; rather it takes on the precariousness of indigenous lifestyles and bodies. After being the target of the violence commanded by the Viceroy Lurigancho, Guamán Poma's body ends up cut into pieces and dispersed in a clear reference to the infamous prison's massacres of June 1986. A coordinated riot in San Pedro prison (Lurigancho) and San Juan Bautista (El Frontón) culminated in the killing of hundreds of political prisoners. This was the Peruvian government's extrajudicial military response to Shining Path actions inside and outside penitentiary complexes, a massacre that, to this day, has an unconfirmed number of deaths due to the chaos in prison management and the fact that once killed, the state discarded prisoners' bodies in the sea (CVR 2003: 737-768).

De Ramos wrote the poem shortly after this political event, coincidentally at a time when colonial historical and literary scholarship were shifting their attention from previous criticism about Guamán Poma's chronicle, going beyond positivist historical approaches that discarded it as non-linear and imprecise. Guamán Poma's lengthy and meticulous letter addressed to Phillip III, King of Spain, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government and Justice* [*El Primer Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno i Justicia*] (1515, 1516), discovered in the Library of Denmark in Copenhagen in 1908 was starting to be recognized in the eighties as a powerful document detailing the complexities of everyday colonial violence. For the first time there was a widespread interest in the importance of his drawings by historians and literary scholars such as John Murra, Rolena Adorno (1980), and Franklin Pease (1980), who offered critical editions in two very reputed and popular presses in the region: Editorial Ayacucho based in Caracas and Siglo XXI Editores based in Mexico City. They coincided in reading Guamán Poma's historical licenses as conscious rhetorical choices, strategies that served him to denounce the illegitimacy of the Conquest and the unjust origin of Spanish rule.

As a young poet, de Ramos recognized Guamán Poma's renewed importance for high culture and starts his stanza emphasizing the bodily dimension of this writer's work: "his entrails recently dissected for our museum / in our history books." He identifies with Guamán Poma, as an indigenous writer who denounced social

prejudices and wrote in the language of the colonizer to the point of transforming the formal structure and language of the chronicle as a genre (Pratt 1992: 1-12). The poem explores a transhistorical experience marked by race, body, written words and images. The following lines fuse objects and notions linked to the past ("ancient garb," "caste," and "chronicle) with those circulating in Peru's urban modernity ("Coca Cola," "news," and "leftist newspaper"), tracing both the changes and permanencies of the colonial system, and concluding that its legacies are ever more present in the violence of modern economic and social relations between Eurocentric/capitalist power structures and indigenous peoples. Without explicitly writing the word *cholo* in this poem, de Ramos composes moments and events that nonetheless center race in the figure of the migrant Guamán Poma, evoking racially charged stereotypes about migrants, and the pervasive violence indigenous peoples and *cholos* experienced during the war. I argue that de Ramos plays with these stereotypes. He uses the reader's and listener's certainty about migrants and thwarts them, transcending a mere reproduction by giving us something other than the predictable, totally readable, migrant.

De Ramos' use of Guamán Poma focuses on his portrayal of the brutality of Spanish colonization in everyday life. The poet concentrates on Guamán Poma's drawings as part of the media flow of news about the war ("...and his drawings and the chronicle/ can be read in the news"). The repetition of these colonial drawings that depict daily scenes in which Spanish authorities violently dominated indigenous people constitute one of Guamán Poma's more powerful achievements. The poem tells us that this systematic registration of colonial punishments and mistreatments find an important sequel during the internal war of the eighties. Many critics have noticed the chronicler's amplified lens on the colonized body, its pains, lacerations, torture, and dismemberment. For Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui the drawings create a visual theory of the colonial world, another way to express indigenous experiences within a social reality where the meaning of words was devalued. For the Bolivian theorist and activist, this visuality was a way to appeal to non-alphabetic forms of communication in order to relate to non-alphabetic cultures such as the Andean. Recently, she has read silences, small details, and redundancies in the chronicle in order to reveal an indigenous episteme, whose political message is to uncover the paradoxes of colonial modernity as a project rooted in violence.[14] Guamán Poma's category of the "world upside down" (*el mundo al revés*) is key to grasp the intrinsic contradictions of colonialism, carried out at the expense of indigenous bodies and land.

De Ramos utilizes Guamán Poma to condemn Peru's recent episode of political violence as a derivative of the colonial formation, reaffirming his political critique by representing a dispossessed, imprisoned migrant who is marked as subversive, one of the untraceable bodies of the war. Simultaneously, de Ramos draws a parallel between Guamán Poma and himself. He recognizes in the chronicler the struggle of being the indigenous writer who is rejected, misunderstood, and forgotten, while also deeply committed to representing the violence inflicted upon him, thus using his literature to express a political critique. Literary genre is a substantial indicator of differentiation between the two. To invert Rivera Cusicanqui's argument, at a time when the proliferation of war images reinforced the racialized physical and symbolic violence of the internal war, de Ramos' investment in the poetic word pointed to the decolonial aspect of his enterprise. It is in itself a critique of the field when he attempts a literary career using a canonical high-culture language, that is predominantly urban, white, and middle class, just as he writes in a Spanish language that does not belong to a *cholo* like him (Mazzotti 144).

The racialization that the term "migrant" performs also tends to obscure the actual racial politics at stake between new comers and *old limeños*. De Ramos' choice of words is *las razas sociales y económicas,* which I translate as "social and economic races," and it links aspects of Peruvian society seen as incompatible at the time. Not only was race obliterated from the Shining Path's straightforwardly Marxist analysis, it was also absent in social scientific approaches that more often used "ethnic culture," a terminology inherited from US anthropologists (de la Cadena 2000: 28). In this first book, de Ramos calls attention to ideas that were unpopular in academia and in the literary world, where poets and writers preferred to talk about migrants, rather than about *indios*, *cholos* or race.

Racial and caste categorization was one of Guamán Poma's fields of expertise. His drawings exhaustively portrayed social relations in the colonial world as motivated by and explained through racial difference.[15] For example, he insidiously wrote about "*mesticillos*" as a damaging breed resulting from undesirable race mixing. The necessary policing of Indian women's sexual behavior and/or the condemnation of sexual violence towards them by Spaniards became central corrective measures for the betterment of colonial society that, in his view, would benefit from a clear differentiation between Indians and Spaniards.[16] This fantasy of control is absent in de Ramos' Guamán Poma, who is less of a judge and more of a protagonist. Unlike the chronicler who declared his indigenous roots and nobility (4-15), the Huamán Poma of de Ramos, is already a mixed-race migrant, uninterested in lineages. This Guamán Poma has a girl (*hembrita*); gets drunk and parties. The colloquial *hembrita*, referring to a girl, points to the sexist animalization of the mestiza or *chola* women. De Ramos' critique of the neocolonial and discriminatory behaviors of Peruvian society, in many instances, includes intersections with gender domination and its discursive practices.

In the first part of the poem, de Ramos plays with the racial and social stereotypes assigned to *cholos* in the city: slippery guy, drunken, *terruco*, *chichero*.[17] I argue that this depiction serves as a hook to a reader that is already used to consuming migrants in this way. Nonetheless, de Ramos makes his migrant Guamán Poma into an atypical subversive, defying the common sense that represents Shining Path members solely as crazy and fanatic combatants. His version of a subversive is closer to a poet and a bohemian than a

bloodthirsty soldier, once again attributing unexpected meanings to the figure of the migrant, whose sensibility was not supposed to encompass literature or contemplation: "he doubts he will hit his mark / through the center of Lima, heading for the Tower / and he takes a minibus to the / sea he just met."

The final destiny of this migrant is political violence. Even though racism and racialized violence have been constitutive and ever present in Peruvian politics, during the internal war the state's objective of exterminating rural Peruvians was overwhelmingly clear. The official narratives of the Peruvian state and the media aligned with economic elites, and tried to explain violence exclusively as a phenomenon perpetrated by the subversives. My intention here is not to dismiss their violence and cruelty. Rather, I want to insist that the war was not a rare or isolated event and instead an occurrence very much in tune with the politics of colonial and republican Peru, its crossing with US counter-insurgency doctrine, the "war on drugs," and global capitalism and neoliberalism (Poole and Rénique 1992; Rénique 2010).

Ruinous migrant/disoriented cholo

The poem presents Guamán Poma as a prototypical migrant that moves through occupations and particular merchandise ("sells newspapers / and potatoes / he works in a construction site like / Machu Pichhu"). Street commerce was one of the most obvious ways in which migrants survived in a city where a lack of infrastructure greeted them, leaving them with the burden of creating neighborhoods, water and sewage systems, schools, hospitals, etc. De Ramos' captures this by making Guamán Poma a street-vendor and bricklayer (*albañil*). The indigenous roots of the migrant become visible through a set of objects and actions, opening up a poetic space for thinking about race. Coming from the Central Andes in Ayacucho, not coincidentally the place where the war started, Guamán Poma has not experienced the sea. He worships indigenous gods: "And pitched in fury and made a mural to the / Sun God and the world was reborn / among the remains that were leaving the embers." He is close to the land through the celebration of harvest abundance and ritualized in the *cortamontes*, a dance around a decorated tree. Migrants celebrated this and other traditions in Lima, maintaining and reinvigorating their changing lives in the city. In this way, de Ramos points out migrants' rural connection through culture but also through race.

With the mural, de Ramos presents a common occurrence in the everyday visuality of the war, meant to show the power of the insurgencies in public spaces. Murals often represented the leaders and the armed struggle. Because they required time and skill, they were usually located in prisons and universities. "*Pintas*" were short graffiti-style messages and symbols, like the hammer and sickle, which proliferated due to their simplicity. They were meant to show the insurgencies' involvement in specific attacks or written to instill fear among the population and/or local authorities. In the poem, de Ramos connects the mural to indigenous religiosity, bringing back themes from Guamán Poma's chronicle, even though the accuracy of such a scene could be questioned. In his text, Guamán Poma insistently proclaims his own Catholicism and condemns all forms of indigenous religiosity as idolatry. Nonetheless, he exhaustively documents life before the Spaniards, affirming the value of the socio-political and cultural organization of the Inca empire, including the richness of its religion. De Ramos's license points to the complexity of the subversive protagonist of the poem, who decides to contemplate the sea, make a mural to his god, and get lost in the city. This results in forgetting about the importance of the orders given to him, becoming a defective soldier, and thus subverting the logic of the war.

Many aspects of de Ramos' first book paint a topography where colonialism, and to the same extent, neoliberal imperialism have encrusted people into landscapes that consume them to the point of rendering them crumbly, disposable, and ruinous. This is even true when they are experimenting with extreme mobility and what might seem like fluidity, as in the case of migrants. In that sense, the urbanist promise of Lima holds the same destructive forces as the combat zones in the rural Andes that would become the primary scenario of the internal war: "The man that lies here between us // with *his earthy face and his ribs of clay // he mated with death // here, with his destroyed heart* // fallen in the morning // *with his lungs crushed by the wind* // he doesn't speak / he doesn't yell // huddled / cold // sweeping along a river adrift" ("The Fall of a Teenager").[18] This fragment documents the death of a student protestor in one of the worker strikes of 1977 and echoes César Vallejo's "Masa."

De Ramos poeticizes violence as a continuum through his depiction of bodies that have been carved up by imperial powers for centuries. He does not treat the racialized violence of the internal war as an exception. On the contrary, he centers himself in this narrative, thinking about his own inscription as *cholo*: "Since then the whole clique treated me with indifference / they hated me / because I was a *cholo* and an old man and worthy of nothing" ("During a Cool May Afternoon").[19] With *clique* he refers to neighborhood friends, his peers. I interpret this as a portrayal of the symbolic violence that the word cholo conveys, as the harshest racial slur commonly used even between people of the same class, origin, and race.

Cholo is implicit in the depiction of Guamán Poma as migrant, as de Ramos' line above defines cholo with being racially and socially inferior. Quijano once listed a series of past meanings that highlight it as an insult in colonial and republican times, when it can allude to black slaves, animals, and domestic servants (Quijano 1980: 56-57). For him, the process of *cholificación*, when indigenous peasants and/or their children become cholo, derives from migration and became a visibly unstoppable phenomenon at the beginning of the sixties. According to this view, when arriving to the city of Lima, indigenous subjects, as the dominated group in Peru, are in need of adapting to the new urban environment, sometimes to

the point of total rejection of their indigenous side, in what Quijano synthesizes as a "schizophrenic acculturation" (39) that in its "cultural dependency" embraces language, products, behaviors, and values originated in US and European modernity: "in a process in which the foundations of one's own culture are abandoned without any possibility of internalizing the other culture. As if someone forgot his language and never managed to sufficiently learn any other" (ibid: 38).[20] Linguistic proficiency and literacy are underlying concepts in Quijano's depiction. Cholo appears as an identity lacking, pre-linguistic and therefore non-human, reactivating the colonial meanings of the word.

Quijano also explains that massive urban migration is the global outcome of post-industrial economies. In the Peruvian case, three simultaneous social processes superpose and overlap: modernization, acculturation and *cholificación*, resulting in an increasing abandonment of indigenous cultures (ibid: 70). The racial connotations are that modernization belongs to *criollo* (white) subjects, while cholo and indigenous populations are resigned to acculturation and *cholificación*, with the obvious moral and cultural judgements attached to these pairings. Once again indigenous and brown-skinned people are trapped in the socio-cultural and economic logics of being lesser.

Quijano himself later deepens his understanding of these social dynamics with his theorization of the coloniality of power. Modernity belongs to criollos insofar as they historically own the means of production and, therefore, are capable of navigating the modern world and its language. My critique rests on the fact that other analyses of immigration and their usage in literary scholarship conform with reproducing the stereotyped migrant, overlooking the systemic critique the migrant both embodies and articulates, a critique that also does not leave comfortable and unquestioned the positionality of the dominant intellectuals who fancy themselves as analysts of the cholo migrant in the first place.

To that extent, stereotyping the migrant responded also to making him disciplinarily intelligible within academic fields completely dominated by Eurocentric modes of knowledge production. Matos Mar's influential book, *Desborde popular* (*Popular Overflow*), is a very interesting example of the social and academic demand to consume migration only in specific ways. His image of overflow has served to describe the eighties as also a time of stimuli overload: sonic, visual, experiential. While the book fantasizes with the image of a well-contained and functioning city prior to migration, it also sees in migration the promise of political change: "This Andean presence in the urban world is part of the new face not only of the Limeño metropolis but rather of the whole country. The inorganic ways in which it expands, the spontaneity, creativity, and arrangement of the serrano [*lo serrano*] impose themselves as dominant signs of a massive attempt of the popular sectors to conquest a social space, more agreeable to the authentic values that even today could not leave a mark in the Peruvian identity" (Matos Mar 1984:86).[21] Nonetheless, Matos Mar has passages where he remains skeptical about migrants, pointing out that their *informality* is also a lack of commitment to any kind of values and a refusal to follow the state's law and order. In my reading of this analysis, it is precisely its contradictory nature that reveals the racial tensions within Peruvian academia as projected onto the figure of the migrant, also the particular slot into which de Ramos is placed by the literary field.

Many of these academic studies and accounts of migration reproduced a sense of otherness. They operate by creating a fantasy in which the *old limeños*, a sector of the population which certainly includes most intellectuals, manage not to experience instability in a country of great economic and social disparities, thus casting all marginal and informal subjects outside their elusive and exclusive sense of social reality. The problematic racial and social fantasy that such ideas promote is that the socio-economic injustices and its neocolonial violence only affect the oppressed, when they have also necessarily shaped and alienated the elites in multiple and different ways.

Marginality completes this migration vocabulary in Quijano's elaboration as part of the global consequences of economic dependency and lack of internal markets. For Matos Mar, informality is the strategic response of the migrant marginal sectors. They settle on land they do not own, sell in the streets without city permits, etc. In his view, informality is the main characteristic of the migration phenomenon and the main threat to formal sectors (1984: 61, 64, 89, 94, 106). Matos Mar also defines Shining Path as an informal party because it was a clandestine group and sabotaged other socialist parties:

> Shining Path is a concrete and obvious example of political informality. It distances itself ideologically and strategically from legally operated revolutionary parties that it openly repudiates. It questions the established order as a whole and the very semantic codes used in the ideologically formal debate. Its guerrilla action is explicitly loaded with typical messages of informality. (88)

Informality becomes a dangerous connector between the Shining Path and the migrants, a possible equation present in the material arrangement of the war. Migrants were suspected of being subversives because they are poor and brown. The parallel is simple, provocative and, nevertheless, brings harsh consequences. Migrants are informal and Shining Path members are too; therefore, there must be some kind of overlap between these groups. Matos Mar picks up on what would soon become a kind of common sense in the war, which is that Lima's shanty towns were a primary site of violence for the armed groups and the Peruvian armed forces and obviously so, since they were already a primary site of economic violence.[22]

De Ramos ironizes this connection by portraying a migrant/subversive Guamán Poma that does not conform to the stereotype of the subversive as single-minded Marxist robot. This subversive

fails in his mission and goes to a party instead, "dancing chicha with his girl." Drunk with beer, he vomits, giving in ultimately to the image of the drunken cholo. The highly racialized use of chicha music was more apparent in the eighties when this poem appeared; it had not yet been appropriated by Peru's white elite sectors that now dance to it at weddings and corporate parties. Chicha was a highly discriminated form of music that hardly had a space in national television for example. However, it did not need mainstream channels. A mixture of tropical rhythms, electric guitars, and Andean musical influences such as huayno, and valichas, chicha music had its own booming industry with producers, labels, performers, radios and venues with commercial success in Lima and in the provinces (Romero 2002, Turino 2008). It takes its name from an Andean corn beer, widely considered a peasant drink. In his famous novel *Deep Rivers* (1992), the indigenista writer José María Arguedas, elaborated on the social relations surrounding chicherías, as spaces highly discriminated against by provincial elites that characterized them as sites of indigenous sexual depravity. These ideas were certainly echoed in the racism towards chicha music in Lima.

De Ramos' awareness of these social dynamics, inside and outside the cultural field and academia, allows him to play with these various, often contradictory assumptions about migrants: the unstable migrant cholo who moves between geographies and occupations, who is a drunk, dances chicha, and gets involved in the Shining Path's insurrection. He did this all while complicating these dimensions by placing this marked-yet-invisible figure clearly within "lettered culture." His is no longer just an informal, marginal subject. The very nature of the poetic language allows de Ramos to create a unique migrant, a writer, a poet, a different kind of subversive. He personalizes migration, while connecting it to colonial times and zooming into the violence of the war.

In my translation of his poem, I opt for *Kraken* instead of octopus, which would be the more literal choice for *pulpo* in the original. Kraken highlights the epic tone of the poem, while insisting on the mythological/religious dimensions of its last section. This Scandinavian beast makes clear that it is a foreign creature, the one inflicting pain to this Guamán. The conflict then becomes allegorical. The Incan Sun remains powerless and Guamán Poma's dispersed body parts reiterate the idea of a social machinery that targets indigenous and migrant bodies, effectively turning them into debris. Growing up during the war, the very word *escombros* (debris) was ubiquitous when recounting the material costs of the war, more often than not in close proximity with the war's racialized victims. This implicit dyad, debris and indigenous people, tells us about the material conditions of a land and de Ramos' composed critique of the destructive nature of colonial modernity and its corrosive powers.

Conclusion

The examples of literary criticism that read de Ramos as a cholo poet, who is making an ingenious yet minor literary gesture, as if he is some sort of oddity within the cultivated literary cannon, are abundant. In my view, they are also insufficient to explain his literature. My interest lies in interrogating the organization of knowledge about migration and race in a place like Peru, and concretely within Peruvian literature. To do justice to Quijano's later work, it is pertinent to refer here to the idea of coloniality of knowledge as a force: 'repressing as much as possible the colonized forms of knowledge production, the models of the production of meaning, their symbolic universe, the model of expression and of objectification and subjectivity.' (2000: 541) Quijano eventually abandons his focus on the cholo to turn to how the global system continuously and oppressively produces instability as a whole. Meanwhile, many if not most of the literary readings of Andean migration still resort to the fetishes of migrants, marginal people, overflow, informality.

Even though there are other examples of migrant poets, writers and scholars in Peruvian culture that have identified as cholo at various points in their careers and are migrants to Lima, the reception of de Ramos' literature in particular has focused on portraying *him* as a sort of cholo par excellence, depicting him ultimately as an outsider to the world of literature itself. Though at times this reception appears as celebratory praise, the highly racialized terms and sense of surprise with which de Ramos is greeted cast him back into that world of the marginal other to which he is assumed to properly belong. In José Antonio Mazzotti's words: "The publications of Domingo de Ramos (Ica, 1960) represent survival in the creative development of marginal social subjects within the scope of 'cultured' poetry (*poesía 'culta'*)." (139) Mazzotti does not define *culta* or *inculta*. In fact, all of the poetry analyzed in his book count as *culta*.

What I read in some of these interpretations of de Ramos' poetry is an incredulity, a sense of discomfort in the critic, triggered by his cholo voice:

> Thus, the mixture of cultures and levels of consciousness leave us with a general feeling of an *olla común,* in which figuratively *entran* everything from caviar to even huayro potato. But it is precisely such a resource that serves to define the profile of this speaking subject so internally pluri-morphic and contradictory, highly representative of a migrant culture that adapts a tradition alien to its own Andean trunk and its strategies of self-flagellation and aggression in relative intersection with the lumpen universe.[23] (144)

There's nothing more conventionally fixed, in class and race terms, than foods like caviar and *huayro* potato in Peruvian reality. They serve to translate the literary taste of the cultivated (*culto*) and the non-cultivated, the European palate and Andean hunger. Run largely by women in *comedores populares* (food kitchens), the big pots of the *olla común* feed the children of the shanty towns. Mazzotti deploys such language to conceptualize this sensation of discomfort, the visceral confusion of not knowing what is on one's

plate. He solves it with a common, yet problematic, gesture of who or what he thinks da Ramos is: this atypical mixture belonging to a mixed up subject that ventured far outside his "Andean trunk."

Venturing, moving, migrating has been a survival strategy for centuries and that is what de Ramos explores fundamentally with "His Body Is an Island of Debris." It is a poem that critically combines a transhistorical critique of race and mobility in order to claim poetry, the Spanish language, and indigenous traditions not as something he petitions to for entry but as something that is already his own territory.

NOTES

[1] For more analysis of the stylistic dimensions of Peruvian poetry produced in the 60s and 70s see Nuria Villanova (1999) and Carlos Villacorta (2017).

[2] In a previous publication (Rodríguez-Ulloa 2016) I have discussed de author's poetic treatment of Lima's shanty towns as production of space in what I interpret as a critique of Peruvian modernity. De Ramos' poetry includes these spaces as part of the city, not as nature or as precarious excess, which was how critics in the social sciences and literary criticism explained them. De Ramos' poetry treats shanty towns as the expected consequence of the violence of the Peruvian modernizing project. In this text, I move from a space approach to a transhistoric one. De Ramos' use of the indigenous chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala makes possible a nuanced comparison between colonial times and the 1980s, via the systemic racism of Peruvian modernity manifested in the racialized violence of the war and expressed through an academic production that reiterates social hierarchies through the new figure of the migrant.

[3] All translations are mine.

[4] Even though the migrant was approached as a culturally marginal subject, it was seen as an agent of political and economic change that was reshaping Peru as a nation. Two very important books of the period that establish the vocabulary about migration and which to this day are used as synonymous of the eighties were Matos Mar's Desborde *Popular y crisis de Estado. El nuevo rostro del Perú en la década de los ochenta* (1984) and Hernando de Soto's *El otro Sendero. La revolución informal* (1987).

[5] The designation belongs to fellow poet Roger Santibáñez, founder and leader of the literary group Kloaka (sewer), where de Ramos started his career. Santibáñez' full quote reads: 'After a few years Mariela Dreyfus told me about a sociology student that wrote poems. It was Domingo. In Kloaka, we were precisely looking for someone coming from marginal neighborhoods and he was coming from the conos (*cones* is another name for the shanty towns): he was the voice of the proletariat' (Torres Rotondo and Irigoyen 2010: 218). Having a migrant increased the cultural capital of Kloaka. It added to the marginal allure of the group's image, whose spelling referenced anarchism and punk, also in an attempt to reinforce shock value.

[6] 'Conquistadors of a New World. From Invaders to Citizens' (Degregori, Blondet and Lynch 1986), 'The Trojan Horses of the Invaders. Peasant Strategies in the Conquest of the Great Lima' (Golte and Adams 1987) are some of the examples of the enthusiastic epic images of many of the studies about migration that placed an excessive weight on migrants as agents of political change, in many cases fetichizing the realities of poverty and violence.

[7] *Cultura chicha* designated migrant aesthetics and/or the cultural appropriation of it. One can detect in those specialized accounts about *chicha* aesthetics the critic's dislike of strident typography in advertising and improvised architecture (Martuccelli 2000; Buntinx 2007).

[8] "Siempre me han querido etiquetar en el discurso subte, social, y soy más que eso, soy más que un marginal" (Podestá 2012).

[9] Version appeared in de Ramos 2014.

[10] Shining Path often blew up electricity towers creating blackouts all over the city, sending the message of its power by destabilizing everyday life in Lima.

[11] *Chicha* was another name for Peruvian cumbia, a rhythm that combined tropical Latin American cumbia with Andean sounds, themes, and singing styles. Chicha musicians also introduced the use of synthesizers and electric guitars to their songs. It was a musical style popular among migrants and later on it became the staple sound/aesthetics of migration.

[12] In Andean harvest festivities, a *cortamontes or yunza* refers to the cutting of a tree that has small presents attached: fruit, clothes, kitchen utensils. Partygoers would dance around the tree, cut it, and take the presents. Migrants brought to the city of Lima these festivities associated with fertility and nature.

[13] Because Quechua was not a written language, transcriptions vary in Spanish. I keep the use Guamán, which is the most common among literary scholars.

[14] "La obra de Waman Puma. Una lectura *qhipnayra* del pasado" is an introduction of a new edition of the chronicle that is taking place in Bolivia and was shared by the author during a personal email exchange. The volume remains unpublished at the time of the submission of this article.

[15] See Burns (2007) for the colonial uses of race and its connection to religion, in particular to the ideas of old Christians (*cristianos viejos*) and *conversos*.

[16] Sara Castro-Klaren (1996) has studied the importance of sexual abstinence as a religious and moral value in Guamán Poma's writing. Sara Vicuña Guengerich (2013) and Olimpia Rosenthal (2014) have seen his policing of indigenous women's sexuality as an enterprise to prevent racial mixing.

[17] Terruco was used as an insult and meant terrorist indian or cholo. This was a violent and highly racialized adjective, used to this day, for example, to discredit any social protest that opposes the neoliberal model. It's especially pervasive in its feminine form to delegitimize feminist militancies. *Chichero* is someone who listens and dances to chicha music.

[18] "El hombre, el que yace aquí entre nosotros // con su rostro de tierra y sus costillas de barro // apareó con la muerte // aquí, con el corazón destrozado // caído en la mañana // con sus pulmones aplastados por el viento // no habla / no grita // encogido / frío // arrastrando un río a la deriva" (2014: 111-112)

[19] "Desde entonces toda la mancha me trataba con indiferencia // y me odiaban // porque era un cholo y un anciano que ya no servía para nada" (2014: 101)

[20] "en un proceso en el cual se abandonan las bases de la propia cultura sin ninguna posibilidad de interiorizar fectivamente la otra. Como si alguien olvidara su idioma y no lograra nunca aprender suficientemente ningun otro" (38).

[21] "Esta presencia andina en el medio urbano constituye parte del nuevo rostro no sólo de la metrópoli limeña sino también del país en conjunto. La inorganicidad en que se expande, la espontaneidad, creatividad, y acomodo de lo serrano, se imponen como los signos dominantes de un intento masivo de los sectores populares por conquistar un espacio social, más acorde con auténticos valores que hasta ahora no pudieron imprimir una tónica de identidad peruana" (86).

[22] The CVR studied the shanty towns as one of the stages of the war, a key space for Shining Path operations. (CVR 2003: 399-466)

[23] "Así la mezcla y superposición de culturas y de niveles de conciencia nos deja una sensación general de olla común en la que figurativamente entran desde el caviar hasta la papa huayro. Pero es precisamente tal recurso el que sirve para definir el perfil de este sujeto dicente tan plurimorfo y contradictorio en su interior, sumamente representativo de una cultura migrante que adapta una tradición ajena a su propio tronco andino y a sus estrategias de autoflagelación y agresión en relativa intersección con el universo lumpenesco." (144)

WORKS CITED

Ángeles, César. „La poesía de Domingo de Ramos y *Pastor de perros*". *Ciberayllu*, 2001, www.andes.missouri.edu/andes/Especiales/CALRamos/CAL_Ramos1.html. Accessed 10 December 2019.

Arguedas, José María. *Deep Rivers*. Translated by Frances Horning Barraclough. Texas University Press, 1992.

Buntinx, Gustavo. *Lo impuro y lo contaminado. Pulsiones (neo)barrocas en las rutas de Micromuseo*, Micromuseo, 2007.

Burns, Kathryn. *Desestabilizando la raza*. Marisol de la Cadena. *Formaciones de indianidad. Articulaciones raciales, mestizaje y nación en América Latina*. Envión: 2007.

Castro-Klaren, Sara. "Las pacarinas y la virginidad, o de la sexualidad en Guamán Poma." *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, vol. 9. no. 1, 1996, pp. 51-64.

Cornejo Polar, Antonio. "Condición migrante e intertextualidad multicultural. El caso Arguedas." *Revista de Crítica Literatura Latinoamericana*, vol. 21, no. 42, 1995, pp. 101-109.

Chueca "Discurso esquizoide, violencia política y nación en *Pastor de perros* de Domingo de Ramos" *In-sufrido fuego. Poesía reunida (1988-2011)* by Domingo de Ramos, Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2014, pp. 51-82.

Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, "2.67. Las ejecuciones extrajudiciales del penal de El Frontón y El Lurigancho," in *Informe final*, CVR, 2003, 737-768, http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20VII/Casos%20Ilustrativos-UIE/2.67.FRONTON%20Y%20LURIGANCHO.pdf Accessed 10 December 2019.

_____. "1.5. La región Lima Metropolitana," in *Informe final*, CVR, 2003, 399-466, http://cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20IV/SECCION%20TERCERA-Los%20Escenarios%20de%20la%20Violencia/Historias%20Regionales/1.5%20REGION%20LIMA%20METROPOLITANA.pdf Accessed 10 December 2019.

Degregori, Carlos Iván, Cecilia Blondet and Nicolás Lynch, *Conquistadores de un nuevo mundo. De invasores a ciudadanos en San Martín de Porres*, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1986.

de la Cadena, Marisol. *Indigenous Mestizos. The Politics of Race and Politics in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991*, Duke University Press, 2000.

_____. *Earth Beings. Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*, Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 61-62.

de Ramos, Domingo. *In-sufrido fuego. Poesía reunida (1988-2011)*. Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2014

de Soto, Hernando. *El otro sendero. La revolución informal*. Editorial Sudamericana, 1987.

Espinoza, Maritza. "José Matos Mar: 'Yo entré a Lima como si fuera mi casa'". La República, January 30, 2014. https://larepublica.pe/tendencias/768722-jose-matos-mar-yo-entre-a-lima-como-si-fuera-mi-casa/. Accessed 15 November 2019.

Guamán Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, 1615/1616, http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/info/en/frontpage.htm

Martuccelli, Elio. *Arquitectura para una ciudad fragmentada. Ideas proyectos y edificios en la Lima del siglo XX.* Universidad Ricardo Palma, 2000.

Matos Mar, José. *Desborde popular y crisis de estado*. Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1984.

Murra and Rolena Adorno, introduction to *El Primer Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno* by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala. Siglo XXI Editores, 1980.

Mazzotti, José Antonio. *Poéticas del flujo, migración y violencia verbales en el Perú de los 80*. Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2002.

Nolte, Jürguen and Norma Adams. *Los caballos de Troya de los conquistadores. Estrategias campesinas en la conquista de la gran Lima.* Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1987.

Quijano, Aníbal. "Dependencia, cambio social y urbanización en Latinoamérica" (1968). *Cuestiones y horizontes. Antología esencial. De la dependencia histórico cultural a la colonialidad/decolonialidad del poder,* CLACSO, 2014.

_____. "The Challenge of the 'Indigenous Movement' in Latin America," *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2005, pp. 55-78.

_____. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Neplanta. Views from the South,* vol. 1, no. 3, 2000, pp. 533-580.

_____. "¡Qué tal raza!," *Ecuador Debate*, no. 48, 1999, pp. 141-152.

_____. "Raza, etnia y nación en Mariátegui: cuestiones abiertas," *Estudios Latinoamericanos*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1995, pp. 3-19.

_____. *Dominación y cultura. Lo cholo y el conflicto cultural en el Perú*. Mosca Azul Editores, 1980.

Pease, Franklin. Introduction to *Nueva coronica y buen gobierno*. Editorial Ayacucho, 1980.

Podestá, Cecilia. "En la periferia del diálogo. Entrevista a Domingo de Ramos". La Mula, June 9, 2012, https://lamula.pe/2012/06/09/en-la-periferia-del-dialogo-entrevista-a-domingo-de-ramos/ceciliapodesta/ Accessed 25 September 2019.

Poole, Deborah and Gerardo Rénique. *Peru: Time of Fear*. Latin American Bureau, 1992.

Rénique, Gerardo. "'People's War,' 'Dirty War' Cold War Legacy and the End of History in Postwar Peru." Greg Grandin and Gil Joseph (eds.) *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War*. Duke University Press, 2010

Rosenthal, Olimpia E. "La figura abyecta del mestizo. *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno," Letras*, vol. 85, no. 121, 2014, pp. 31-45.

Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia. "La universalidad de lo ch'ixi: miradas de Waman Puma." *e-misférica*, vol. 1, no. 7, 2010, pp. 1-16. http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-71/rivera-cusicanqui. Accessed 9 November 2019.

Rodriguez-Ulloa, Olga. "Producción de espacio en la ciudad de Lima. La estética de lo im/propio en la poesía de Domingo de Ramos," *Catedral Tomada. Journal of Latin American Literary Criticism,* vol. 4, no. 6, 2016, pp. 242-269.

Romero, "Popular Music and the Global City: Huayno, Chicha, and Technocumbia in Lima," *From Tejano to Tango: Essays on Latin American Popular Music,* edited by Walter Aaron Clark, Routledge, 2002, pp. 217-239.

Torres Rotondo, Carlos y José Carlos Yrigoyen. *Poesía en rock. Una historia oral. Perú 1966-1991*. Lima: Ediciones Altazor, 2010.

Turino, *Music in the Andes. Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, 97-123)

Vich, Víctor. *Voces más allá de lo simbólico. Ensayos sobre poesía peruana*. Fondo de Cultura Económica de Perú, 2013.

Vicuña Guenguerich, Sara. "Virtuosas o corruptas: Las mujeres indígenas en las obras de Guamán Poma de Ayala y el Inca Garcilaso," *Hispania*, vol. 96, no. 4, 2013, 672-683.

Villacorta, Carlos. *Poéticas de la ciudad: Lima en la poesía de los setenta*. Corregidor, 2017.

Villanova, Nuria. *Social Change and Literature in Peru, 1970-1990.* E. Mellen Press, 1999.

Zevallos, Ulises. *MK (1982-1984): cultura juvenil urbana de la postmodernidad periférica. Estudio introductorio, antología y recopilación de documentos.* Ojo de Agua, 2002.