César Vallejo, Peru's Universal Poet

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Abstract: This paper begins by suggesting that travel between China and the Americas occurred long before the arrival of Christopher Columbus from Europe in the Caribbean, and the conference on "Latin America and China in World Literature" is, thus, to be seen as the resumption of a dialogue that had been interrupted rather than a completely new venture. The paper then moves to a discussion of the cultural meaning of magical realism which is seen as the symptom of the cultural upheaval caused by the chasm between the way the inhabitants of the Americas felt and understood reality, as contrasted with the values and rationality of the Western world. The Peruvian poet, César Vallejo, along with other poets such as the Chilean Pablo Neruda, played a crucial role in the articulation and expression of the roots of that cultural upheaval in the early decades of the 20th century—their signature can be divined, for example, behind the linguistic innovation of the novels of the Boom Generation—and Vallejo's role in particular is traced in the final section of the essay. Vallejo's Quechua soul struggles to emerge from within the confines of the Spanish language, and this struggle leads to the emergence of a universalist voice which speaks directly and emotively to nations across the world, as witnessed by the translation of his work into so many foreign languages.

Keywords: César Vallejo, Peru, China, magical realism, personal poetics, colloquialism, universality

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I

I would like to express my special thanks to the organizers of the conference on "Latin America and China in World Literature" held on 27–28 April 2024 in the Foreign Studies College at Hunan Normal University, an event which allowed us to meet in China to talk and exchange ideas, impressions, and perspectives regarding our two discursive branches of world literature:

China and Latin America.[1]

It was in 1421, 71 years before the Genoese navigator, Christopher Columbus, discovered America, that a huge fleet of imperial ships left China, consisting of 107 junks that were between 100 and 150 meters long and intent on fulfilling their mission of returning to their respective countries the dignitaries of the entire world known at that moment in time to China, then ruled by the Emperor Zhu Di (朱棣), who had just carried out the official inauguration of the Forbidden City. Some historians argue that a year later, after completing their mission, those ships of fantasy with their rectangular sails, which had served to establish a maritime trade route dating back many years, arrived in the Americas and then discovered Australia, circumnavigating the world long before the Portuguese navigator, Magellan, arrived on the scene.

About 160 years later, a small Spanish expedition that set sail from the coasts of Peru, led by Álvaro de Mendaña, discovered the Solomon Islands. They became the launching pad for Spanish galleons in the Viceroyalty of Peru setting off from Callao on their voyage to the ports of New Spain (as Mexico was then known). From there they would continue their journey to the ports of Macao and Guangzhou (Canton), establishing an important overseas trade route between Asia and the Americas, carrying valuable cargoes of silver extracted from the mines of Potosí in Upper Peru (as Bolivia was then known) and ferrying back to Lima not only the highly sought-after spices of the East, but also shipments of furniture exquisitely worked in the finest oriental woods, as well as delicate China porcelain and exquisite Chinese silks, amongst other sumptuous merchandise that served to flatter the vanity and provide a patina of sophistication to the viceregal court of Lima, crammed to the rafters with consignments of silver transported from the Andes of southern Peru.

Regrettably, the monopolizing instincts of the Spanish crown contrived to block any direct commercial relationship between Peru and China, using various laws to shield Spain's monopoly of its overseas kingdoms, rendering China in particular and Asia in general inaccessible for trade. This forced tunnel vision of the colonies of the Sub-continent meant they only had access to Europe and could only trade with Spain. This is why I believe our conference on "Latin America and China in World Literature" is especially important because it is simply the resumption of a conversation of yesteryear, that is, an ancient dialogue that was interrupted despite our best intentions, which we resume today after all those centuries that have passed us by. We do so, however, not from the place where we left off—despite the geographical coordinates remaining the same—as a great deal of water has flowed under the bridge in the interim, and many waves have bathed the coasts of both continents. Six centuries later we are different, although—apparently—we are the same. Our perspectives are different from those of yesteryear, although we continue to survey each other from the same opposite shores, separated by this same immense pond of water that lies between us. However, as the Chinese sailors who arrived in the Americas in 1422 believed, this space does not separate us, but, on the contrary, irremediably brings us together for the future.

This is the new perspective that I bring to this meeting of two cultures through their respective literatures, which are like two distinct but similar coastlines since both are bathed by the same waters that give meaning to the literature of China and Latin America.

II

In this project on magical realism—in which Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, and Juan Rulfo serve as the main representatives in Latin America, alongside that other variant, the marvelous real, for which Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Ángel Asturias play a leading role—when all is said and done, magical realism and the marvelous real end up as mythological beings who have a single body with two heads. For the purposes of this dialogue, it seems more appropriate to speak of magical realism, since it has been less constrained by a strictly indigenous or nationalist agenda. On the contrary, magical realism as a literary formula has spread across the globe, replicated with variants outside Latin America's geographical borders.

There are many characteristics that scholars have found to be distinctive of magical realism. However, all of them revolve, in the end, around the insertion of the fantastic or the magical into a realistic universe without thereby generating the appearance of any surprise, either in the narrator's voice or in the minds of the characters, who do not perceive that eruption of the fantastic as a break with the everyday logic of the events they understand as their "normality." An example of this is Remedios the Beautiful's ascent to the heavens in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), lifted up by a gust of wind that wraps her up in a sheet while her grandmother watches her as she waves goodbye with the indolent nonchalance of a beauty queen. Another is in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), when, on a Friday morning in October, the dictator gets up and discovers the soldiers, the maids of the palace, the needy, the women of the market, the men of the dock, the children in the streets, all wearing bright red bonnets, having received them from some individuals who spoke very strangely and who were obsessed with exchanging things, leaving them trinkets that they condescendingly accepted, until, after describing all the uproar created by those men—whom the reader surmises are Europeans who have arrived in the Americas—the dictator draws near to the palace window that looks out on the sea and sees them in their three caravels.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that magical realism should have arisen in communities overwhelmed by a cultural upheaval that shook their ancestral and traditional worldview and revealed a divide between the way they felt and understood reality, as contrasted with the values and rationality of the Western world. Indeed, this insertion of Western categories, values, and cultural perspectives, fracturing the traditional way of ordering and understanding the world, initially generated a perception of strangeness and an eruption of surprise in the Americas which, much later on, took on a new shape—in the form of magical realism—as an aesthetic vehicle which was able to communicate that abrupt and contradictory collision. Over time, however, magical realism has been normalized in the collective understanding of the Latin American peoples as a type of syncretism, of cultural miscegenation.

This is the originality of magical realism, and therein lies its value, its ability to express the symphony of a globalized world in which the gravity-based counterweights nations possess are at variance with each other. This has led to new ways of representing human beings interacting with each other, in scenarios in which their cultural visions are at odds, and yet it has also led to a co-existence, a fusion, to the generation of new cultures, and to new forms of understanding and relating with the world.

III

This expression of the eruption of new cultural paradigms that disrupt and interrogate discourses and values via the narrative vehicle of magical realism leads us not only to writers of the Latin American Boom such as the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez, the Mexican Juan Rulfo, and the Peruvian Manuel Scorza. We can also trace magical realism's influence to other latitudes. It enriched the work of writers across the globe, such as the German novelist Patrick Süskind, the Indian-born British-American writer Salman Rushdie, and the Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami, among others. It also leads us back to Latin American writers such as the Chilean writer Isabel Allende, the Guatemalan Nobel Prize laureate Miguel Ángel Asturias, the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, the Venezuelan writer Arturo Uslar Pietri, and the Mexican novelist Elena Garro, in addition to the aforementioned novelist and short-story writer Juan Rulfo. All of these writers had already achieved international recognition prior to the Boom. Indeed, it was these Latin American writers who, as a result of their respective literary works, provided the initial artistic strokes that, when brought together in concert, gave shape and form to magical realism.

As we have already seen, magical realism sought to express in an aesthetic manner that eruption of new cultural paradigms in the discursive logic and values of a pre-existing culture, that is, a community that had its own *Weltanschauung* (worldview). Magical realism drew on the technique of the insertion of the fantastic or the magical within a realistic universe without generating apparent surprise, either in the narrator's voice or in the characters' minds; they do not view this eruption of the fantastic as a break with the daily logic of the events that subtend their "normality." Indeed, they accept and assimilate the magical as part and parcel of what is foreseeable within the normality of everyday life.

The expression, however, of this dichotomy through the eruption of the magical within the real was not, in my opinion, the only way in which this complex reality—which had been disrupted by the imposition of alien values and worldviews, forcing both realities to co-exist in a new state of being that we perceive as our own—could be articulated. There is a more subtle and at the same time more profound vehicle that can be used to do so, one that transcends thought through the use of language itself. This vehicle is the word stretched to its most creative functionality, a space that generates new meanings: poetry.

Indeed—and just to give one example—we should not forget that García Márquez's (or Gabo's) father, Don Gabriel Eligio García, was a telegraph operator, doctor, dentist, pharmacist, an inspired violinist, and also a poet characterized by sporadic poetic outbursts. He was a great fan, for example, of "décimas" (ten-syllable poems) and "romances" (octosyllabic poems with assonant rhyme), as well as hendecasyllabic sonnets. In Gabo's father we find the germ that leads us to the poetic vein of the author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; Gabo, as is well-known, wrote poetry furiously throughout his adolescent years. And if we dig down a little deeper, we see that the young Gabriel García Márquez and his group of enthusiastic friends who belonged to Colombia's literary bohemia read reams and reams of poetry. Among his favorite poets, as we learn in *Vivir para contarla (Living to Tell the Tale)* are César Vallejo and Pablo Neruda, among many others (García Márquez 122–132; Martin 80–85).

This only serves to highlight the poetic influence that César Vallejo and other Latin American poets exerted on the new generations of writers who would give birth to the famous Latin American Boom. Although it is known that Pablo Neruda's lyricism held a greater sway over García Márquez than Vallejo, in contrast, it is worth recording that the famous North American literary critic Harold Bloom, in an interview with the newspaper *La Jornada*, indicated that he would include César Vallejo in his Western Canon, because, as he pointed out, Vallejo was a better poet than Neruda and more interesting ("Murió Harold Bloom"). Here we arrive at the port to which this journey through the paths of magical realism had led us, and which constitutes what we consider to be one of the best ways of approaching the work of César Vallejo, who is, perhaps, the greatest Latin American poet of all time, and, without a doubt, one of the most important poetic voices of world literature of the 20th century.

IV

As Stephen Hart has pointed out, quoting the Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, autobiography is an essential feature of Vallejo's work ("César Vallejo" 125–139). Therefore, it is appropriate at this point to pause for a moment to summarize, from a bird's eye view, his troubled life. César Abraham Vallejo Mendoza, the Peruvian poet whom the Trappist poet and monk Thomas Merton described as "the greatest universal poet after Dante," was born in the small town of Santiago de Chuco, department of La Libertad, in the mountains of northern Peru, on March 16, 1892, being the twelfth child of a traditional and Catholic family. His family wanted him to be a priest. However, he took on another calling, the path of letters.

As a child, he left his hometown, Santiago de Chuco, and moved to the province of Huamachuco, to finally settle in the capital of the department, Trujillo. There he joined the Bohemian group of Trujillo, to which Antenor Orrego, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, and Alcides Spelucín belonged, all of them well-known political and academic figures of their time. In those years Vallejo worked in occupations that put him in contact with the everyday life of the most needy within society as well as the most oppressed sectors of Peruvian society. It is believed that he worked in the Quiruvilca mine, near Santiago de Chuco, and he saw first-hand the terrible working conditions of the indigenous people who worked there. He worked as a private tutor to the family of a wealthy landowner in Cerro de Pasco. For a short while Vallejo was then a cashier's assistant at the "Roma" sugar plantation, a position he eventually resigned from as a result of indignation at the abuses that were perpetrated against the Indian workers. He also worked as a primary school teacher and he happened to teach a child, Ciro Alegría, who would later become a prominent indigenous writer in Peru.

In 1918 Vallejo traveled to Lima to study at the National University of San Marcos, the oldest university in the Americas, where he studied for a doctorate in Philosophy and Letters. The following year, his first book, *Los heraldos negros* (*The Black Heralds*), was published. In 1920, while in the department of La Libertad, Vallejo was unjustly accused and imprisoned for 112 days in Trujillo prison. Intellectuals from Lima, Trujillo, and Arequipa defended Vallejo's innocence with public pronouncements and, eventually, the poet was released. During his imprisonment

Vallejo wrote the book *Escalas* (*Scales*). In 1922 he published *Trilce*, a book that critics consider to be his best work. Shortly afterwards, in 1923, Vallejo traveled to Europe, and he never returned to Peru (Espejo Asturrizaga).

Vallejo lived the last 15 years of his life in Paris, and for much of this time he suffered from economic hardship. It was there that he met a young French woman, Georgette Philippart, with whom he lived and would later marry. She stayed with Vallejo until the end of his life and later became the executor and disseminator of his work. During the years spent in Europe, Vallejo visited Madrid, Budapest, Brussels, Berlin, and Moscow. A cultured and sensitive man, Vallejo was influenced by Marxist ideas and by the social struggles of his time, such as the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. In 1937 he attended the Second Congress of Antifascist Writers in Madrid. Vallejo wrote his last three books during his European exile. He died in Paris, on April 15, 1938, at 9:30 a.m. on Good Friday. His remains are now in the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris, a cemetery reserved for famous writers (Hart, "A Chronology" 698).

V

César Vallejo physically left the world on April 15, 1938, and his fame has grown steadily since that day. Since then, he has captured the imagination of illustrious scholars as well as new generations of poets; he is considered Peru's greatest writer, and as one of the most significant innovators of the world's poetry in the 20th century. His writings—his poetry, his essays, his plays, and his travelogues—have been translated into more than forty languages, reflecting the universal reach and impact of his work, especially his poetry.

César Vallejo's work is original and very personal, and the imprint of his suffering personality is clearly evident in his poetry, as well as the sensitivity to his own suffering and that of others with whom he identified. In his posthumous poetic collections, such as *Poemas humanos (Human Poems*, 1939) and *España, aparta de mí este cáliz* (*Spain, Take This Cup from Me*, 1939), a feeling of solidarity is transmuted in response to his deep metaphysical, religious, and social concerns. Vallejo's parents thought of consecrating him to the priesthood—both of his male grandparents were priests—and this, no doubt, explains the presence of abundant biblical images and liturgical language in his poetry, as well as the poet's obsession with ontological problems such as the meaning of life and death.

Vallejo's poetic work is characterized by a permanent restlessness and desire for renewal and a firm ideological independence in the midst of the influences of the time. In political terms, he maintained throughout the years in Europe a very personal position within Marxism, compatible with his religious and aesthetic concerns. He rejected dogmatism and the reduction of literature to proselytizing purposes, and—even though he saw in Marxist ideology a pathway offering justice and liberation for humanity—he never claimed that it offered a solution to the more searching metaphysical questions. In his poetry Vallejo turned away from the beauty, the formal perfection, the sensuality and the color of *modernista* imagery and he chose to adopt an almost colloquial discourse.[2] His poetry is full of directly spoken lines full of emotion and torn with uncertainty: "Hay golpes en la vida! Yo no sé!" (Vallejo 83) ("There are blows in life, so powerful … I don't know!"

[Eshleman 25]). Vallejo is considered one of the most significant reinventors of world poetry in the 20th century. He was always one step ahead of literary currents, and each of his books traced one step forwards in his journey towards poetic immortality.

VI

Being a universal writer from a cultural province of the world, and yet not renouncing one iota of that singularity that gave him his character as an Andean, *mestizo*, and Peruvian writer is perhaps one of Vallejo's greatest achievements. Hence the title of this paper: "César Vallejo, Peru's Universal Poet." To understand this double register within Vallejo's verse, I intend to dwell, briefly, on some individual features of his poems in order to address, firstly, their universality, and then, their Peruvian essence. Certainly, if there is one thing that is unquestionable about Vallejo's work, it is its universality, evidenced in the multiple translations and constant reprints of his books, which have generated admirers across the globe. As already noted, it was in his early works that Vallejo already showed signs of his uniqueness; this was clear in the way he promptly detached himself from the *modernista* influences that were percolating in *The Black Heralds*, and then showcased an unrepeatable originality in his second book, *Trilce*, a master work of the avant-garde. All the while Vallejo was building his own aesthetic with poetic resonances drawn from a universal transcendence. This is, indeed, one of the most striking features of Vallejo's poetry. Its poetic originality is based on components that cannot be distilled and extracted in order to be used as a model to structure other poetic expressions without their influence being clearly noticed. Vallejo's stamp on any given verse is immediately obvious and, indeed, indelible.

In the next section I will proceed to review some aspects of his verse that highlight that universality as anchored in his irreducibly personal poetics. As we have already noted, although the influence of *modernismo* and *postmodernismo* is evident in his first book, *The Black Heralds*—mainly, in the way in which he alternates rhyme with free verse, hendecasyllables, and alexandrines—it already contains the germ of Vallejo's poetic essence. As for the content, *The Black Heralds* opens and closes with God as a leitmotif as well as a lacerating obsession. The last verse of "Espergesia" ("Epexegesis") closes with a shocking statement: "Yo nací un día / que Dios estuvo enfermo, grave" (Vallejo 182) ("I was born on a day / that God was ill, gravely" [Eshleman 163]). The poet, born in a religious home, draws on his Catholic training to reverse Christian logic, showing us an antithesis of Catholicism: a gravely ill God whose illness, in effect, gives birth to the poet. The creative incapacity of this sick God carries with it a creative error, since it gives rise to a failed universe—which, perhaps, explains why misfortune, including human misfortune, continues to exist in the world—including, of course, the misadventures of a poet who suffers as a result of divine error. But, just as Vallejo announces the perceived failure of his birth, he sees himself as now in charge of proclaiming the death of the man who continues to suffer in Vallejo's own flesh. *The Black Heralds* is full of scatological elements that can be seen from the very title of the book; death hovers, like a shadow, with its whiff of Thanatos spreading on every page of the book, even as the incense is being scattered as part of the rituals of the Catholic liturgical paraphernalia of Holy Week. Thus, there are references to the veils, the nail in the coffin, and

cemeteries in his poetry, and these are just some of the images that reinforce the gloomy tone of the volume. As Vallejo sees it, death accompanies us, lying in wait until the last moment in which it rears its head, flapping its wings briefly, faintly, and thereby extinguishing, in a second, the faint breath that life breathed into us…

But the dusty cobwebs of death are blown away in the next volume of poetry, *Trilce*, where the language of the poetry stands out. In this his second book, Vallejo, who had already gone through the terrible experience of prison—which had shaken him to his very core as a human being, lowering him, taking away not only his freedom, but also his dignity—seems now to go beyond the limits of the word, making the language crack, crackle, arch, and then burst into a thousand pieces, throwing its splinters at the reader who perceives all this happening in expressions that violate syntax and spelling, break up descriptions, disarticulate sentences, promote apparently arbitrary connections, and contain onomatopoeias that seem to go nowhere, like an indescribable scream with words…

And, in the face of so much avant-garde writing, the backdrop of words used by the Andean population, by the mixed-race populations, the *cholos*,[3] as Vallejo also recognizes, and the Peruvian cantito (popular song) emerges, the Andean colloquial speech, where a Quechua soul survives within a Spanish diction, while the words seem to continue squeaking "Vusco volvvver de golpe el golpe" (Vallejo 216; "I sdrive to dddeflect at a blow the blow" [Eshleman 183]) or "Qué se va a hacer" (Vallejo 253; "What can one do" [Eshleman 245]), the poet expresses himself, like a machine that strives to its utmost to achieve its expressive objective, without ever achieving it completely. Vallejo expresses his ontological kinesthesia, his most intimate and profound roots, all with words that are scrapped, crumbling and unravelling between our fingers as we are reading the poems. And, in the midst of all this, in *Human Poems*, published posthumously in 1939, Vallejo vindicates the stature of a man standing in front of mankind, of a man (the poet) irremediably condemned, despite his greatness, to the mere destiny of a fossil whose bones will be covered with the absurd dust of oblivion. Nothingness in the face of so much bewildered humanity.

VII

But that universality does not deny its Andean seed, its place in the world, from where it draws its universality. Paradoxically, *Human Poems* is the book that ends up giving Vallejo the universal character of which Merton speaks, a universality that recognizes his indigenous heritage as a starting point. Thus, in "Telúrica y magnética" ("Telluric and Magnetic") Vallejo proclaims without ambiguity or restrictions: "¡Lo entiendo todo en dos flautas / y me doy a entender en una quena!" (Vallejo 389) ("I understand everything in two flutes / and I make myself understood on a Peruvian lute" [Eshleman 425]). In the same poem, he addresses his homeland with the following immortal lines: "Sierra de mi Perú, Perú del mundo, / Y Perú al pie del orbe: yo me adhiero" (Vallejo 389) ("Mountains of my Peru, Peru of the world, / And Peru at the foot of Planet Earth: I express my allegiance" [Eshleman 425]). In this poem Vallejo expresses his adherence to the notion of Peru as a kaleidoscope of potentialities; that is, as a local geographical identity (such

as the "Mountains of my Peru"), as part of a globalized reality ("Peru of the world"), as well as a subordinate nation that sits "at the foot of the globe." Vallejo, thus, expresses the paradox of a country that belongs to the world, but also simultaneously does not belong to that world, due to its rejection or exclusion by Western nations. In several of Vallejo's poems written while he was in Paris, we find this paradox expressed through the concept of the ghostly. However, in the expression "I adhere" of the poem cited above, we can imagine Vallejo, as so often happens in his poetry, "embracing" the Sierra, just as he embraced humanity at the end of his poem, "Considerando en frío, imparcialmente…" ("Considering coldly, impartially…"): "le hago una seña, / viene, / y le doy un abrazo, emocionado. / ¡Qué más da! Emocionado… Emocionado…" (Vallejo 377) ("I gesture to him, / he comes towards me / and I give him a hug, and it moves me… / What's the difference! It moves me… moves me…" [Eshleman 405]).

VIII

What is it that makes any text a literary text? And what makes a literary text a poetic text? Beyond languages, cultures, and times, what makes a text a literary work of art? What makes a writer born in a small town in the high, inhospitable, and cold mountains of the Andes of Peru, a poet who, despite having died 86 years ago, remains alive, and who motivates poets from all over the world to engage in a dialogue with his work, to take up his themes, to question his perspectives, to stand on his shoulders and continue writing from the same place where he left off? What motivates thousands of people to continue reading his verses, beyond his translations and his re-editions in various languages, generating that empathy that brings them closer to the life and work of someone whose literary spectrum continues to speak in their ears, whispering to them very quietly, like a constant drop, inoculating his verses everywhere, to contaminate them with poetry, to infect them with art, and so on until the end of time?

As the novelists of magical realism would say, Vallejo is still alive, unable to die, with his heart condemned to continue beating for us on every page, to continue breathing in each verse of his poems, of his books, which perhaps contain the wordless explanations to all these questions, which are the same questions which have existed since time immemorial. Martin Heidegger, the great German philosopher, tells us that a poet, when he writes, speaks of the very essence of things (Heidegger 54; see also Close). For his part, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset suggests, in turn, that a poet is a poet because he has an Adamic vision of the world, since he speaks of things as if he were seeing them for the first time, bringing us news of the world that we all thought we knew, but that he illuminates in a singular and unique way (Marquina 64).

Vallejo uses the word at the time of poetizing in a way that is radically innovative, not only because it is nourished by that same language he learned in his Catholic home, in the small Andean town of Santiago de Chuco, during his childhood, but because he enriched it later on with his unique, unrepeatable readings and experiences, which in some crucial ways shapes his time. Vallejo's language is a language enriched, moreover, by the syncretism resulting from the miscegenation of two millenary cultures, the Western and the Andean.

It is with this very language that has been structured on the basis of three centuries of colonialism and two centuries of an imperfect South American republic full of injustices, that Vallejo, with his innate talent, with his verbal audacity, ends up contracting words, producing linguistic tricks, illuminating realities, semantically redesigning the contents of his poetry, describing realities, and creating new knowledge with each poem. By involving his readers in his discursive adventures, he establishes a poetic empathy that illuminates not only Vallejo's reality, but ours as well, that is, the intimate worlds of his readers, wherever we are, whatever our origin. Even 86 years after his death, Vallejo's word continues to live, illuminating like a beacon the subjective worlds of those who read his poetry. Otherwise, there is no explanation for that wonderful magical feeling we have when we read Vallejo's poetry and feel his heart still beating within out own hearts.

Notes

1. This paper was translated into English by Stephen M. Hart. The translations of Vallejo's poetry are by Clayton Eshleman.
2. *Modernismo* (*Modernism*) was a literary movement that pervaded the Spanish-speaking world from around the 1880s until around 1916. The themes of this poetic movement—aestheticism, art for art's sake, melancholy, the use of complicated verse schemes—were derived in the main from the Symbolist movement in France.
3. "Cholo" is a colloquial term used in Peru to indicate mixed race individuals, normally of Indian and Hispanic heritage, and can have affectionate or pejorative connotations depending on the context.

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