



# Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures

*Antonio Cornejo Polar*

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# Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures

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**Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures** Antonio Cornejo Polar

Originally published in 1994, *Writing in the Air* is one of the most significant books of modern Latin American literary and cultural criticism. In this seminal work, the influential Latin American literary critic Antonio Cornejo Polar offers the most extended articulation of his efforts to displace notions of hybridity or "mestizaje" dominant in Latin American cultural studies with the concept of heterogeneity: the persistent interaction of cultural difference that cannot be resolved in synthesis. He reexamines encounters between Spanish and indigenous Andean cultural systems in the New World from the Conquest into the 1980s. Through innovative readings of narratives of conquest and liberation, homogenizing nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourses, and contemporary Andean literature, he rejects the dominance of the written word over oral literature. Cornejo Polar decenters literature as the primary marker of Latin American cultural identity, emphasizing instead the interlacing of multiple narratives that generates the heterogeneity of contemporary Latin American culture.

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