

# I&L

## IDEOLOGIES & LITERATURE

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Volume II

Number 10

September-October 1979

### ESSAYS

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- Roberto Fernández Retamar  
«Against the Black Legend»
- Arturo Madrid  
«Identidad y creatividad chicana»

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# Three speeches on Angolan Culture

Agostinho Neto

We have the honor of presenting three speeches by Agostinho Neto, President of Angola. Angola gained its independence on November 11, 1975 after fourteen years of armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Only one month after independence the Angolan Writers Union came into being. The creation of a Writers Union so soon after independence and in the midst of pressing national problems comes as no surprise given the fact that the liberation struggle was in itself a cultural act. Agostinho Neto, the President of Angola and of the MPLA-Workers Party, is himself a poet of international stature. Some of the present members of the Angolan Writers Union were freedom fighters, others were political prisoners or exiles, almost all were somehow involved in the struggle. Thus, the language of the three addresses reflects the revolutionary spirit and the determination of nation-building that surrounded the proclamation of the Union in 1975, the inauguration of the President of the General Assembly in 1977, and the installation of new officers in 1979.

*Dr. Antonio Agostinho Neto succumbed to illness on September 10, 1979. Africa has been deprived of one of its greatest contemporary leaders and spokespersons, the progressive world has lost an edoquent, humanistic, and pragmatic statesmen, and a principal architect of Angola's cultural reconstruction. Although his duties as President had curtailed his own literary activities, Agostinho Neto remained an active force in the Angolan Writers Union, as attested to by the addresses that we are pleased to bring to our readers in the present issue. Despite the irreplaceable loss, we believe that Agostinho Neto's example within the Writers Union and the legacy of his poetry will continue to inspire writers in all of Lusophone Africa and in the world at large.*

## Concerning the Writers Union

*Words Spoken by Comrade President Agostinho Neto  
During the Formal Session in Proclamation  
of the Angolan Writers Union on December 10, 1975*

Compatriots and Comrades,

This formal session in proclamation of the constitution of the Angolan Writers Union is one more beginning in our young People's Republic. Once again we have seen our hopes materialized, hopes that we have had since the start of our struggle for the total adhesion of all social strata and of all valid elements of the Angolan people. It is not by accident that all of Angola's writers belong to the MPLA. They belong or belonged. Those who are no longer with us, those who perished, belonged: those who are alive are in the MPLA. This fact is significant because literature in Angola, and we can extend this a little by saying art in Angola, has always served the revolution. That which was done by comrades, in attendance, by others dispersed throughout the room, by others who have been lost, was done in support of the political struggle of our people for their independence. It was done in support of our people's desire for the establishment of a people's democracy. Art in Angola was never dedicated to a reactionary view even when appearances suggested the contrary. Therefore, I hope, as do all of us, that the names that have been put forth as potential associates of this union, that these names are approved in short order. Moreover, I hope to see this Angolan Writers Union function. Function in a dynamic way so that the culture of our people, the culture of the Angolan people, can be known to our own people and also known by the entire world that wishes at all costs to understand the soul of this country.

I believe that it is fitting for us to underline—all of us who constitute the leadership of this revolution—to underline the fact that on the 10th of December, 1975, that is, just a month after the proclamation of independence, that we can meet here in this thater where the people were never allowed. Here the Portuguese colonialists met to enjoy their leisure time. Now, we proclaim here an Angolan Writers' Union at the service of our people. This is significant; this speaks to the future. We have always said that the struggle for national liberation cannot be

separate from the struggle for the imposition, for the recognition of a culture which is peculiar to our people. Our people have their way of being, they have their idiosyncrasies which are revealed in many facts, on many occasions, in many manifestations of art. From this moment on, let us attempt, with this beautiful initiative of old and young comrade writers: let us try to organize, for our people, a synthesis of our culture. And I hope that this Angolan Writers Union is indeed at the service of the people, at the service of the workers and the peasants who constitute the most exploited classes in our country.

I hope that the comrades who have just made pledges here—for our people and our future, they are valid pledges—will be able to bring about everything they spoke of, not only in the proclamation of this union but also in the expression of the poems that were recited here today. And we have the added hope of seeing that our culture does not remain enclosed within Angola. Three of the poems recited here were dedicated to foreign authors, dedicated to progressive authors from among those we most esteem in the world today. And from its very beginnings this Union already goes beyond our borders, this being within the cultural logic of making all of the world's people join together in their common struggle for better social conditions. This activity also falls within a desired cultural comprehensiveness that our movement wishes to see as our country's orientation.

I should tell the comrades who have come together in this theater that the Angolan Writers Union has the support of the MPLA's political bureau. Therefore, this is a Union that from the moment of its birth has been oriented within the spirit of independence, within the spirit of the organization and the institution of people's power, within the spirit of the directing of our Country towards a people's democracy. And thus, we are all going to work together.

Thank you very much.



## Concerning Literature

*A Speech Delivered on November 24th, 1977 on  
The Occasion of the Inauguration of the President of  
The General Assembly of the Angolan Writers' Union*

Comrades:

It is with the greatest pleasure that I attend this formal ceremony for the installation of the governing bodies of the Angolan Writers Union.

As all of you will understand, only the guarantees offered by the other members of the General Assembly and by the Comrade Secretary-General were able to convince me to accept one more obligation added to so many others.

Nevertheless, I wish to thank the Angolan Writers Union for this kind gesture and to express my hope that whenever it may be necessary for me to make my contribution to the Union that the comrades as a whole or individually will not hesitate to put before me the problems that go along with these new duties that I now assume.

I wish to use this occasion to pay homage to those comrade writers who before and after the national liberation struggle suffered persecution, to those who lost their freedom in prison or exile, and to those who inside the country were politically segregated and thus placed in unusual situations. I also wish to join with all the comrades here in the homage that was paid to those comrades who heroically made the ultimate sacrifice during the national liberation struggle,—and who today are no longer with us.

Comrades:

We have taken one more step forward in our national life with the forming of this Writers Union which continues the literary traditions of the period of resistance against colonialism. During that period, and in spite of colonial-fascist repression, a task was accomplished that will go down in the annals of Angola's revolutionary history as a valuable contribution to the victory of the Angolan people.

Comrades:

I have the honor of saluting those faithful interpreters of our cultural options and of our traditions who represent the spiritual bulwark of the struggle. In the front lines of literature they, by creating, transmitting, and interpreting, salvaged whatever they could of the literary wealth of the Angolan people.

Comrades:

In order to establish the premises capable of permitting a brief introduction to some of our problems, we have to consider that life is a succession and a sum total of contradictory facts, which, according to their nature, may or may not be resolvable.

And the writer reflects life in accordance with the way in which he or she faces it. It is for this very reason that it is important to situate the social point of view from which phenomena are seen.

For the Angolan writer, the interpretation of existence cannot help but be subjected to this rule. And in order to do so, it is obvious that the writer cannot ignore reality, above all, those dramatic aspects of that reality which constitutes its contradiction.

The people and the environment will always be present in each thought, in each word or written sentence, just as the shadow coexists with the light, and the leaf with the root.

The people and the environment here in Angola have been marked by the branding iron of slavery, and for a long time to come the life of the Angolan people will bear the marks of colonialism. The desire, the option, the orientation will not always coincide with the manner of expression or with content of what is expressed. What exists in the subconscious of human beings, or that which underlies things, is to be revealed. And only action, in this case revolutionary action, will be able to condition radical change.

The superficiality of observation, the preconceived notion, or the complexes that marked existence during the colonial period, will still be with us. It is natural that such be the case.

The manual laborer, manual labor itself, the new role of those who produce and their capacity to transform nature, the philosophical principles that condition socio-economic structures and which, in turn, have philosophical consequences, will elude, for now, the sensibilities of the Angolan writer. And even the apparently simple fact of the contemplation of the black man or of the white man will for a long time suffer colonial influences,—contradictorily so.

I think that all of us will agree that writers should situate themselves in their times and exercise their function as formers of consciousness. They should be active agents in the improvement of humanity.

Some of our writers still cry when it's time for them to sing: although, at times crying can also be singing and tears can mean joy. But knowing how to sing is sometimes more difficult than knowing how to cry because when the future becomes the present not everyone

realizes his or her dream. I mean to say by this that it is not always that the reality of the majority constitutes the happiness or the sorrow of each individual.

If on the one hand we have to deal with the fact of independence and, on the other hand, with the fact of proletariat-peasantry, we can rightfully ask, what is the writer's position in face of the new Angolan person who has resulted from the historic victory over one of the elements of the colonial contradiction? Because, one cannot forget the new historical factor introduced to Angolan reality and constituted by independence and by freedom. Nor can one ignore the African context in which today people are considered in a manner different from that to which we became accustomed by centuries of slavery and colonialism. Today, Africans are free people, or they are in the process of freeing themselves from colonialism and imperialism.

One cannot ignore the world context in which profound and definitive transformations have occurred and are occurring on the human as well as the social and material levels. No matter what the social condition of the observer, no matter what his or her political choices may be, no matter what sentiments he or she may have, no one can overlook the world context.

In Independent Angola, headed toward a superior form of social organization, namely socialism, literature necessarily has to reflect this new situation. In the past much of the Angolan literature produced by those represented in the Writers Union assumed an eminently patriotic character in its concern for social conditions. Today, for the sake of continuity, it will be necessary for Angolan literature to insert itself well into and be a reflection of Angolan culture. At this point we can infer that there have been profound social transformations in the structures that conform to the several classes, ethnic groups, and races which constitute the Angolan people.

In the past our literature was deeply immersed in European culture—it was indeed a part of the literature of Europe—whose currents were followed and one language of which was used as our only means of expression. In the past our culture was merely a «different» motif, a folkloric variation, a colorful contrast to embellish phases and ideas. The political condition that dictated literary modes was empty idealism and snobbish realism.

Today, our culture has to be reflected for what it is, without deformations. Our culture itself has to be the motivator of literature.

During the National Liberation struggles there were serious attempts to follow the new path: But the results were insignificant.

Under our particular conditions, however, cultural reconversion cannot be accomplished in just one generation. The effort—and this I am sure of—will be made: but the effects will only be felt much later when material conditions are sufficiently determinant of a new consciousness.

In order to be valid, expression has to be the result of experience and observation.

What can it mean to live Angolan culture, without falling into leftism? To live Angolan culture means to understand the people just as they are defined, to be an element of the people, to forget prejudices, and to go beyond class. To caricature the petty bourgeoisie, or to describe it, is as valid as exalting the peasant or the worker.

To live Angolan culture means to live the life of the people and, for those who concern themselves with literature, to know how to extract from sentiments, from aspirations, from the times, and from history itself, those elements necessary for their artistic endeavors.

Comrades, at this time it is no longer an acceptable idea to include in the category of writers just those who know how to use the Portuguese language well. The interpretation or the description of life does indeed fall to artists, but the form that this takes is not subordinate to a more or less perfect command of the language which we use today. Thus, the concept of writer and of member of this union should be actively expanded.

As a matter of fact, in a broader framework of culture and cultural activity it will be necessary to develop art in all its aspects and gather all possible elements of our oral and written literature. It will be necessary to retell the history of Angola in order to make known the long road travelled between the past and the present.

I mean to say that this Writers Union is called on to play an important role in our revolution. The cultural personality of the Angolan people has to be revealed through literature and other forms of expression.

A while ago I referred to languages. The exclusive use of Portuguese as the official language, as *Lingua Franca*, and presently as the expression of our literature does not solve our problems. And in primary education and probably even in secondary schools it will be necessary to use our languages. And given the diversity of this country, sooner or later we ought to tend towards the agglutination of some dialects in order to facilitate contacts.

All of the development of the language problem will naturally also depend on the removal of regional barriers, on the consolidation of national unity, on the extinction of those complexes and blemishes inherited from colonialism, and on economic development.

The worker-peasant alliance, materialized in the development of transportation, means of communication, commerce, industry, agrarian collectivism, will contribute to the solution of the question of the use of our languages in the normal activities of the Angolan people. Therefore, the Writers Union, and particularly Angolan writers themselves, cannot neglect this problem. I think that the Writers Union, together with the organisms of the culture sector, should concern itself with the question of our languages. To my way of thinking, for now, and in a progressive manner, there should be an active integration into the Writers Union of those literary values not expressed in Portuguese.

Comrades:

In this installation ceremony of one of the most valuable organisms for the spiritual life of our country. I wish to express the satisfaction that I will experience in witnessing debates on concrete problems of Angolan culture treated as one of the primordial concerns of the Angolan writer.

I believe that this wish will also be expressed by the first Congress of the MPLA.

**THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!  
VICTORY IS CERTAIN!**

## Concerning National Culture

Text of a speech by Comrade Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA—Workers Party and of the People's Republic of Angola, and President of the Board of the General Assembly of the Angolan Writers Union. The address was delivered on January 8, 1979 on the occasion of the investiture of the governing body of the Angolan Writers' Union for the biennium 1979/1980.

Comrades and Dear Colleagues

Today brings to an end one more process in the life of the Angolan Writers' Union, an action which, after duly held elections, culminates with the installation of the new governing bodies.

A period of activities is about to begin for all writers with the installation of officers elected on December 29, 1978. And I hope that in March of 1981 \* we will be able to take very positive account of this period which promises to be one of great prospects and production.

The directorship of our Union has made every effort to dynamize literary production at a time when there still exists some confusion in content about an Angolan, African, and universal future for literature and the political necessity of nationalism, or about the future of the writer's political activities and politics itself.

Thus, the task that lies before the new officers will not be merely one of administrative responsibilities, but also one of analysis and criticism. It will not be an easy task. I believe that we will soon open debate to the assessment of our work within the true context of the Angolan Nation or, better yet, of the Angolan People.

Therefore, in the name of the Board of the General Assembly it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the elected executive body of the

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\* The next General Assembly of the Angolan Writers Union is scheduled for this date (trans. note).

present directorship, which has before it a grand task to perform in the dynamization of Angolan culture. May their work go well.

I think it necessary to talk about culture in general before dealing with literature in particular. Let us take advantage of this excellent opportunity to examine some essential aspects of our culture.

Fortunately, among Angolan intellectuals some hesitation and doubts have already been raised as to whether Portuguese culture, which did serve some Angolans who were detached from their own people, is or is not that which should be presented as the cultural emanation of the Angolan people. Doubts lead to affirmation.

Obviously, culture cannot be inscribed in chauvinism, nor can it avoid the dynamism of life. Culture evolves with material conditions and at each stage it corresponds to a form of expression and of concretization of cultural acts. Culture results from the material situation and from the state of social development.

In the Angolan context cultural expression results, if not from imitation, at least, for the time being, from the effects of centuries of acculturation. This acculturation has claimed to reflect the material evolution of the people who, after being independent, became submissive and completely dependent, and then became independent again under new conditions.

We must turn to our own reality, without chauvinism and without denying our universalist calling. Cultural chauvinism is as detrimental as was the concept of *proletkult* which emerged right after the Revolution of October and which Lenin so vigorously opposed. Lenin insisted that the Soviet nation, for the elaboration of a new socialist culture aimed at the masses, should necessarily find fulfillment in and take advantage of its cultural heritage. Later on, of course, the concept of *socialist realism* also proved to be detrimental.

Today, the culture of the Angolan people is composed of fragments that extend from the assimilated urban areas to rural areas where European assimilation had only superficial effects. And because capital cities like ours \*, overgrown with bureaucracy, exert a magic influence on the rest of the Country, there is a tendency to imitate. This tendency to imitate is readily apparent in the cultural realm. Thus, the Angolan Writers Union has a special responsibility. Both the responsibility and the task are enormous. Where to begin? Or, how to continue?

If my esteemed comrades and colleagues will permit me, I will say that we should not fall into fixed patterns or stereotypes like those of the *socialist realist* theorists. On a par with our nationalist capacities, we have to intervene in such a way as to join with the rest of the world even as we go about laying claim to our national reality.

In our initial phase, and from the cultural point of view, it is necessary to analyze and not indulge in mechanical adaptations. It is

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\* The reference is to Luanda, capital of the People's Republic of Angola (trans. note).

necessary to analyze reality profoundly and to utilize the benefits of outside techniques only when we are in possession of an Angolan cultural heritage.

To develop our culture does not mean to subject it to other cultures.

We have not yet reached a level of material production that will permit us to dedicate ourselves intensively to spiritual production. We need more time. But, Comrade Writers, that time cannot be taken up with accommodations to imported themes and forms.

Angolan culture is African; above all, it is Angolan. Thus, we have always been offended by the way our people were treated by Portuguese intellectuals.

If it is not yet within our capacity to transform the writer into a professional of literature or cultural research, we are headed in that direction. And some proposals put forth by the Secretariat may be able to be honored during vacation periods or active weekends.

I believe that shortly artists and writers will just be artists and writers, able to devote themselves to problems that I merely touch on now, at the end of this Assembly.

To my way of thinking, however, it will be necessary to go deeply into issues that have to do with the culture of the several Angolan nations, today united into one, and with the effects of acculturation resulting from contacts with European culture. There is likewise a need to reach an agreement on the utilization of agents of culture from the people and to bring about a single comprehensive current of this culture in Angola.

Not unlike the botanist or the zoologist, the scientist or the philosopher, let us bring together all elements. Let us analyze these elements, and let us do it scientifically, and within two years let us present our results. And I am sure that we shall arrive at the conclusion that Angola has its own characteristic culture, one that has resulted from its history, or from its histories.

It would be a good thing (but if it's not possible, we won't cry over it) if during the next Party Congress we could count on the opinions of the Angolan Writers' Union on these matters.

As for other agents of culture, like painters and sculptors and even those who, under present conditions, are charged with the dissemination of information among the masses of the people, I think it only normal procedure for the Angolan Writers Union to assume responsibility in orienting and transmitting ideas. This function is one that the party organisms can only define through texts, and one which the State organism can dynamize by becoming itself the vehicle for the results to be obtained by those engaged in formulating ideas.

I think it necessary that we have the broadest possible debate on ideas, the most extensive efforts in research dynamization, and public presentation of all forms of culture existing in this Country. And we should do this without any preconceived notions of an artistic or linguistic nature.



We need to make it so that the artists of the people can create!

We would need a lot more time to emphasize the fact that in order to speak for the Angolan people it is necessary to be part of the Angolan people. It is not a question of language, but one of national quality.

Dear Colleagues and Comrades,

If we persist in attitudes which are inattentive to our people, we will not be capable of interpreting the «spirit» of the people as it emerges from study and from lived experience.

To narrate the political experience of the moment is easy, but to arrive at the essence of thought of the several ex-nations is not so easy.

Thus, let us free artists from the incumbrances of the past in order that they gain a broad and comprehensive attitude toward all of our processes of cultural reconstruction.

Once again, we should remind ourselves of the necessity of our commitment to the artists of the people, not for reasons of interpreting folklore, but in order to understand and to interpret culture, and in order for us to be capable of reproducing folklore and culture.

The repetition of the imported aspects of culture is certainly an act of which no one approves. And since I have been called on to express an opinion, I would wish that all that which is directed to our people by the most capable agents of Angolan culture be representative of the people's aspirations and forms of expression.

All of this must be accomplished as it was with respect to independence, as it is with respect to the adoption of the Party's political line, as it is with respect to the forms of carrying out this political line, and, on the other hand, as it is, and will be, with respect to the People's spiritual activity.

May I recommend to my esteemed comrades and colleagues that they take every advantage of those conditions that will permit our writers to work and produce and to observe every nook and cranny of our national geographic sphere as they live the life of the people. Material conditions will always be created to the extent that it is possible, until such time as we can turn writers and artists in general into authentic professionals of culture, linked to socio-political realities.

By the same token, I would hope that by bringing about these conditions we will aid in the formation of an Angolan literature that encompasses political circumstances and, especially, the very life of the People.

Once again, I wish to direct my most sincere congratulations to all those who take office today.

The struggle continues!  
Victory is certain!

# Against the Black Legend

Roberto Fernández Retamar

*To Spanish friends, in and outside Spain*

## THE PALEOCCIDENTAL HERITAGE

The stimulating discussion, renewed in recent years, as to the nature of Latin American culture has come to emphasize the authenticity of our indigenous Indo-American or African heritage and to point out our distance from, or, if you will, our sympathies and differences with the «Occident,» that is, with the developed capitalist countries. This last point is essential: if we are not Europeans, we are, on the other hand, as Alejandro Lipschutz has put it, «Europoids.»

But there is another important heritage of our culture which I would venture to call «intermediate»—not indigenous, not in the strict sense «occidental,» but rather, as I have suggested elsewhere, «paleoccidental»: the Iberian heritage. Any attempt, however modest, to specify the roots of our culture cannot gloss over our relations with the Iberian. My intention here is to present some general ideas on these relations, emphasizing the most evident poles: Spain and Spanish America.

To begin with, it is obvious that a considerable part of our culture derives from a Spanish source. Although to speak of a «source» implies speaking metaphorically, and although the weight of the Spanish in the subsequent elaboration of our culture should not be exaggerated, neither should we minimize it, and even less pretend to erase it with the stroke of a pen. We received much more than a language from Spain; however, the peculiar form of our reception of the Spanish is evident in the language itself. Menéndez Pidal, speaking of the unity of the language observed: «Hay, podemos decir, dos tipos de lengua española culta, como hay dos tipos de inglés: uno europeo y otro americano, distintos fundamentalmente por algunas peculiaridades de pronunciación.»<sup>1</sup> This visible (or better, audible) differentiation, which might also be thought of as an enrichment, fortunately does not also entail the risk of linguistic fragmentation, as occurred with Latin after the fall of the Roman Empire and as Andrés Bello and Rufino José Cuervo feared (and fought) a

century ago: «los pueblos en que se fraccionó el imperio español se comunican hoy entre sí mucho más que cuando formaban un solo Estado.»<sup>2</sup> While permitting variation and enrichment on either side, the unity of our language has properly been conserved, thus guaranteeing a fruitful communication and the maintenance of a homogenous link with the rest of the world.

Beyond language, of course, the situation becomes much more complex. Spanish Americans like to say about Spaniards that we do not descend from those who stayed but from those who came, whose children had already ceased being Spaniards to become first Creoles and then, intermixed with other ethnic groups, Latin Americans. The logic of this distinction is clear: over a century and a half ago Spanish America initiated political separation from the battered and decadent Spanish Empire, which was destined to lose its remaining American possessions, Cuba among them, in 1898. Moreover, the first definition of Spanish America was made in counterpoint with Spain and it necessarily implied emphasizing our differences with the Spanish: an anxious and complex definition, as we understand today, and one in which the urgency of pointing out what distinguished us from the old metropolis contributed to the fact that many succumbed to the lure of new and aggressive metropoli. As if changing masters, as Martí warned, were the same thing as being free.

The attraction of proposals to «westernize» which so fascinated and fascinate Latin American groups intent on modernization was facilitated by the economic ruin of Spain itself and the inequity of the exploitation it imposed on the American territories, soon to become nations. But another factor was that Spain and the Spanish had been branded from the sixteenth century on by a fierce anti-Spanish campaign which has come to be known as the Black Legend. It is worth pausing to consider this legend, whose uncritical acceptance has had generally negative consequences, especially for us.

#### RATIONALE OF THE BLACK LEGEND

The Black Legend appears to have its source in a justifiably shared rejection of the monstrous crimes committed in this continent by the Spanish conquerors. But respect for historical accuracy indicates that this is simply false. Yes, the crimes were committed and, yes, they were monstrous. But seen from the perspective of later centuries no more monstrous than those committed by the metropoli which enthusiastically took Spain's place in the fearsome business of colonial exploitation and sowed death and desolation on all continents. If anything distinguishes the Spanish conquest from the depredations of Holland, France, England, Germany, Belgium or the United States (to mention only a few illustrious «Western» nations), it is not the proportion of crimes—in this they are all worthy rivals—but rather the proportion of scruples. The conquests

carried out by these countries did not lack their own murders and destruction; what they did lack were figures such as Bartolomé de las Casas and internal debates on the legitimacy of conquest such as those inspired by the Dominicans which shook the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century. This does not mean, of course, that such figures, always a minority, succeeded in imposing their criteria; but they were able to present them to the highest authorities, and they were listened to and to a certain extent taken seriously. The French scholar Pierre Vilar, who has studied the history of Spain with erudition and from a correct perspective, is able to argue:

Es hermoso para una nación colonial haber tenido un Las Casas, y no haberlo dejado aislado y sin influencias. La Escuela de Salamanca, con Melchor Cano, Domingo de Soto y Francisco de Vitoria, a mediados del siglo (xvi), hizo pasar la discusión del plano humanitario al plano jurídico del «derecho de gentes»... Lo esencial, de hecho, es distinguir entre una práctica brutal (pero no más brutal que cualquier otro tipo de colonización) y una doctrina, e incluso una legislación, de intenciones sumamente elevadas (que han faltado frecuentemente a colonizaciones más modernas).<sup>3</sup>

It is also useful to note what scholars like Fernando Ortiz, Alejandro Lipschutz and Laurette Sejourné, who have taken a clear stance against colonialism and in defense of the indigenous communities massacred by both the Spanish Empire and those which came later, have had to say about the Black Legend. For Fernando Ortiz, «la conquista del Nuevo Mundo fue una realidad ciertamente crudelísima,» but «ni tan *leyenda* ni tan *negra*,» given that:

la negrura de su humanísima inhumanidad no fue exclusiva de España, ni más tenebrosa que la de todos los otros genocidios y sojuzgamientos de unas gentes por otras, realizados a sangre y fuego o con las más refinadas técnicas mortíferas, cuando los infrenados afanes de poder y codicia entenebrece las conciencias, aunque se encubren con alardes de fatalismo ideológico, destinos manifiestos, predestinaciones naturales o servicios a Dios.<sup>4</sup>

Alejandro Lipschutz, for his part, maintains that «tal leyenda negra es *ingenua*; y peor que eso, es *maliciosa propaganda*. Es ingenua, porque los conquistadores y primeros pobladores no son exponentes de la cultura moral del pueblo español; y es maliciosa propaganda, porque en forma igualmente tremenda se han realizado, y todavía están realizándose, *todas* las conquistas de tipo señorial.»<sup>5</sup> Moreover:

con igual razón se debiera confeccionar una leyenda negra antiportuguesa, antibritánica, antifrancesa, antialemana, antirrusa, antiyanqui. En los tremendos sucesos que se resumen con las palabras de Las Casas «La destrucción de las Indias» no hay nada que fluyera simplemente del hecho de haber sido españoles los conquistadores de América y sus primeros pobladores, o si se quiere, de haber sido ellos de «raza» española. Todo fluye del hecho de ser ellos los instrumentos ciegos o videntes del *régimen seño-*

rial, avasallador, trasladado a un marco tribal ajeno, por medio de la conquista... En el pogrom de la conquista de América se exterioriza el carácter inmanente del régimen señorial. Si se quiere: no hay lugar para una leyenda negra antiespañola, antiportuguesa, antibritánica, etc.; hay sólo lugar para una leyenda negra antiseñorial. Y aún más vale otro hecho de orden histórico: en verdad no se trata de una leyenda antiseñorial sino de la auténtica realidad señorial milenaria.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, Laurette Sejourné confesses:

nos hemos dado cuenta también de que la acusación sistemática a los españoles desempeña un papel pernicioso en este vasto drama, porque sustrae la ocupación de América a la perspectiva universal a la cual pertenece, puesto que la colonización constituye el pecado mortal de toda Europa... Ninguna nación lo hubiera hecho mejor... Por el contrario, España se singulariza por un rasgo de importancia capital: hasta nuestros días ha sido el único país de cuyo seno se hayan elevado poderosas voces contra la guerra de conquista.<sup>7</sup>

Such observations help us understand the real reasons for the rise and spread of the anti-Spanish Black Legend; to paraphrase Sejourné, its intention is to separate the conquest of America from the universal (i.e. European) context to which it belongs. It is essential, therefore, to reject this separation and to consider the Spanish experience in America in the light of this «universal context.» When we do this, it becomes immediately evident that, as Julio Le Riverend has put it, «en definitiva, la conquista y la colonización de América en el siglo XVI forman parte del fenómeno de aparición y consolidación del capitalismo.»<sup>8</sup> The crimes of colonization are attributable, then, *not* to one nation or another but rather to the general process of what Marx called «the primitive accumulation of capital»; and they reveal:

the deep hypocrisy and barbarism characteristic of *bourgeois civilization* as such, presented naked to our eyes when, instead of contemplating it in its home, where it adopts good manners, we contemplate it in the Colonies, where it removes its mask.<sup>9</sup>

The Black Legend was created and disseminated precisely to mystify this truth, to exonerate «capital, which comes into the world oozing blood and mud from every pore,»<sup>10</sup> and to throw the blame on one nation, Spain, the most powerful of all in the sixteenth century and therefore the one whose hegemony others desired and plotted to gain.<sup>11</sup> It was the nascent bourgeoisie of these other metropoli who created the Black Legend, naturally not for the benefit of those peoples martyred by the Spanish conquest but rather to cover up their own rapacity.<sup>12</sup> The Black Legend was thus a handy ideological weapon in the intermetropolitan struggle which accompanied the rise of capitalism and lasted for several centuries (although by the end of the seventeenth century it had been for all practical purposes decided in favor of new metropoli like

Holland, France, and England—the major proponents of the Legend). In this struggle there were (and are), as is natural, contradictions and mutual recriminations between the bourgeoisies of the different powers, but over a base of common interests which are evident today in the operations of the multinationals. This allowed them to praise themselves, not as the bandits they were and are, but as the shining representatives of Civilization vs. Barbarism. For example, the inter-imperialist contradictions which led to World War I at the beginning of this century were accompanied by the emergence of new «Black Legends,» just as mendacious as the original and, sadly, reflecting crimes just as real. They were elaborated by the warring contingents to the detriment of their occasional enemies in the division of the world; they were products not only of the respective bourgeoisies but also, shamefully, of the traitors of the Second International, the pseudo-socialists who have left such a lamentable heritage to the present. But such legends did not continue to prosper after the war ended (nor, even in spite of the horrors of Nazism, did the anti-German Black Legend prosper after the Second World War), except an attenuated and haphazard form typical of the ridiculous extremes of bourgeois national chauvinism. They did not prosper because it could not be otherwise among accomplices in the same crimes, especially after the appearance and development, more powerful every day, of the socialist world made possible the ongoing process of decolonization and forced the «civilized» barbarians to hurriedly remake their common cause. To give a name to this common cause—the cause of world exploitation, genocide, pillage and horror—they dusted off the terms «Western» and «Western Culture,» according to them the very essence of human splendour. This Black Legend, that of the «civilized» West, is the reverse of the original, and it has no purpose or value other than that. When it is not used as a weapon of murder, it is simply idle chatter.

## THE TWO SPAINS

The way in which Spanish reactionaries have tried to combat the Black Legend directed against Spain has been, as we should expect, absolutely ineffective. Consulting their arid and arduous texts,<sup>13</sup> one feels at times tempted to subscribe to the Legend—something that would be a serious error. Incapacitated by the narrow perspective of their class interests, they are content (besides criticizing other countries) to simply make lists of useless and sterile «glories» and moments of national «greatness,» while denigrating really admirable figures and achievements in Spanish history and culture. A characteristic example of this is the unanimous and bitter hatred expressed by Spanish reaction for the extraordinary Bartolomé de las Casas, to whom we shall have occasion to return to presently.

This dichotomy shows that these reactionary apologists, although clearly products of a process of anti-dialectical mummification, do not

completely ignore the existence of a duality in the heart of every national culture—a fact that Lenin constantly insisted on.<sup>14</sup> Only they, claiming for themselves the totality of the Spanish heritage and blinkered by an ultra-reactionary and clerical view of that heritage, pretend to expel from it much of what we would consider vital and alive in Spain, blindly defending on the other hand all that seems dead, ossified and negative.

To make our own criticism of the Legend, we have to begin by openly challenging this false totality which would oblige us to totally accept or totally reject «Spanish-ness»—a foolish option. We have to insist on the existence of not one but *two* cultures in Spain or any similar national reality: the *seigneurial culture* as Lipschutz has it, and the popular; the culture of the oppressors and the culture of the oppressed. The latter is for us the living and authentic culture, and we defend its works. But on this basis we can also proceed to consider the former without excluding it out of hand (and paying attention to Leninist *praxis* as well as theory), assimilating critically what there is in it of general value to humanity.<sup>15</sup>

Few countries, in fact, have expressed the consciousness of this duality as vividly as Spain. Due to its advanced position in the process of the initial «take-off» of capitalism and European expansion and its subsequent decline and eventual marginalization from the development of that capitalist system which it was in some measure responsible for engendering, the theme of an external (Europe/Spain) as well as an internal («las dos Españas»)<sup>16</sup> duality becomes a constant of Spanish thought and letters almost from the beginning of the Decadence in the early seventeenth century. It is sufficient to recall Larra's striking epitaph in «Día de difuntos de 1836»: «Aquí yace media España: murió de la otra media,» or the worthy Antonio Machado's distinction in texts like «El mañana efímero» of 1913 (the same year in which Lenin wrote of the existence of two cultures in a nation) between:

La España de charanga y pandereta,  
cerrado y sacristía,  
devota de Frascuelo y de María,  
de espíritu burlón y de alma quieta,  
esa España inferior que ora y bosteza,  
vieja y tahir, zaragatera y triste;  
esa España inferior que ora y embiste  
cuando se digna usar de la cabeza.

and:

La España del cincel y de la maza,  
con esa eterna juventud que se hace  
del pasado macizo de la raza.  
Una España implacable y redentora,  
España que alborea  
con una hacha en la mano vengadora,  
España de la rabia y de la idea.

Without denying the evident existence of *one* history of Spain, which in turn forms a part of world history, any consideration of Spain that does not take into account the existence of these two internal cultures and insists, either to denigrate or to defend, of speaking of Spain in the singular can only be legendary.

## SPAIN AND THE WEST

It is not surprising, given its origin, that the Black Legend should find a place among the various and permanently unacceptable forms of racism. We need only mention the well-known fact that in the United States the ordinary words «hispano» or «latino» as applied to Latin Americans—and to Chicanos and Puerto Ricans in particular—carry a strong connotation of that disdain with which the apparently transparent citizens of that unhappy country habitually deal with persons «of color.» It may be useful also to recall a phrase attributed (in its classic form) to Alexandre Dumas: «Africa begins at the Pyrenees.» The sacrosanct West thus shows its repugnance for *the other* which is not itself, and this *other* finds its embodiment *par excellence* in Africa, whose tortured history was *caused by* Western imperialism which exploited and underdeveloped it in order to make its own growth possible.<sup>17</sup>

In expressing its discontent with this phrase, Spanish reactionary thought again makes a muddle of things. What it demonstrates is that it is as racist as those who would subscribe to such a notion: for in effect Spain's capital sin *was* the doctrine of «purity of the race» (*pureza de sangre*). Reality is always much more lively and instructive than those who are quick to suspect and lash out against what they consider an offense to their honor normally tend to suspect. The real history of Spain, not the one composed of the lies in pompous and costumed (*engolados y engolillados*) official histories, shows us the total untruth of what the West thinks about itself: I refer to that singular myth according to which Reason was revealed to Greece, became an Empire in Rome, assimilated a religion which was destined, after spending several centuries in hibernation, to reappear like an armed prophet in the works of the post-barbarian Westerners, who were to spend the next several centuries fulfilling the onerous mission of bringing the light of Civilization to the rest of the planet. If any country permits us to remove the mask and show the genial fraud implicit in this «history» appropriated by the developed bourgeoisie of the West, that country is Spain—a fact which no doubt has contributed not a little to the hostility she has experienced in Western eyes. I do not pretend to be an expert on the matter, but what is common knowledge is enough to begin to rectify this mendacious cultural autobiography.

Over and against the stupid simplification according to which «Eternal Spain» was occupied for several centuries by Arab infidels



whom she eventually succeeded in expelling from the Peninsular, preserving thus the purity of the Christian faith and preventing the contagion of Mohammedan barbarism from entering Europe, a much richer and more complex truth is superimposed: Christians, Moors and Jews, all equally «Spanish,» co-existed for more than seven centuries in Spain, mutually and fruitfully influencing each other, as Américo Castro has explained in his controversial book. In that process, «no había... ni decir que lo español era lo europeo ni que era lo oriental.» Moreover, Castro continues:

Apretujada entre la embestida islámica y la ambiciosa presión de Francia, Castilla desarrolló una existencia de enérgico y hábil esgrimidor, ducho en ataques y en paradas. El menester de vivir bajo la amenaza de la más alta civilización existente en el mundo entre los siglos IX y XII, llevó a Castilla a delegar a los moros y judíos que sometía el trato de las cosas, la técnica y lo que requiriera detenerse a pensar.<sup>18</sup>

Almost at the same time as the appearance of Castro's book, Menéndez Pidal wrote:

La España del Sur, el Andalucía, aunque desarrolla un islamismo muy hispanizado en costumbres, en arte, en ideología, queda segregada de Europa y unida al orbe cultural afroasiático. La España del Norte, la europea, aunque bien firme en su cristiandad, se ve sin embargo muy sometida a influjos del Sur, en el tiempo en que la cultura árabe era muy superior a la latina, y cumple entonces el alto destino histórico de servir como eslabón entre los dos orbes, oriental y occidental.<sup>19</sup>

Spain, in other words, was the conduit through which the influence of Arab civilization—«the highest existing in the world between the ninth and thirteenth centuries»—, and Arab culture—«superior to the Latin»—, passed into Europe and revived the moribund European cultural world. This influence made itself felt in philosophy, literature, science, technology, social customs, in Aquinas and in Dante. (As the Spanish priest Miguel Asín Palacios pointed out, «nuestra patria tendría derecho a reivindicar para algunos de sus pensadores musulmanes una parte no exigua de los tintos de gloria con que la crítica universal ha decorado la obra inmortal de Dante Alighieri.»)

But Spain was not only the «eslabón entre la cristiandad y el Islam,» as Menéndez Pidal put it; due to the extension of Islam, her function as link or conduit was also to introduce to Europe the contributions of Greece, Persia and India which the Arabs had assimilated. Think of the short story or of mathematics; of wax, an Indian invention which entered Europe through Arab Spain; of the arithmetic book written in the ninth century by the Persian Al-Khurvarzimi who gave his name to our numbers (*algarismo* in old Spanish, modern *guarismo*). José Luciano Franco notes, in addition:

Los primitivos iberos eran negroides... De las poblaciones capsianas del Maghreb, surgieron los inmigrantes que poblaron Iberia muchos milenios antes de nuestra era; y son los primitivos iberos quienes, en su contacto tradicional con las gentes de su propia etnia que permanecieron en Africa, dieron nacimiento a un fenómeno de transculturación que se prolongó por más de veinte siglos para finalizar con árabes, bereberes y judíos sefarditas.<sup>20</sup>

It follows that, of the Spaniards designated for their cultural and linguistic traits as Arabs or Moslems who were expelled with the Sephardic Jews in 1492, the majority were therefore in fact Berbers and Blacks.

If we take all this into account, then it is not only Africa which begins at the Pyrenees but also Asia.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, this fact (along with many others) explains Europe's cultural reawakening in the twilight of the Middle Ages. If we also take into account that the so-called «Greek Miracle» had solid Afro-Asian roots, as we now know, and that Christianity itself was a beautifully quarrelsome Asiatic sect whose scandalous equalitarianism caught on among the slaves and subject populations of the Roman Empire (just as, according to Engel's classic analogy, socialism later grew up among the new slaves of European capitalism),<sup>22</sup> then it becomes clear to what extent the West's idea of itself as a new «Chosen People» is as false as similar ideas throughout history. Alejo Carpentier likes to evoke the sad fate of the Carib tribe, a proud and bellicose community which extended from the shores of the Orinoco to the sea to which it gave its name and its bones with the cry «Sólo el caribe es hombre»: only the Carib is human. When it sought to expand into the islands of the great sea, it collided with the proud and bellicose Spaniards, whose crosses and sails claimed nothing more or less than the Caribs claimed: «only we are truly human.» And in time those sails, those crosses and those swords proved to be just as fragile as the arrows, warcries and aboriginal canoes of the people they conquered. The implacable march of capitalist development pushed aside Spain and her history, despite its debts to Spain, debts which include, among others, Spain's philosophical, artistic, scientific, technological and juridic legacy to Europe, and her role as the vanguard of Europe's penetration of the New World, generator of the «primitive accumulation» through her bloody extraction of gold and silver destined to pass into the greedy hands of those Genoese and German bankers fond of referring sarcastically to the arrogant Spanish gentlemen as «our Indians.» In spite of everything, in spite of the Decadence, Pierre Vilar reminds us that:

... la España de Velázquez es todavía prestigiosa; inspira el «gran siglo» francés. Hacia 1650, el castellano es la lengua noble en todas partes. En la Isla de los Faisanes —veamos los tapices de Versalles—, la vieja distinción de la corte castellana anula el lujo sin gusto de Luis XIV y de su séquito. Tendrá que pasar mucho tiempo para que los nuevos ricos, que son Inglaterra, Países Bajos y la misma Francia, perdonen esa superioridad.<sup>23</sup>

They were to «pardon» Spain with the Black Legend.

If it is somewhat understandable that the Legend continues to live on in the reactionary sectors of the West, those for whom racism, mystification, resentment and irrationality are essential, it may seem less understandable that the Legend still has currency in sectors considered part of the Western Left where one would expect a more reasoned judgement of history. That this is so, nevertheless, exemplifies the sort of paternalistic European leftist who, as Jacques Arnault remarks, «denuncia el colonialismo, pero se le eriza la piel cuando descubre esa denuncia en la pluma de un colonizado.»<sup>24</sup>

As a case in point, consider a classic representative of the Western Left, Jean-Paul Sartre, expounding on Spanish culture in a manner Alexandre Dumas might have recognized as his own. To a (loaded) question put him by the journal *Libre*, Sartre replies: «Cuando fui por primera vez a Cuba, recuerdo que una de las principales preocupaciones de los cubanos era la de resucitar su antigua cultura, que infortunadamente es española, para oponerla a la absorbente influencia de los Estados Unidos.»<sup>25</sup> One might think that Sartre is referring to the *present* situation of Spanish culture, which is indeed lamentable; but no, he speaks explicitly of «*its old culture, which is unfortunately Spanish.*» Why insist on the obvious oversights? The old culture could be the indigenous or the African or the Creole, but for Sartre it is the old *Spanish* culture which is «unfortunate.» Since in every country that has risen out of colonialism the old culture can only be if we omit as Sartre does the extra-European component, the culture of the respective colonizing metropolis, then why should we admit that «unfortunately» our old culture is Spanish? Would we be more fortunate if our old culture were Dutch, as in the case of Surinam, or English, as in Jamaica, or French, as in Haiti? How have these countries been favored over us by their relation to a non-Spanish metropolitan culture? Although he may not be aware of this, Sartre is doing nothing more than subscribing to the Legend in such remarks. The most important and definitive thing is that those countries born of colonialism, Cuba among them, have not only our respective old cultures but also a new and revolutionary culture which we are creating together.

Jean-Jacques Fol offers us another example (though a minor one) of this same phenomenon in his evaluation of Las Casas. «Sin duda,» he writes, «Bolívar llamó a Las Casas 'el Apóstol de América', y Martí hizo su elogio. ¿Pero eso es verdaderamente suficiente? ¿No es menester ver más lejos?» Now seeing further than Bolívar and Martí is a prodigious task. Here is the mouse the mountain of Monsieur Fol's «long view» gives forth: «Pues la defensa de América por el padre Las Casas se hizo en detrimento de Africa, y la salvación de los indios fue posible en la época por la llegada de esclavos transportados de Africa.»<sup>26</sup>

If Pol's ignorance were not as great as his telescopic fatuity, he would have only needed to look at some maps of America (those that Manuel Galich offers in his essay «El indio y el negro,» for example)<sup>27</sup> to learn that where the «salvation of the Indians» occurred (the Meso-

american plateau, the Andean sierra, etc.) are precisely the regions into which African slaves were *not* introduced; rather, they were brought to work on the plantations of the coastal lowlands where the Indian *had already been exterminated*. But above all he should have known that such a calumny against Las Casas, one of the noblest figures in human history, represents a base and reactionary imputation. Fernando Ortiz had already written in 1938:

Contra Las Casas hubo un doble deseo, el de borrar el recuerdo de su nombre por ser evocador de la barbarie de la conquista y destrucción de las Indias Occidentales, y, a la vez, el de denigrarlo, cuando era inevitable sacarlo a la luz, atribuyéndole la iniciativa de la trata negrera... Imputación afrentosa que le arrojaron los defensores del esclavismo y del colonialismo español.<sup>28</sup>

It goes without saying that this challenge has not been met by the enemies of Las Casas, a fact which has not impaired their propagation of the sort of nonsense echoed by Monsieur Fol which coincides with conservative bullheadedness and contributes to keeping alive the Black Legend against Frey Bartolomé.<sup>29</sup>

## THE SPANISH DECADENCE

One matter which we neither can nor want to gloss over is the magnitude of the Spanish decadence. The Decadence is an incontrovertible fact; but it has nothing to do with supposed defects immanent in «the quality of being Spanish.» The twilight of Empire, which Spain was the first modern nation to know, would be relived by Portugal, Holland, France and even England itself, the «Queen of the Seas» in our childhood, today a provincial lady more closely resembling Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. In each case, the new imperial power, the Yankee Empire, scurried to inherit by ruse or by force the former colonies. From Spain it wrested Puerto Rico and the Philippines; from France and Portugal it attempted to take over Indochina and Angola... As we see today, however, the peoples of these former colonies have had different ends in mind.

The reasons for the decline of Spain are well known, although some of them are still objects of debate. A series of disasters, like the expulsion of the Jews and Moriscos and the crushing of the rebellion of the *comuneros* in Villalar by Charles V, stifled the growth of a bourgeoisie and led to the recrudescence of a feudalism that Ferdinand and Isabella had endeavoured to check. Without protobourgeois nuclei in Spain capable of capitalizing it, the arrival of the riches of America consolidated this regression. Pierre Vilar explains:

El triunfo del «cristiano viejo» significa cierto desprecio del espíritu de lucro, del propio espíritu de producción, y una tendencia al espíritu de

casta. A mediados del siglo xvi, los gremios empiezan a exigir que sus miembros prueben la «limpieza de sangre»: mala preparación para una entrada en la era capitalista... Para unos, «el oro de las Indias» ha servido por sí mismo para asegurar la hegemonía española. Para otros, es ese mismo oro la causa de la decadencia... Los beneficios no fueron «invertidos» en el sentido capitalista del término. Los emigrantes favorecidos por la fortuna soñaban con compras de terreno, construcción de castillos, con tesoros. El teatro y *Don Quijote* reflejan esta actitud, tanto del campesino como del hidalgo... Doctrinas modernas hay que han considerado como un signo de gloria esta *inadaptación de España al capitalismo*. Pero fue ella quien condenó al país a la ineficacia. Por otra parte, no hay que considerar en esta psicología un rasgo determinante. Si la inflación de medios monetarios no hubiera aniquilado a la empresa castellana y hundido a la banca sevillana, destruyendo los gérmenes de la burguesía, todo hubiera podido transformarse. La España del siglo xvi, por posición y por coyuntura, tuvo que dejar a las naciones del norte de Europa la tarea de desarrollar las consecuencias de la revolución hecha posible gracias a los «Descubrimientos.»<sup>30</sup>

This defeat of the bourgeoisie, this persistence of feudal structures, marks the future of Spain with the survivals of an archaic ideology embodied in an obscurantist Catholicism which set the power of the Counter Reformation against the process of bourgeois modernization, causing thus in Spain the retardation or regression of scientific development, essential for a bourgeois but not for a feudal society<sup>31</sup> Despite efforts at renovation in the eighteenth century, Spain still presents a desolate panorama at the beginning of the nineteenth, a fact that Spanish Americans could not but resent bitterly. In the course of his trip to Spain in 1846, Sarmiento writes with his customary rudeness: «Ustedes (españoles) no tienen autores, ni escritores, ni sabios, ni economistas, ni políticos, ni historiadores, ni cosa que valga.» In 1890, writing about the poet Sellés, Martí would note: «Los pueblos de habla española nada, que no sea manjar rehervido, reciben de España.» This is simply truth to (a sad) fact, not a concession to the Black Legend. The most lucid Spaniards of the nineteenth century, from Larra to Costa, were saying essentially the same thing. The Spain from which Spanish America separated at the beginning of the nineteenth century was, in the words of the modern historian Tuñón de Lara:

... un país que vivía dentro de los moldes de lo que se ha llamado «viejo régimen», o sea: un país eminentemente agrario, dominado por la gran propiedad rústica y los señoríos, en que la nobleza y la Iglesia detentaban la mayoría de las fuentes de riqueza... Los vestigios feudales eran tan acusados, que en multitud de casos la propiedad de la tierra llevaba aparejada la potestad sobre los habitantes de pueblos y tierras.<sup>32</sup>

According to Roberto Mesa, «La España del siglo xix es una gran potencia de museo, albacea testamentario del Imperio.» Even more, the Spain of Franco, given the annulment of the relative renewal experienced between 1898 and the Civil War, «por encima de acronías, tecnocracias

a la moda y masas de consumidores, es un inmenso esperpento que camina desde los aguafuertes de Goya hasta los militares valleinclanescos de charretera y cuartelazo.»<sup>33</sup>

This concrete historical situation—the structural backwardness of a European country which did not go through a bourgeois revolution and remained overwhelmed by feudal remnants—explains the frequently low level of theoretical discussion in Spain (a fact Cajal insisted on). Many of Spain's best thinkers, those who admitted the reality of her decadence,<sup>34</sup> embarked on an interminable discussion of the need to «europeanize»: something which meant, inevitably, different things to different people and which was a confused and confusing slogan, even in a figure as energetic and lucid as Costa. Consider, for example, the paradoxical Unamuno, who subscribed to Costa's thesis in «En torno al casticismo» (1895) only to pass—seeing some things clearly but mystifying still more—to the other extreme; or the Westernized Ortega, a classic case of what Machado called «la trágica frivolidad de nuestros reaccionarios»; or those today who think Spain's linkage with the multi-nationals is going to guarantee modernization. This is not to deny that Spain is in urgent need of a genuine modernization, but this cannot be a «Europeanization» or «Westernization.» The latter, as has been demonstrated in Spanish America, can only lead to neocolonialism. Genuine modernization requires a drastic change in structures: the revolution Costa had desperately called for. But no longer the same revolution—the democratic bourgeois revolution—he championed; rather an advancement towards the socialist revolution prefigured in the 1936-39 Republic triennium, towards the sort of revolution which will make of Spain not a Western but a *post-Western* nation, as occurred with Russia in 1917 and Cuba in 1959. There is no «Western» (i.e. developed capitalist) future for Spain. It is today what I have called a paleoccidental country; tomorrow (and hopefully tomorrow will come soon) it will be a post-occidental one.

## NUESTRA ESPAÑA

This economically underdeveloped and (until recently) politically shackled Spain is a country which we Spanish Americans can only consider fraternally: it is a country like ours. Its tormented past is also, to some extent, our own; its sad recent present under the heel of Franquism resembles that of many of our countries (especially now that Fascism is beginning to spread on our continent); its future is not at all foreign to us. With great pain, we watch the descendants of harmonious Indo-American or African societies doing the toughest jobs in the present-day capitalist world. The destiny of the poor descendants of Spain's rundown greatness is hardly different: where they are not exploited in their own land, they are servants in France, miners in Belgium, unskilled workers in West Germany. This also gives us pain.

Fortunately, our hope of eventually seeing a revolutionary and newly triumphant Spain is not based merely on sentimental illusions. Marx, over a century ago, had already noted prophetically: «Napoleon, who like all his contemporaries, considered Spain a lifeless corpse, received a fatal shock on discovering that, although the Spanish state was dead, Spanish society was everywhere full of life and bursting with the force of resistance.»<sup>35</sup> Forty years ago this fact was proven again: the brilliance of that example, which illuminated my childhood, has not yet been extinguished. Savagely attacked by the Fascist *blitzkrieg* which was later to penetrate the countries of Europe like a hot knife through butter only to come to ruin against the magnificent Russian people, Spain demonstrated for three unforgettable years to what a degree it was still «everywhere full of life and bursting with the force of resistance.» It is indicative of our solidarity with Spain that the best Spanish American poets went to the Peninsula in those years and wrote in homage to the resistance of the Spanish people some of their finest poems: «Niños del mundo: está la madre España con su vientre a cuestas,» wrote impassioned César Vallejo. And there also, made a symbol of the fraternal identity of our destinies, remained the generous Pablo de la Torriente Brau, as his close companion Miguel Hernández was to say, «con el sol español puesto en la cara / y el de Cuba en sus huesos.»

Is it really necessary to insist on the intimacy we feel and will always feel for this other Spain, the Spain where Las Casas and the great Dominicans of the sixteenth century—«el momento más brillante del pensamiento anticolonialista hispánico»<sup>36</sup> defended with nobility the first Americans; the Spain of Vives and the Erasmists,<sup>37</sup> of Servet, Huarte, Suárez, Sánchez, Feijoo, Cadalso, Jovellanos, Blanco-White (many of them obliged to write and think outside of Spain itself); the post-independence Spain of Larra, Pi y Margall, Giner and the Krausistas,<sup>38</sup> Costa, Iglesias, Cajal, some of the figures of the Generation of '98,<sup>39</sup> and above all of Antonio Machado; the Spain whose peoples, in a dramatic process, engendered the rebellious descendants of our America; the Spain of the *comuneros*, of the guerillas against Napoleon, of the Cortes de Cádiz, of Riego and the Institución Libre de Enseñanza; the Spain that worked and thought; the Spain that fought magnificently for all of humanity from 1936 to 1939 and lost? With the eyes of this Spain we can look upon the members of an impressive and varied family: Hispano-Arabic art, the *Poema del Cid*, Don Juan Manuel, the Arcipreste, *La Celestina*, the *romancero* and the picaresque novel, Garcilaso, Fray Luis, Ercilla, Santa Teresa, San Juan de la Cruz, Góngora, Cervantes, Balbuena, Quevedo, Lope, Tirso, Ruiz de Alarcón, Calderón, Saavedra Fajardo, Gracián, El Greco, Velázquez, Moratín, Goya, Quintana, Espronceda, Bésquer, Rosalía de Castro, Valera, Galdós, *Clarín*, Unamuno, Baroja, Valle-Inclán, *Azorín*, Antonio Machado, Juan Ramón, Miró, Picasso, Gómez de la Serna, Falla, León Felipe, Moreno Villa, Lorca, Alberti, Buñuel, Miguel Hernández...

Is there any reason on earth why those infected with the Black Legend should presume to tell us that the errors and horrors of Spanish reaction oblige us to forget what is also our heritage, or make us ashamed of it? What sense does it make to declare the whole of a country's culture worthless because of the atrocities that the ruling classes of that country may have committed at a given moment? Do we not admire the work of Shakespeare, Shaw or Virginia Woolf in spite of the British Empire? That of Whitman, Twain or Hemingway in spite of Yankee imperialism? That of Rabelais, Rimbaud or Malraux in spite of French colonialism? That of Pushkin, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky in spite of Czarism? That of Dante, Leopardi or Pavese in spite of Fascism? That of Goethe, Heine or Brecht in spite of Nazism?<sup>40</sup> That of Kipling, Claudel or Pound in spite of Kipling, Claudel or Pound? The truth is that we are proud that what is Spanish is also ours. To leave it out would not enrich us; it would make us immeasurably poorer.

The exceptional case of José Martí suffices to demonstrate how the best of Spain's cultural heritage, mixed with others, was transfigured in an American work. It is evident today that no other person of «our America» was able to elaborate such a vast and coherent work, respecting and loving of our aboriginal roots and at the same time reaching a level of universal excellence. No one was less blinded than Martí by the false and bloody light of the empire whose last chains he contributed decisively to remove from America. And yet, what reader of his familiar with several literatures fails to recognize that his work—modern, nourished by the most advanced fashions of his time, original and prophetic—has its stylistic equivalent only in the greatest writers of the Spanish Golden Age, writers he knew and admired especially intimately. Juan Marinello speaks justly of «la españolidad literaria de José Martí.»<sup>41</sup> Martí himself, referring to Quevedo, noted; «ahondó tanto en lo que venía, que los que hoy vivimos, con su lengua hablamos.»

The man who in his *La edad de oro* taught the children of his America to love and respect Las Casas, who was Spanish («y su padre, y su madre»), to not confuse him with «aquellos conquistadores asesinos (que) debían venir del infierno», who in his later years confessed:

Para Aragón, en España,  
Tengo yo en mi corazón  
Un lugar todo Aragón:  
Franco, fiero, fiel, sin saña

.....  
Estimo a quien de un revés  
Echa por tierra a un tirano:  
Lo estimo si es un cubano;  
Lo estimo si aragonés...;

who, in the midst of preparing Cuba's way of independence was able to distinguish between «el español que tiene en el Sardinero o en la Rambla su caudal, que es su única patria» and «el español llano, que



ama la libertad como la amamos nosotros, y busca con nosotros una patria en la justicia»; who spoke also of «el español liberal y bueno, ... mi padre valenciano, ... mi fiador montañés,» and exclaimed of them: «A estos españoles los atacarán otros: yo los ampararé toda mi vida!»: such a man gives us a lasting lesson on the nature of the relation between Spain and our America.

In the footsteps of Martí's example, and giving others of their own, are Nicolás Guillén, author of the extraordinary «El apellido,» who was able to evoke his «two grandfathers» (one Spanish, the other African) in an exemplary poem; and Mirta Aguirre in her excellent Marxist study of Cervantes,<sup>42</sup> which has shown a new generation of revolutionary scholars and critics what a correct approach to the enormous cultural heritage of Spain should be.

And should we not also recall that when that legendary but completely real hero of our America left Cuba over ten years ago to fight in other lands, he wrote that the felt Rocinante's ribs—«el costillar de Rocinante»—under his heels? Frankly and finally, I think Federico de Onís was right when he wrote:

Podemos suponer que llegue a desaparecer todo lo que España estableció en América, como desapareció la estructura política de su organización colonial y también otras cosas del pasado —ni más ni menos que han desaparecido en España misma—; pero aquello que plantaron en América los españoles que tuvieron la voluntad de ser americanos —aquello que sin duda era lo más íntimo y popular de España, lo que tenía más fuerza de unidad, universalidad y libertad, lo que era más apto para transformarse y fundirse con los demás elementos que ofrecía la nueva realidad— perdurará a través de todas las transformaciones que sufra este continente, cuyo destino, como ellos quisieron, es el de ir siempre en busca de un más allá.<sup>43</sup>

Havana, June 9, 1976

(English translation by John Beverley  
and Roberto Fernández Retamar)

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, «La unidad del idioma» (1944), in *Castilla, la tradición, el idioma* (3rd ed., Madrid, 1955), p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *op. cit.*, p. 192. On this question of the language, which has provoked so much nonsense on both sides of the Atlantic, see, in addition, Amado Alonso, *El problema de la lengua en América* (Madrid, 1935), and Castellano, *español, idioma nacional: Historia espiritual de tres nombres* (Buenos Aires, 1943); and Angel Rosenblat, *El castellano de España y el castellano de América: Unidad y diferenciación* (Caracas, 1962). Rosenblat notes in his enjoyable essay: «Frente a la diversidad inevitable del habla popular y familiar, el habla culta de Hispanoamérica presenta una asombrosa unidad con la de España, una unidad que me parece mayor que la del inglés de los Estados Unidos o el portugués del Brasil con respecto a la antigua metrópoli» (p. 46).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Vilar, *Historia de España*, translated by Manuel Tuñón de Lara (Paris, 1960), pp. 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Fernando Ortiz, «La leyenda negra contra Fray Bartolomé,» in *Cuadernos Americanos* (Sept.-Oct., 1952), p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> Alejandro Lipschutz, *El problema racial en la conquista de América y el mestizaje* (Santiago, Chile, 1963), p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> Alejandro Lipschutz, *Marx y Lenin en la América Latina y los problemas indigenistas* (Havana, 1974), pp. 170-71.

<sup>7</sup> Laurette Sejourné, *América Latina. I. Antiguas culturas precolombinas*, translated by Josefina Oliva de Coll (Madrid, 1971), pp. 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> Julio Le Riverend, «Problemas históricos de la conquista de América: Las Casas y su tiempo,» in *Casa de las Américas*, núm. 85 (July-August, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, «The Future of British Domination in India.» (Italics mine).

<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, part. VIII.

<sup>11</sup> Quevedo, who was born in 1580, eight years before the defeat of the Invincible Armada, sensed the beginning of this process and reflected it in his enormous, bitter, and genial work. In one of his best-known sonnets, he wrote: «Y es más fácil, oh España!, en muchos modos, / que lo que a todos le quitaste sola / te puedan a ti sola quitar todos.»

<sup>12</sup> «In general, the concealed slavery of wage workers in Europe required, as a prop, slavery *sans phrase* in the New World.» Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, part VIII.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *La leyenda negra. Estudios acerca del concepto de España en el extranjero* (1914), by Julián Juderías; and *Historia de la leyenda negra hispanoamericana*, by the Argentine Rómulo D. Carbia (Madrid, 1944). It is not accidental that the extreme right of Spain and many foreign reactionaries have yielded to this «defense» of Spain with the same zeal they usually employ to justify more «modern» depredations.

<sup>14</sup> Lenin wrote in his «Notes on the National Question (1913): «Although they may not be developed, *elements* of democratic and socialist society exist in every national culture. In every nation there is an exploited and working mass whose living conditions inevitably engender a democratic and socialist ideology. But a bourgeois culture also exists in *each* nation (and in most cases is also ultrareactionary and clerical), not only in the form of 'elements', but as the *dominant* culture. Therefore, the 'national culture' is generally the culture of the landowners, priests and bourgeoisie.»

<sup>15</sup> During the early years of the October Revolution and against the Proletkult's intention to pass over or reject pre-revolutionary culture *in toto* and create a new «proletarian» culture, Lenin reiterated that «this proletarian culture can only be created knowing precisely the culture created by the whole of humanity during the course of its development and transforming... Proletarian culture has to be the logical development of the storehouse of knowledge conquered by humanity under the yoke of capitalist society, of landowning society, and of bureaucratic society. All of these roads and paths have led and continue to lead to the proletarian culture» «Tasks of the Communist Youth Leagues (1920). These ideas are repeated and extended in, for example, the essay «On Proletarian Culture» of the same year, and in general guided on questions of culture the gigantic Leninist task of founding the first socialist state.

<sup>16</sup> From the viewpoint of a Liberal, Fidelino de Figueiredo has dedicated himself to this theme of the «two Spains»—one of the Right, the other of the Left—in his book *Las dos Españas*, first published in 1952.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Under-developed Africa* (2nd ed., London and Dar-es-Salaam, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> Américo Castro, *España en su historia: cristianos, moros y judíos* (Buenos Aires, 1948), pp. 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *España, eslabón entre la cristiandad y el Islam* (Madrid, 1956), *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> José Luciano Franco, «Transculturación afrohispanica.» in *Santiago*, No. 17 (March, 1975), pp. 50-56. Also on this point, «The European image of the non-European» in Fernando Henriques, *Children of Caliban* (London, 1947), esp. pp. 14, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Bolívar was conscious of this fact: «España misma deja de ser europea, por su sangre africana, por sus instituciones y por su carácter.» he told the Congress of August 1819. Far from offending, such a fact contributed to the American originality he was to proudly proclaim four years later: «Nosotros somos un pequeño género humano.» On the other hand, it is known how «the Arabic» in Spanish culture attracted Martí. The *otherness* or heterodoxy of Spain has always interested the great creators of our America.

<sup>22</sup> «The history of primitive christianity has notable points of similarity with the modern working-class movement,» noted Engels. To Anton Menger's question of why socialism did not follow the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, he replied that «socialism in fact existed wherever possible at that time, and even reached a dominant position . . . in Christianity. However, Christianity of necessity, given the historical conditions, did not wish to complete the social transformations in this world, but rather beyond it in the eternal life after death, in the immanent 'millenium'» Frederich Engels, «On the History of Primitive Christianity.» See also his preface to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*.

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Vilar, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Arnault, *Historia del colonialismo*, translated by Raúl Sciarreta (Buenos Aires, 1960), p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> «Entrevista con Jean-Paul Sartre,» in *Libre*, Number 4 (1974), p. 10. Note that this publication, whose subtitle was *Revista crítica trimestral del mundo de habla española*, passed over this remark without the slightest criticism or comment.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Jacques Pol, «Notes de lecture.» in *Europe* (Jan.-Feb., 1974), p. 286.

<sup>27</sup> Manuel Galich, «El indio y el negro, ahora y antes,» in *Casa de las Américas*, numbers 36-37 (May-Aug., 1966), dedicated to *Africa en América*.

<sup>28</sup> Fernando Ortiz, prologue to José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el Nuevo Mundo y en especial en los países americano-hispanos* (Havana, 1938), I, p. LIX.

<sup>29</sup> Silvio Zavala, «¿Las Casas, esclavista?», in *Cuadernos Americanos* (March, April, 1944). Juan Commás, «Fray Bartolomé, la esclavitud y el racismo,» in *Cuadernos Americanos* (March-April, 1976). *Cit.* in n. 4, pp. 183-84. Unfortunately, Menéndez Pidal has also repeatedly contributed to this anti-Las Casas legend in the following: «¿Codicia insaciable?» «¿Ilustres hazañas?» (1940), in *La lengua de Cristóbal Colón. El estilo de Santa Teresa y otros estudios del siglo XVI* (Buenos Aires, 1942); «Vitoria y Las Casas» (1956), and «Una norma anormal del Padre Las Casas,» in *El Padre Las Casas y la leyenda negra* (Madrid, 1958); and *El padre Las Casas: su doble personalidad* (Madrid, 1963). Menéndez Pidal compares Las Casas negatively to Bernal Díaz and Vitoria, accuses him of being a slanderer who intensified, fixed and perpetuated the black legend against Spain, an anti-black slaver, and lastly paranoid (to which Lipschutz would reply in «La paranoia y el histerismo de los profetas,» in *Marx y Lenin en la América Latina, cit.* in n. 6). On this and other historical points, the eminent philologist, who is taken for the most objective and serene soul, proves to be the heir of another great Spanish energumen, the cipher expert Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, whose sadly reactionary criteria do not, however, invalidate his enormous work, which despite its author's ideology it would be absurd to leave in the hands of Spanish reaction. It is still an arsenal of the most varied thoughts. An attempt to elucidate the living and the dead in that great work (a very insufficient attempt, given the usual superficiality of the person who undertook it) was realized by Guillermo de Torre in *Menéndez Pelayo y las dos Españas* (Buenos Aires, 1943). After reading this little book, one is convinced of the importance of doing a more serious job on this matter. For example, in volu-

me III of the *Historia de España y América*, directed by J. Vicens Vives (Barcelona, 1961), especially pp. 250-386, and Julio Le Riverend, *op. cit.*, in n. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Vilar, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 53, 65.

<sup>31</sup> In his spiritedly bookish youth, Menéndez Pelayo tried to deny this fact: *La ciencia española* (1876). But in 1894 he already recognized the decadent state of Spanish science of his time «Esplendor y decadencia de la científica española.» in *Antología del pensamiento de lengua española en la Edad Contemporánea*, edition, introduction, and notes by José Gaos (México, 1945). For his part, Santiago Ramón y Cajal, with the authority given to him by his great scientific work on the international level, affirms that the output of Spanish science, judged globally, «ha sido pobre y discontinuo, mostrando, con relación al resto de Europa, un atraso, y sobre todo una mezquindad teórica deplorable.» «Nuestro atraso cultural y sus causas pretendidas.» in *El concepto contemporáneo de España. Antología de ensayos* (1895-1931), ed. Angel del Río and M. J. Bernardete (Buenos Aires, 1946), p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> Manuel Tuñón de Lara, *La España del siglo XIX* (4th ed., Barcelona, 1973), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Roberto Mesa, *El colonialismo en la crisis del XIX español* (Madrid, 1967), pp. 12-13.

<sup>34</sup> In the Gaos *Antología* mentioned in note 37 there is a good panorama of thought on the Spanish decadence and the independence movement in America.

<sup>35</sup> K. Marx, «Revolutionary Spain» written for the *New York Daily Tribune*, September 9, 1854.

<sup>36</sup> Roberto Mesa, «Prólogo a la edición española,» *El anticolonialismo europeo desde Las Casas a Marx*, ed. Marcel Merle and Roberto Mesa (Madrid, 1972), p. 8. As high representatives of that «moment» we must also mention the chroniclers of Indian cultures like Sahagún: *Cronistas de las culturas precolombinas*, anthology, prologue and notes by Luis Nicolau d'Olwer (México, 1963).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Marcel Bataillon's outstanding *Erasmus en España: Estudios sobre la historia española del siglo XVI*, trans. by Antonio Alatorre (México, 1950). See the appendix «Erasmus y el Nuevo Mundo,» II, pp. 435-454.

<sup>38</sup> Juan López Morillas, *El krausismo español: Perfil de una aventura intelectual* (México, 1956). Arturo Andrés Roig has provided an example for scholars in other Hispanoamerican countries with his book, *Los krausistas argentinos* (Puebla, México, 1969).

<sup>39</sup> Carlos Blanco Aguinaga has studied in a useful book, *Juventud del 98* (Madrid, 1970), how the writers grouped under the label «youth of '98» approached «the problem of Spain» between 1890 and 1905 from radical socio-political prospects which went from intransigent federalism to marxism (p. XII) and how in their capacity as petty bourgeois intellectuals «acabaron volviendo, cada uno en su modo, a recogerse en el seno de la sociedad establecida» (p. 326).

<sup>40</sup> We do not mention Portugal here, despite its known contributions to world art and literature, because that country has suffered the lash of the anti-Spanish Black Legend, a legend with a definite anti-Iberian form. Of course, we must not forget that «Portugal no es un problema español, y es tan extraño y tan afín a la España grande como Polonia a Rusia, Bélgica a Francia... No forma parte de ninguna de las dos Españas», Fidelino de Figueiredo, *Las dos Españas, cit.*, in n. 16, pp. 271, 276. The Black Legend has affected other peoples of the Peninsula, the Basque, Galician, Catalan, even more strongly. They were oppressed by a reactionary Castilian Spain against which they have never tired of fighting in search of a just federal solution.

<sup>41</sup> Juan Marinello, «Sobre Martí escritor: La españolidad literaria de José Martí,» in *Vida y pensamiento de Martí. Homenaje a la ciudad de La Habana en el cincuentenario de la fundación del Partido Revolucionario Cubano 1892-1942* o I, (Havana, 1942). Guillermo Díaz-Plaja could affirm of Martí: «ese gigantesco fenómeno de la lengua hispánica, raíz segura de la prosa de Rubén, y desde luego, el primer 'creador' de prosa que ha tenido el mundo hispánico.» *Modernismo*

*frente a noventa y ocho: Una introducción a la literatura española del siglo XX* (Madrid, 1951), p. 305.

<sup>42</sup> Mirta Aguirre, *La obra narrativa de Cervantes* (Havana, 1971).

<sup>43</sup> Federico de Onís, «La eternidad de España en América,» in *España en América* (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1968), p. 19.

# Identidad y creatividad chicana

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El mundo hispanoparlante siempre ha tenido conocimiento de la existencia de lo que se podría llamar una presencia hispánica en lo que hoy es el sudoeste de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica. Para la mayoría de nuestros hermanos hispánicos ese conocimiento se ha limitado a saber que hay lugares que se llaman Santa Fe, San Antonio, San Francisco, o que por allí anduvieron personajes históricos secundarios tales como Cabeza de Vaca, Coronado, Junípero Serra. Los que más sabrían podrían citar nombres, lugares o sucesos más recientes: El Alamo, la guerra contra México, el Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo. Pero cualquiera que fuera su nivel de conocimiento, el mundo hispanoparlante en general carecía de conocimientos acerca de los seres humanos que habitaban esas tierras y de la sociedad que allí se había desarrollado. Los pocos que conocían esa zona se inclinaban a considerar la cultura existente allí como una sobrevivencia anacrónica de España en América o como una extensión adulterada de México al norte del Río Grande, y en ambos casos la caracterizaría como exótica y fascinante para negarle importancia. Hoy día, como consecuencia de los esfuerzos del pueblo chicano en los últimos quince años por mejorar sus condiciones sociales, políticas y económicas, como resultado de la gran publicidad que se les ha dado a algunos de los líderes chicanos, y gracias al interés que los intelectuales del mundo hispano han demostrado por las cuestiones chicanas, se sabe mucho más acerca de este pueblo. Queda, sin embargo, mucho más por saber.

## I

Debido a su aislamiento geográfico (es decir, a la distancia que separaba a la meseta central mexicana de lo que se llamaba la Apache-ría) la sociedad que se desarrolló en las tierras fronterizas españolas-mexicanas —y que ahora constituyen los estados norteamericanos de

Arizona, California, Colorado, Nuevo México, Texas y Utah— no tomó parte en la Revolución que creó el Estado mexicano, no participó en la evolución cultural que formó a la sociedad mexicana durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX. Sus instituciones y tradiciones, hispánicas por herencia, llegaron a caracterizarse por su adaptación al medio ambiente, a la geografía circundante, a las culturas indígenas vecinas. Todos estos factores influyeron en el desarrollo de una cultura distinta de la de México, aunque tuviera mucho en común con la mexicana, incluso un mismo origen e idioma.

Más allá del hecho de que nunca fuera una parte esencial, importante o vital de la sociedad que se desarrolló en la meseta central mexicana, la distancia entre las dos sociedades se hizo mayor a causa de la separación política que resultó de la conquista y anexión de estas tierras por los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica a mediados del siglo XIX. Separada de México y desdeñada por la América anglosajona, la sociedad de esta nueva América mexicana continuó su evolución en aislamiento durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. El idioma, la cultura y las instituciones de los anglonorteamericanos afectaron a muy pocos de los miembros de ese pueblo que ahora por tratado internacional era méxico-norteamericano. La mayoría de sus habitantes siguió su existencia aislada y marginal en los pueblos agrícolas que se encontraban a lo largo del valle del Río Grande, en las placitas serruñas del Río Arriba, en los ranchitos situados aquí y allá en las riberas del Pecos y el Pedernales, en los campos mineros del Río Gila, en los ranchos de la Alta California y en los viejos centros comerciales desde Texas hasta California.

Este aislamiento histórico, sin embargo, no se podía mantener eternamente. Dentro de muy poco el expansionismo anglonorteamericano invadiría aun las vegas y los valles más remotos de esas tierras; con el tiempo, el capitalismo anglonorteamericano penetraría todo pueblo rural, todo barrio urbano. Ya fuera en busca de tierra o de mano de obra, los anglonorteamericanos, poco a poco, fueron sobreponiéndose a las barreras que había edificado a su alrededor el pueblo mexiconorteamericano, e impusieron en mayor o menor medida su idioma, su cultura y sus instituciones. Paulatinamente, durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX los habitantes de ese vasto territorio que antes fuera español y luego mexicano, fueron incorporados a la nación norteamericana.

## II

Con la anexión, el idioma del comercio, el idioma de la cultura, el idioma de la información, el idioma de la instrucción, el idioma del orden político y social, pasó a ser el inglés. Pero aquel mismo expansionismo y desarrollo económico que atrajo a tanto aventurero y pionero anglonorteamericano a esas tierras, también provocó la migración de mexicanos al norte de la nueva frontera en busca de trabajo y oro. En tanto éstos se incorporaban a la economía de la zona, el español pasaba

a ser el idioma del trabajo, la *lingua franca* entre enganchador y enganchado, entre mayordomo y minero, entre patrón y peón, ya fuera en los pastos ovejunos o vacunos, en la industria minera, en las empresas ferroviarias o en los nacientes imperios agrícolas. A decir verdad, el español también sobrevivió entre una élite sumamente reducida al mismo nivel que el inglés. Entre ellos se comerciaba, se escribía, se hacía política, se publicaba en español. Las masas mexicanas, sin embargo, no recibían instrucción ni en inglés ni en español, y en consecuencia no eran ni consumidores ni productores de la palabra impresa. Su medio de transmisión cultural eran las formas orales: baladas, corridos, cuentos, décimas, romances.

### III

El desarrollo económico que tanto caracterizó a la segunda mitad del siglo XIX siguió en vigencia durante las primeras décadas del siglo XX, y la migración de mexicanos hacia el Norte se intensificó. A los que venían enganchados por los agentes de las empresas capitalistas se sumaron aquellos que venían huyendo de la inestabilidad creada por la Revolución mexicana. Aunque la mayoría de los nuevos emigrantes, como sus padres y abuelos anteriormente, cruzaron la frontera para trabajar como agricultores, ferrocarrileros, mineros y vaqueros, también hubo los que pasaron a las zonas urbanas a formar parte de la fuerza laboral industrial. Estos establecieron barrios mexicanos en ciudades que ya no llevaban nombres hispanos y que no se situaban en aquellas tierras que antes fueran mexicanas, ciudades como St. Louis, Mo.; St. Paul, Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; Gary, Indiana; Larain, Ohio; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Y a diferencia de sus padres y abuelos los recién llegados trajeron a sus familias. Ese proceso de desigual desarrollo económico de México y los Estados Unidos, que provocaba una constante y creciente migración al Norte no sólo de hombres, sino de familias enteras, y de una progresiva urbanización de la población de origen mexicano, tendría grandes consecuencias para el pueblo que originalmente había sido rural y marginal.

### IV

En la medida en que el pueblo de origen mexicano en los Estados Unidos se fuera industrializando y urbanizando, se fue exponiendo más y más al idioma y a la cultura de los anglonorteamericanos. En las urbes, a pesar de la primacía del español al nivel de la comunicación social, a pesar de los refuerzos culturales y lingüísticos que proveían los recién llegados y a pesar de la difusión de películas y programas de radio en español, la población mexicana no podía evitar la inmersión total en el idioma y la cultura norteamericanos.



En el sector industrial el idioma de trabajo era el inglés y no el español. Mientras que en las colonias rurales se les negaba la educación a los niños mexiconorteamericanos, en las ciudades tenían la obligación de asistir al colegio, donde el idioma de instrucción era el inglés y donde se prohibía el español. Pero fueron los medios de difusión masiva los que mayor impacto tuvieron sobre el pueblo mexiconorteamericano. La radio, las películas, los periódicos, las revistas, y después la televisión, mediante anuncios, canciones y programas empezaron a influir y transformar el carácter cultural y social de los mexicanos al norte de México, a producir cambios en ellos que los hacía distintos de sus paisanos al sur de la frontera. Los recién llegados percibían estos cambios sutiles inmediatamente y les producían molestia, pero dentro de muy poco presenciaban semejante metamorfosis en sus propios hijos.

Algunos llegaron a dominar el inglés, a hablarlo y escribirlo con elegancia. Los más hablaban un inglés permeado por el idioma que seguía siendo su idioma materno y afectivo, que expresaba sus necesidades más básicas, sus preocupaciones más hondas, sus sueños más íntimos; limitado, sí, torturado, sí, pero siempre ricamente expresivo de la conflictiva existencia de los mexicanos al norte del Río Bravo.

## V

A pesar de que el inglés y la cultura norteamericanas fueron penetrando en mayor o menor grado todos los aspectos de la vida de los mexicanos al norte de México, el español permaneció como el idioma casero, la *lingua franca* del barrio urbano o de la colonia rural; el medio de comunicación entre viejos residentes y recién llegados; el modo de identificarse unos a otros en un ambiente alienante y hostil; la manera de mantener la cultura mexicana y sus valores; su conexión con la tradición y el pasado mexicano. Este español tenía tantas variantes como contextos históricos y geográficos distintos existían. Había el español norteño arraigado de los residentes de la frontera; el español adaptable y funcional de los pizcadores; el tenaz español siglo *xvi* de los desarraigados; el español pachuco de los jóvenes marginados; y siempre el español de los recién llegados, que introducía nuevas palabras y nuevos giros a las variantes existentes.

Como ocurría con otros aspectos de la vida mexicana en los Estados Unidos, el inglés formaba parte de su tejido. El inglés se colaba en el español mediante un vocabulario utilizado para cosas o sucesos nuevos, si bien transformado fonéticamente, o mediante giros y expresiones corrientes traducidas al español, o por medio de estructuras gramaticales ajenas al español. A decir verdad no era el español de la clase media del valle de México, pero al fin y al cabo era español, adaptado a un nuevo ambiente, moldeado por nuevas presiones; era el reflejo de un nuevo contexto, expresivo de nuevas experiencias.

## VI

Los comienzos de una conciencia chicana se encuentran en las tensiones históricas que se desarrollaron entre aquellas gentes que poblaron las tierras fronterizas, sus hermanos mexicanos al sur y los vecinos anglo-norteamericanos al norte. Esas tensiones no eran sencillamente las muy intensas que existían entre anglonorteamericanos y mexicanos. Las había también entre los residentes de las zonas fronterizas y las autoridades mexicanas que representaban al nuevo gobierno mexicano después de la guerra de la independencia de 1821. Hubo mexicanos texanos que pelearon al lado de texanos anglosajones en El Alamo. Los californianos trataron de separarse de la nueva nación mexicana antes de la guerra del 46. La verdad es que muchos de los que habitaban las tierras de la frontera norteña se creían y se sentían distintos de los habitantes del centro de la nación mexicana.

Pero el verdadero conflicto era con los anglonorteamericanos, de cuyos motivos sospechaban y a quienes ojeaban con recelo. Los consideraban —y con mucha razón— aprovechados, codiciosos y oportunistas. Los anglonorteamericanos, por su parte, menospreciaban a los mexicanos por su cultura y por sus orígenes raciales. Frente al chovinismo anglosajón, los mexicanos tenían que insistir en la primacía de su civilización y sus tradiciones, puesto que la fuerza económica y política de los gringos era arrasadora. La guerra del 46 y la anexión subsecuente intensificaron el conflicto entre los dos pueblos. Ya no era sólo cuestión de sufrir el menosprecio de los norteamericanos, sino de padecer sus golpes e injurias, sus robos y asesinatos. Poco a poco los mexiconorteamericanos fueron perdiendo sus tierras y sus bienes, hasta quedar despojados. Desvalidos y desamparados, su único consuelo eran los valores culturales que ellos creían superiores a los de los bárbaros anglosajones, sus genealogías familiares, y las memorias de lo que antes habían sido y habían tenido, y que llegaron a ser más metáfora que realidad.

Es de entenderse que los mexicanos que migraron al Norte durante la segunda mitad del *xix* y a principios del *xx* no simpatizaran con ellos, que los miraran de reojo y con sospecha, y que esto añadiera a la distancia que ya existía entre los antiguos residentes de las zonas fronterizas y los que acababan de llegar. Los separaban experiencias vitales, modos de ser y hablar, visiones de vida, niveles de cultura, y en muchos casos, condiciones económicas. En pleno siglo *xx* se plantearía agudamente también la cuestión de los derechos políticos y jurídicos que les correspondía a los que tenían ciudadanía estadounidense, pero que se les negaba a los que no la tenían.

A pesar de la revitalización de la cultura y el idioma que resultaba como consecuencia de fuertes oleadas de mexicanos nacidos y criados en México en el siglo desde la guerra del 47 y la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la verdad es que los procesos de acumulación y asimilación eran sumamente acelerados. ¿Cómo se les podía pedir a esas muchas

generaciones nacidas al norte de la frontera, que no habían vivido la experiencia nacional mexicana, cuya vida cultural más allá de su casa no era mexicana, y cuyo idioma principal no era el español, que fueran mexicanos? Anglonorteamericanos, es cierto, no eran, pero tampoco eran mexicanos. Y de ambos lados de la frontera se lo recordaban y se lo echaban en cara a cada vuelta.

La condición chicana se debe a la alienación, al desamparo y al rechazo que los mexiconorteamericanos sufrieron durante el siglo después de la guerra del 46. La conciencia de ser chicano representa una aceptación de ese proceso dialéctico histórico de ser y no ser y una afirmación de ese querer ser.

## VII

Lo que interesa aquí, sin embargo, es cómo este proceso histórico encuentra la plasmación literaria a que hoy día se le da el nombre de literatura chicana, producto directo del movimiento chicano de los últimos quince años, literatura conflictiva y comprometida por definición. ¿Cómo hablar de la producción literaria de un pueblo que se ha desarrollado históricamente dudando de su existencia? ¿Se puede hablar realmente de una tradición literaria que se inicia con las relaciones, memorias e historias de los primeros exploradores y pobladores, que incluye autos sacramentales, piezas teatrales, romances, coplas y décimas de tradición hispánica? ¿Son literatura chicana los versos exaltados y los ensayos retóricos del Romanticismo que se encuentran en los periódicos en el siglo XIX? ¿Lo son los cuentos sentimentales, melodramáticos y costumbristas de la primera mitad del siglo XX? Claro que sí, propiamente entendidos como parte de un proceso dialéctico muy extenso y a veces ambiguo y no como el fruto maduro de una conciencia chicana que no se da hasta mediados del siglo XX. Lo que hoy se conoce como literatura chicana, es sólo la más reciente manifestación de un largo proceso histórico de desarrollo y definición, si bien la más interesante y la más realizada.

Como tal, sus antecedentes directos no son las memorias coloniales del siglo XVII, ni los autos sacramentales del siglo XVIII, ni los versos románticos del siglo XIX. Más bien los antecedentes directos de la literatura chicana son aquellas creaciones literarias del siglo XIX y XX que tratan directa o indirectamente la conflictiva experiencia de los mexicanos a manos de los anglonorteamericanos en los Estados Unidos. Estos antecedentes tenían dos vertientes: una escrita, otra oral. La escrita era el producto de una élite muy limitada que tanto en el siglo XIX como en el XX (aunque en español en el primer caso y en inglés en el segundo) recordaba y recreaba un pasado más agradable y que lamentaba la llegada de los gringos. La vertiente oral era el producto del pueblo, reflejo colectivo de la vivencia de mexicanos al norte del Río Bravo. Su

forma principal fue el corrido, que abarcaba toda la problemática del mexicano en los Estados Unidos: los abusos de los gringos, las agresiones de los rinchos, el heroísmo de los valientes, la maestría de los vaqueros, los sufrimientos de los braceros, las humillaciones de los refugiados, las desgracias de los renegados, las tragedias de los repatriados, las quejas de los recién llegados, las protestas de los mexiconorteamericanos. De las dos vertientes, la más vital y la más central para el desarrollo de una conciencia y una literatura chicana fue la oral.

No fue hasta mediados del siglo xx cuando la problemática chicana fue abarcada de una manera comprometida y comprensiva en las formas tradicionales literarias. Esto tuvo lugar como parte de un proceso político, el llamado movimiento chicano, que creó medios de publicación y desarrolló un público lector. Los periódicos y revistas que se fundaron para informar y mover al pueblo daban cabida también a poemas, cuentos y piezas teatrales. En sus primeros momentos esta literatura era principalmente una praxis política. Los escritos tenían fines políticos implícitos y explícitos: crear en un pueblo que había sido históricamente humillado, orgullo en sí mismo; desarrollar una conciencia chicana; mover al pueblo chicano a demandar sus derechos. Era también una manera de desahogarse, de contar todas aquellas cosas que un pueblo oprimido ha tenido que tragarse, y de atacar al opresor. Pero este proceso también proporcionó los medios de publicación y un público a todos aquellos chicanos que querían escribir porque amaban la literatura y porque tenían talento literario.

## VIII

En vista de la vitalidad del español y de la cultura mexicana entre el pueblo mexiconorteamericano, ¿cómo entender entonces que la literatura chicana esté escrita en su mayoría en inglés? No debería sorprender, puesto que los jóvenes activistas que dieron inicio a ella recibieron toda su educación formal en inglés, puesto que sus modelos literarios habían sido los de las literaturas norteamericana e inglesa, puesto que su cultura general había sido formada por los medios de comunicación masiva de habla inglesa. Es más, los medios de producción y distribución literaria (imprentas, casas editoriales, revistas, librerías) eran anglosajonas. Y, finalmente, el público a quienes se dirigían era en su gran mayoría monolingüe en inglés.

Decir que en su mayoría la producción literaria chicana está escrita en inglés es olvidar, sin embargo, una de las principales características de la vivencia chicana, y en consecuencia de la literatura chicana; es decir, que el pueblo chicano habla también una mezcla de español y el inglés, al cual se le ha llegado a llamar el hablar chicano. Y son los jóvenes los que más mezclan los dos idiomas, los que más han desarrollado sus posibilidades expresivas. A estos escritos los caracterizan la

espontaneidad y la conflictividad; de ser cultivada con esmero esta forma de expresión pierde mucha de esa espontaneidad. Sin embargo, los escritos en chicano son algunos de los textos más provocativos e interesantes de la literatura chicana.

Pero había también los que se defendían en español, los que querían, preferían y sentían la necesidad de expresarse en español. Estos también se sirvieron de los periódicos y las revistas del movimiento para publicar sus obras. También las casas editoriales chicanas encontraron una parcial solución al problema del público lector: sacar ediciones bilingües. Así se publicó la obra que ganó el primer premio de la casa editorial chicana Quinto Sol, ... y *no se lo tragó la tierra*, de Tomás Rivera, en 1970, y más recientemente *Klail City y sus alrededores*, de Rolando Hinojosa, Premio Casa de las Américas 1976. Es más, ya empiezan a publicarse textos chicanos en revistas y colecciones del mundo hispano. En Cuba se publicó por primera vez *Klail City y sus alrededores*; en México se editó la primera novela chicana en 1975, *Caras viejas y vino nuevo*, de Alejandro Morales. Con el tiempo y ayuda de nuestros compañeros y compañeras en los países de habla española, ésta llegará a ser una vertiente muy rica.

Hay, sin embargo, que matizar esta nota optimista. La literatura chicana seguirá siendo tan problemática y tan conflictiva como la realidad chicana. Seguirá siendo escrita en inglés, en español y en chicano. Se seguirá poniendo en duda su existencia, su identidad, su integridad. Seguirán los problemas de publicación y de público. Pero seguirá también el proceso Chicano, e inevitablemente una de sus principales expresiones seguirá siendo la literatura.

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## «Realismo mágico» y «negritude» como construcciones ideológicas

Horst Rogmann

Una visión simplista, practicada sobre todo por críticos europeos, gustaba y gusta todavía dividir la literatura hispanoamericana en dos vertientes principales: una tendencia europea, cosmopolita, cuyo máximo representante sería Jorge Luis Borges, y otra corriente auténtica, autóctona, indigenista, con fuertes rasgos de crítica social, que se definiría, entre otras cosas, por lo que se ha llegado a calificar como realismo mágico. Aunque no se pueda tomar en serio esta dicotomía, es necesario cuestionar el «realismo mágico», que se apoya en ella, porque contribuye poderosamente a la mistificación de la literatura latinoamericana.

El término «realismo mágico» es una etiqueta que se pone a muchos productos, desde las obras que dizque reflejan la mentalidad de indios y negros americanos hasta formas de narrativa fantástica como las emplea Gabriel García Márquez en *Cien años de soledad*<sup>1</sup>. Se puede afirmar que el origen de este concepto con sus diversos contenidos, que parece que mantiene un sitio más o menos consagrado en los manuales de historia literaria latinoamericana, se encuentra, después de haber sido acuñado por Franz Roh, en declaraciones, comentarios y autointerpretaciones de Miguel Angel Asturias y Alejo Carpentier, referidas principalmente a media docena de obras: *Leyendas de Guatemala*, *Hombres de maíz*, *El señor Presidente*, *El reino de este mundo*, *Los pasos perdidos*, *Mulata de tal*.

Si se tratara sólo de opiniones personales que vierten estos y tal vez otros autores sobre su propia obra de creación, poco habría que objetar. Aceptaríamos que ellos intentan construir un mundo narrativo ficticio, con ciertos elementos realistas, que se caracteriza por sus ingredientes mágicos, maravillosos, fantásticos, o que lo mágico y lo maravilloso definen el mundo narrado en los libros respectivos. Pero evidentemente no es esto o no solamente esto lo que quieren decir los mencionados autores y sus apologetas. Pues lo atractivo y peligroso del realismo mágico-maravilloso es su afán de presentar la realidad latinoamericana o aspectos de ella como algo mágico y maravilloso, es decir, de no limitarse a realidades literarias sino declarar que éstas reflejan o reproducen una realidad característica americana.

Resumiendo las conocidas explicaciones de Asturias y de Carpentier habrá que constatar: lo mágico y lo maravilloso son fenómenos dignos de una atención especial y de una valorización positiva; están ligados estrechamente a minorías o mayorías de la población de varias naciones americanas, concretamente a indios y negros. Y habrá que constatar desde ya: se trata de fenómenos raciales; la visión desde la cual son representados es racista. Esta visión sufre dos amplia-

ciones. La mentalidad mágica, responsable de lo maravilloso, es declarada como *típicamente* americana; Carpentier hasta afirma que toda la historia latinoamericana es maravillosa. Y los mitos, productos de tal mentalidad, reciben el derecho de residencia permanente en América; América produce novelas ricas y variadas, de las que carece el Viejo Continente, dice Asturias, debido a que dispone de mitos vivos, mientras que han muerto ya en Europa. Sin embargo, frente al «mito del siglo xx» del Tercer Imperio y la realidad maravillosa de millones de muertos que trajo consigo, la magia del «Reino de este mundo» queda bien chica; la renovada glorificación de aquel fenómeno a través del cine y la ola de libros sobre Hitler, así como el éxito del *Exorcista*, o el exorcismo practicado hace poco por representantes de la Iglesia católica bávara, no son precisamente argumentos en pro de una falta de pensamiento mágico en el Primer Mundo.

De todos modos, el punto de referencia de la singularidad mágica-maravillosa es Europa; o sea si la especialidad del mundo y la cultura americana se caracteriza por lo maravilloso indio y africano, esta caracterización es de una autenticidad prestada, porque se mide por la comparación con modelos europeos —existe sólo porque existe la contrapartida europea.

En cuanto al fondo racista del indigenismo de Asturias, es de especial interés considerar su obra juvenil, su tesis doctoral sobre «El problema social del indio». Allí se lee repetidas veces que los indios pertenecen a una raza degenerada, que antes de la llegada de los españoles los indios eran semibárbaros y no civilizados, y que ahora solamente podrían salvarse mediante el cruce con razas vigorosas, ejemplos de las cuales, aptos para la empresa regeneradora, se encontrarían en Holanda, Bélgica, Baviera, el Tirol. En el prólogo a la reedición de este texto, del año 1971, Asturias no se distancia de sus opiniones de adolescente; lo único que advierte críticamente es que su propuesta de «inmigración», como dice ahora, no da resultado alguno, porque «la experiencia ha demostrado que si se llevan inmigrantes, éstos, no sólo no se mezclan con el indio, sino muy pronto se convierten en jefes, patrones, amos o capataces del infeliz nativo»<sup>2</sup>. Su apreciación respecto de los indios cambia en París, donde a partir de 1924 sigue cursos de historia precolombina en la Sorbona, al mismo tiempo que empieza a alternar con escritores de la vanguardia surrealista. Pero sus primeros cuentos que ya se atienen al nuevo estilo literario europeo no tratan de temas indígenas<sup>3</sup>. Las *Leyendas de Guatemala* son luego la exitosa combinación de rasgos vanguardistas y de motivos nativos. El aplauso de una autoridad como Paul Valéry bien puede haber sido la causa para continuar la línea y fundamentarla teóricamente con su «realismo mágico». Este consiste, dentro de su creación literaria, principalmente en la utilización de elementos míticos como brujos, el nahualismo, el dios Tohil, en la mezcla de elementos realistas y oníricos que pretendidamente es expresión del pensamiento indio, y en una concepción mágica del Verbo y su vate, el poeta, igualmente derivada de una tradición indígena.

El realismo mágico surge como alternativa a una literatura de imitación de las corrientes de moda, sobre todo europeas. Y esto aunque sus dos máximos representantes, Asturias y Carpentier, habían colaborado en la más reciente y localista de ellas, el surrealismo parisino de Breton, y Carpentier había participado en las disensiones internas de este movimiento apoyando a su herético amigo Robert Desnos. La alternativa, sin embargo, no consistió en desechar los fundamentos surrealistas, sino en presentar una variante americana: se mantiene su exigencia de buscar lo maravilloso, pero no se lo quiere encontrar *artificialmente* con la ayuda de psicotécnicas como la escritura automática (la que Asturias incluso afirma haber practicado), sueños provocados, etc., sino como hecho corriente *natural* en el ambiente negro o indio americano. Abandona las posibilidades generales



del hombre de dar con lo maravilloso para localizarlo en dos etnias determinadas. Si bien es cierto que la amplificación del concepto de realidad de tal manera que abarque esferas fantásticas y prodigiosas es comprensible como reacción contra el realismo de un Rómulo Gallegos o Eustasio Rivera y hasta contra lo maravilloso surrealista, no se puede aceptar sin más la definición de Carpentier de lo maravilloso que «surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad, de una revelación privilegiada de la realidad, de una iluminación inusual», etc.<sup>4</sup>. Hay que preguntar, por de pronto: ¿Quién recibe, nota o es sorprendido por este maravilloso, «por la virginidad del paisaje, por la formación, por la ontología, por la presencia fáustica del indio y del negro» y el «caudal de mitologías» americanas? Seguro que ni el habitante de este paisaje, ni el indio, ni el negro, ni el creyente en ritos mágicos (pues él cuenta con la realización de milagros que su fe le presenta como verosímil), sino más bien quien *no* está habituado a todo esto, el foráneo, tal vez el que siente «ardientemente el deseo de expresar el mundo americano» y busca «las esencias americanas»<sup>5</sup> desde fuera. La expresión del mundo americano desde la vertiente maravillosa patentiza la exterioridad del que la emprende<sup>6</sup>. Significativamente el mismo Carpentier, en *El recurso del método*, se encarga de mermar el exclusivismo americano respecto de las supersticiones, en que lo real maravilloso encuentra su apoyo, cuando alude a las Vírgenes, madres de Dios, que de vez en cuando hacen su aparición milagrosa también en Europa.

La «négritude» de autores como Léopold Sedar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, en sus primeras fases fue una reacción al mundo de los colonizadores. Siendo una reacción o contestación, sólo es comprensible dentro y a partir de la cultura europea, la que había sido impuesta a las colonias. Necesariamente el edificio de ideas del movimiento de «négritude» y sus realizaciones literarias incorporan formas y contenidos de la cultura combatida, empezando por el idioma. Al transferir parte de la tradición europea al ámbito de una cultura negra refortalecida, la «négritude» adopta también algunos de sus presupuestos como toda una gama de prejuicios sobre el modo de vivir de los negros, es decir todo el racismo y exotismo europeos. Es verdad que invierte los términos: lo que los blancos consideraron como signos de barbarie, lo va a festejar la negritud como la forma legítima de la personalidad africana. Sin embargo, aunque invierta la valorización, dignificando por ejemplo al «sale nègre», el negro sucio, no por eso destruye el sistema de prejuicios con los que la colonización justificó su empresa pretendidamente civilizadora. Todavía existe el prejuicio de que los países industrializados deben el serlo a la inteligencia, a la inventiva técnica, a la iniciativa, el dinamismo, la laboriosidad, etc. de sus pobladores, mientras que los «atrasados» son la víctima de su propia pereza, la resistencia frente al progreso, la pervivencia de formas de vida arcaicas, etc. Naturalmente un Senghor no va a afirmar lo último, pero sí reconoce lo primero, que no es más que el otro lado de la misma moneda. La negritud, en el fondo no pone nada diferente, más bien afirma lo que niega, porque se basa en él. Más aún: la valoración positiva de las culturas «primitivas», de la vida agreste y tribal, no es ni siquiera del todo fruto de la iniciativa de los intelectuales negros francófonos; había sido preconizada por científicos y artistas europeos —por cierto, una minoría—, y en todo caso se integraba a los anhelos exotistas, bienintencionados, de muchos europeos que se ocuparon con nostalgia de las expresiones de pueblos no industrializados, no desnaturalizados y oprimidos. La identificación con la suerte de los oprimidos, que principalmente obedecían a razones humanitarias y también políticas, no queda libre de la sospecha de sublimar el descontento del intelectual europeo a causa de su marginalidad dentro de una sociedad utilitarista. No hay que olvidar,

de otra parte, que las obras que afirmaron la negritud se publicaron y se leían en gran parte, acaso mayoritariamente, en el país opresor y en sus círculos intelectuales. La revista antillana *Légitime Défense*, por ejemplo, precursora del movimiento, no sólo tomó prestado su nombre del jefe del surrealismo francés, sino coincidió con él en la condena del capitalismo y del cristianismo y en la adhesión al marxismo y al psicoanálisis, o sea compartía las preferencias en boga dentro de la vanguardia europea.

Hay diferencias entre la «négritude» y el «realismo mágico». La «négritude» como movimiento emancipatorio es mucho más política y agresiva; sus doctrinas han sido expuestas mucho más amplia y coherentemente, en especial por Senghor<sup>7</sup> y a través de revistas como «*Présence africaine*», y hasta han llegado a ser el programa de un partido político que todavía está en el poder. Ha sido analizado detalladamente<sup>8</sup> y cuenta con un número muy grande de obras literarias y ensayísticas adscritas a ella. Entre sus temas, llama la atención la importancia concedida a la sexualidad, la fisiología, la musicalidad y los bailes del negro, además del culto de los antepasados. No obstante, el realismo mágico coincide con la negritud en muchos aspectos: el momento histórico y el lugar de su aparición, el carácter elitario (son estudiantes/escritores los que promueven las dos tendencias, y no precisamente originarios de la clase popular) y el carácter literario (aunque con distintas implicaciones políticas), la influencia gestora del surrealismo francés, la procedencia extraeuropea de sus portavoces que convergen en Francia, el idioma románico que utilizan, la reivindicación de culturas precoloniales, la revalidación de sociedades agrícolas preindustriales; el énfasis puesto en creencias mágicas, en una cosmovisión no racionalista y en la compenetración con la naturaleza; un racismo antirracista, la presentación de un mundo diferente del europeo, etc. Compárese cómo Asturias, quien en enero de 1974 participó en un coloquio sobre la negritud y América Latina, en Dakar, enfoca la poesía de Senghor, como si hablara de su propia obra: «Lisez ses poèmes et vous sentirez vibrer l'Afrique... toujours parée de son cortège magique d'animaux, d'arbres, de mystères divins que l'Europe ne connaît plus. Vous sentirez palpiter dans chaque vers la nostalgie et la réalité d'un monde 'différent' de celui de l'Europe, plus chaud, plus solidaire, et rythmé sur des musiques étranges qui introduisent à l'essence des choses»<sup>9</sup>. Asturias destaca las coincidencias entre él y el presidente senegalés. Habla del sometimiento cultural(!) de América Latina y Africa a Europa, de su despertar gracias a «la voix magique du poète», de la infancia de los dos autores «au contact le plus intime avec la vie indigène la plus authentique», del redescubrimiento de la cultura indígena pasada y presente en París, el encuentro con la cultura francesa y el surrealismo y la «notion, si typiquement extra-européenne, de la poésie comme service public, interprétation et voix de la Communauté» y de la «mission de 'gran Lengua', de 'maître de Langue', d'amoureux infatigable, tout à la fois archaïsant et révolutionnaire, artisan de la parole ancestrale et de la parole française»<sup>10</sup>.

Al mismo tiempo une las dos concepciones su tendencia de huida, imaginaria y compensatoria, de la civilización moderna de las grandes urbes, donde suelen residir sus defensores. Como tal no puede negarse el parecido con ciertos rasgos románticos del siglo XIX que surgieron junto con la primera revolución industrial. En este contexto queda visible que el mágico realismo latinoamericano y la negritud francoafricana no son fenómenos aislados, sino forman parte de una serie de tendencias europeas de los primeros decenios del siglo XX, cuyo común denominador es el rechazo del mundo moderno y la búsqueda de un refugio en un pasado mitificado, la comunidad agrícola, el culto del terruño y de la sangre. Las expresiones estéticas de este irracionalismo son, entre otras, las de la «generación del

98» española y el «Blut- und Boden Mythos» del nazismo alemán, su expresión política, el fascismo.

Por más chocante que parezca, permítasenos la indicación de que en un libro sobre la historia de la descolonización en África se afirma la afinidad ideológica entre la negritud y el nacionalsocialismo alemán<sup>11</sup> y que en un trabajo reciente sobre el arte fascista italiano se emplea precisamente el término de «réalisme magique» para caracterizar los productos estéticos durante la era de Mussolini<sup>12</sup>.

Un factor importante para el escritor latinoamericano (como para el europeo o norteamericano)<sup>13</sup> contemporáneo lo constituye la necesidad de tener que tratar temas siempre nuevos o proponer formas nuevas para un público urbano, cuyas esperanzas y frustraciones tiene que tomar en cuenta y hasta que justificar presentándole, fuera de materias para la lectura atractiva, explicaciones convincentes. En el caso del realismo mágico, jugará un papel considerable el chauvinismo de la nueva clase media, cuyo sentimiento de inferioridad frente a lo que viene de Europa o Estados Unidos queda recompensado con la imagen de un mundo singular que cree que es el suyo, aunque en verdad desprecie al indio y negro pobre con quien sentimental y abstractamente se identifica.

De otro lado trae prestigio y reconforta el aplauso de parte de lectores y críticos no latinoamericanos o no africanos, los que a su vez ven confirmadas sus opiniones preconcebidas acerca de regiones, que en su fuero íntimo les parecen exóticas, y que ahora pueden disertar impunemente sobre estos prejuicios, cuya verdad queda testimoniada por escritores «indígenas»; encima brinda un consuelo para sus propios miedos ante un mundo tecnificado y burocrático el saber que hay países donde todavía reinan la vida natural, la emoción, la magia y la maravilla. El mejor ejemplo para ello es la seriedad con que se interpretan a modo de documento social, psicológico, etc., las bromas y el jolgorio que llenan gran parte de *Cien años de soledad*, cuyo humorismo mágical a menudo pasa desapercibido.

El fértil hallazgo de los escritores del realismo mágico consiste en haberse apoderado para fines literarios de la imaginación popular: un pensamiento pre-lógico, precientífico y su producto, los mitos. Lo mismo vale, tal vez en mayor grado, para los autores de la «négritude», cuyo contacto con los estratos populares, por lo menos en un principio, ha sido más estrecho aún que el de sus congéneres hispanoamericanos (con la excepción de figuras como José María Arguedas). Pero habría que explicar de qué manera la imaginación popular, que es de carácter *colectivo*, se manifiesta como elemento fructífero en la obra poética de escritores formados dentro del *individualismo* burgués occidental. La reproducción inmediata de la imaginación popular presupone una identidad vivida, o como afirma con razón Alejo Carpentier, el milagro necesita de la fe. Sin embargo resulta evidente la escisión entre el sujeto creador no popular y su obra, la que sólo se inspira en productos de la imaginación popular —copiando, elaborando, re-creando y elogiándolos— sin participar en su modo de producción originario. La obvia falta de *identidad* primaria entre el escritor y el mundo que le sirve de fuente de inspiración da lugar a una *identificación* a posteriori, y ésta es el origen de una identidad ilusoria, base ideológica de las teorías del realismo mágico, de lo real maravilloso, de la «négritude». De ahí los motivos de la infancia recuperada(?), los pasos perdidos, el regreso al país natal y las culturas precoloniales, marcados no por la practicabilidad sino por la nostalgia y un fuerte acento reaccionario.

El carácter artificioso de la vuelta al hogar popular y mítico se ve tanto en sus postuladores, que viven en París y otras grandes ciudades, y no en las comunidades agrícolas americanas o africanas, y menos todavía en sus creencias, como

en el afán de generalizar, para quedar incluidos en lo que les es ajeno: «nosotros», afirma Asturias, «los de mentalidad primitiva relacionados(!) con el mundo indígena, tenemos este aspecto de un mundo subterráneo, submágico, más(!) directamente, no como producto intelectual, sino como un producto muy natural»<sup>14</sup>; para Carpentier *toda* la historia hispanoamericana es un espectáculo de lo real maravilloso<sup>15</sup>, y Senghor, cuando define la negritud suele hablar de «el negro»<sup>16</sup>, es decir, todos los negros están unidos con la naturaleza, con el cosmos, etc. En lugar de confesar que en la mayoría de las veces se refieren a fenómenos regionales, específicos de grupos sociales delimitados, proyecciones de sus deseos personales o de simple invención, en lugar de afirmar que a menudo las múltiples facetas de lo mágico, mítico, maravilloso y primitivo son sencillamente temas o motivos de su literatura y a veces argumentos para apoyar en ellos un programa político, estos autores se pusieron a ontologizarlos: el negro, el indio, el hispanoamericano, Africa negra, Latinoamérica *es así*. La ontologización, desde luego, incluye al escritor y su obra; el que por ejemplo Hispanoamérica sea mágica y maravillosa hace que un Asturias posea una mentalidad primitiva y sea capaz de plasmarla en su creación poética: el sujeto creador, a través de este proceso ideológico, se reintegra al objeto de su creación; de modo parecido el político autoritario Senghor llega a ser la voz auténtica de los intereses de todos los senegaleses. En esta confusión de lo particular —lo personal, lo local, lo ilusorio— con lo general, reside propiamente lo ideológico de las construcciones teóricas que reducen una realidad complicada y conflictiva a esquemas que no la traducen sino parcialmente o la falsifican del todo.

La mistificación de la realidad nace de la diferencia que media entre la vida real del escritor, sus actividades diarias, sus intereses de privilegiado y sus acciones sublimadas, que son su pensamiento, sus teorías, el fondo teórico de sus ficciones, y su labor poética. La diferencia entre lo que es y lo que quisiera ser. Un Asturias quiso ser la voz de su pueblo, de los indios, sin vivir —sin poder ni querer vivir— la vida de ellos (al fin y al cabo no pudo plantar el maíz en París). La institución dentro de la cual se mueve el escritor, la literatura en sentido amplio, ni siquiera se da en la vida actual de los campesinos americanos. En este dilema se vislumbra la función que desempeña para él la cultura de los antepasados de los indios: en aquel entonces, según Asturias, los poetas sí que eran los portavoces de su pueblo (no se pregunta si lo eran de todo el pueblo o a modo de cortesanos). De todas maneras, quiere revivir esta tradición, asumir el cargo, ahora en verdad inexistente, de «gran lengua»<sup>17</sup> de su país, haciendo caso omiso de la realidad del escritor contemporáneo, cuya mayor gloria, si tiene suerte, consiste en que sus libros se vendan mucho, reciban premios, se discutan en las universidades, los congresos y las revistas de los especialistas en literatura —y no mucho más.

No es muy diferente el caso de Senghor. El también insinúa que el poeta de la negritud personifica al bardo, el «griot» de las comunidades agrícolas, que existe como institución en las organizaciones tribales y en los reinos tradicionales. Siendo un caso extremo, el de Senghor es muy ilustrativo: ya no es un bardo y representante de la cultura africana negra tradicional, sino un jefe de estado moderno, y el ambiente de la capital en que gobierna no se distingue demasiado de otras capitales; cuando se logre la industrialización senegalesa, aunque sea por la vía de un socialismo africano senghoriano, es dudoso que quede mucho de la «fuerza vital» y la unión con las «fuerzas telúricas» que tanto destaca el presidente escritor<sup>18</sup>.

En el conflicto entre el deseo y la realidad surge una noción auxiliadora: el concepto de mestizaje. El mestizaje asoma temprano en las declaraciones de

Senghor, ya que responde a un hecho: la penetración del colonialismo europeo en África y el cosmopolitismo de la élite africana, y responde también a una necesidad: la de recurrir a la ciencia y técnica modernas. A Asturias el mestizaje le ofrece una salida de la zanja entre su vida de escritor y el realismo mágico de sus ficciones; la noción de mestizaje le permite incorporar lo indio y lo latinoamericano a lo universal, al cosmopolitismo practicado por el escritor<sup>19</sup>. Incluso se inventa una instancia que une la voz del escritor «mestizo» a la comunidad del país natal, una instancia que con su irracionalismo es pariente próximo de la magia: el Verbo. Dice Asturias del Verbo: «qui le connaît et l'utilise est 'per se' la voix de la Communauté»<sup>20</sup>.

Con el «mestizaje» cultural propuesto, Asturias y Senghor aceptan de antemano también la base sobre la que reposa la discriminación de la población indígena: aceptan que existe una diferencia fundamental, cuasi ontológica, entre el indígena y el blanco, una diferencia vital —de la manera de comprender el mundo (por la emoción o por la razón, por el instinto o por el cálculo, etc.)— y cultural (predominio del ritmo, de la poesía o de la técnica, la ciencia). De este modo, una problemática política, social y económica, que por lo demás los dos autores no niegan, es reducida a un problema cultural; poco falta para que presenten una solución estética y moral a problemas político-sociales. En un discurso en que se ocupa de la negritud y el «americanismo» (que es la visión subjetiva del mundo, partiendo de los valores objetivos de la civilización norteamericana, o «americanidad» —palabra que recuerda la lamentable «idea de hispanidad»), Senghor pontifica consecuentemente que en la confrontación entre el mundo desarrollado y el subdesarrollado, lo que hace falta es «dar soluciones más culturales que económicas»<sup>21</sup>. De otro lado, ni la universalización del jazz, del reggae, del poncho, etc. ha mejorado la suerte de los habitantes de Harlem o de los campesinos centroamericanos, ni el mestizo Fulgencio Batista fue un político ejemplar, ni la favorización del vodú por Duvalier favoreció la felicidad de los haitianos, ni el despegue de aviones franceses de territorio senegalés para combatir el movimiento independiente del Frente Polisario dice muy bien del humanismo que pregona el presidente de la negritud<sup>22</sup> —el abismo entre las ideas y las realidades a que se refiere patentiza el carácter ideológico de las primeras (en el sentido de «falsa conciencia»).

La negritud de Senghor muestra por la práctica que no logra cumplir con sus postulados emancipadores. La práctica política del partido y gobierno de Senghor muestra más bien, para resumir la opinión de sus críticos, que no realiza la libertad del hombre senegalés, sino favorece el neocolonialismo. Algo debe fallar cuando la negritud da primero impulsos a la descolonización y poco después al neocolonialismo.

Mientras que las teorías de Asturias y Carpentier casi no han sido objeto de una crítica severa<sup>23</sup>, la «négritude» de Senghor fue vituperada duramente como tesis «irracional, peligrosa y mixtificadora, subproducto del nacionalismo», que sirve «de base cultural a la penetración neocolonialista en África y en América»<sup>24</sup>. Stanislas Adotevi, de Dahomey, en su libro *Négritude et négrologues* (París, 1972) desmonta implacablemente el edificio mitológico de la negritud de Senghor y sus compañeros de ideas, calificándola de mascarada, de cabalgata de clichés grotescos y ridículos sobre una esencia rígida del negro que el tiempo no alcanza<sup>25</sup>. Mientras que «liberar al negro de los fantasmas del pasado y sobre todo del presente es una de las condiciones primarias del desarrollo de África»<sup>26</sup>, la negritud lo petrifica como un ser delirante y bailador, sensual, fraternal<sup>27</sup>: «La négritude, c'est la dernière-née d'une idéologie de domination»<sup>28</sup>, desde un punto de vista político radical, es el opio del negro<sup>29</sup>; según otro crítico es un medio

del imperialismo cultural y de «autocolonización», realizada por las nuevas élites de países del Tercer Mundo<sup>30</sup>. Su función destaca un artículo aparecido en marzo de 1977 en *Le monde diplomatique*: «Pour le président Senghor, le socialisme trouve en Afrique ses assises dans la société traditionnelle, qui est, par nature, collectiviste. Puisque le socialisme existe déjà<sup>31</sup>, il n'est nul besoin de le construire, ni de rompre les liens de dépendance avec le monde capitaliste. Théorie commode, qui scelle la collaboration de l'Afrique indépendante avec l'Occident, par l'intermédiaire de la bourgeoisie d'Etat ainsi assurée de consolider son pouvoir. ...Si l'agriculture est par nature collectiviste, l'industrie reste, pour le président Senghor, le domaine des étrangers»<sup>32</sup>. Con la desaparición del régimen colonialista directo, además, no se está restaurando el idilio precolonial sino produciéndose, como dice Jacques Chevrier, «en particulier l'oppression de l'homme noir par l'homme noir»<sup>33</sup> para encubrir estas nuevas relaciones de desigualdad es útil ahora la doctrina de los rasgos comunes a todos los negroafricanos.

En un mundo moderno que para la solución de sus graves problemas precisa del máximo esfuerzo racional, la glorificación de la irracionalidad, de la tradición y del mestizaje idealista son de escaso valor, son contraproducentes. No hay remedio: las estructuras tradicionales están destruidas o a punto de desaparecer, los viejos ritos están transformándose en artículos de exportación (como los conjuntos de danzas africanas o mexicanas que se exhiben en los escenarios de las grandes ciudades internacionales), los «kora» y «balafong» de Senghor se van sustituyendo por la guitarra eléctrica, Mackandal ya no vuela por los aires sino en avión. —¿Para qué presentar un mundo mágico maravilloso que (ya) no es real, como si lo fuera? «Por qué (ciertos autores), cuando invocan sus culturas, tienen que presentarlas esencialmente bajo la especie de tradiciones o de un folklore de épocas pasadas como si fueran para ellos sólo un refugio al margen de la vida donde protegerse contra los asaltos del presente?»<sup>34</sup> Además, no hay aquí ninguna relación incontaminada con las tradiciones indígenas, porque ya la visión de ellas está teñida por la europea y hasta aprendida en París. La conciencia de este hecho se expresa indirectamente por el elogio del mestizaje (la civilización indoespañola, afrocubana, francoafricana) o la afirmación de su necesidad, que es la negación ya de la antítesis Europa/América (o Africa), la que a su vez fue el presupuesto del realismo mágico y de la negritud.

Octavio Ianni nombra «dependencia estructural» maneras de pensar que adaptan la cosmovisión dominante en un país dependiente de la cosmovisión de la metrópoli<sup>35</sup>. Se ha abusado mucho de la teoría de la dependencia, pero el término se presta para captar la base del realismo mágico y la negritud, que está formada por una valoración positiva de prejuicios colonialistas acerca de llamados pueblos «primitivos». Este hecho se corrobora por el paralelismo con corrientes dentro del pensamiento de vanguardia europeo que impugnan los valores «occidentales»; esta impugnación desde el centro del poder favorecía, estimulaba y hallaba un eco en impugnaciones desde fuera, desde las élites de países política y económicamente dependientes. La interrelación que así se muestra que existe ideológicamente entre la metrópoli y la periferia, es el mejor argumento en contra de la dicotomía literatura europea/literatura autóctona, pues históricamente, nos guste o no, la cultura europea invadió las de la periferia, pero éstas, si es que existían como tales autónomamente, influían muy poco en la europea.

Es un solo proceso que subyace a la división entre la metrópoli y la periferia, no dos, y aunque tenga efectos diferentes según se trate de la una o la otra, son más o menos los mismos grupos sociales los que actúan como portadores de la vida cultural y que suelen considerarse como víctimas de este proceso, lo que facilita la circulación de las mismas ideas entre ellos. Construir diferencias profun-

das donde no las hay, buscar lo típico en formas de vida agrícolas, telúricas, naturales o sus aspectos irracionales, hace que lo diferente lo sea sólo en la apariencia. Es precisamente a través de la búsqueda de lo autóctono que se manifiesta la dependencia.

Si, para citar a Roberto Fernández Retamar, obras mágico-realistas y negristas comunican «al mundo noticias de esas comarcas que reclamaban la atención»<sup>36</sup>, la plena comunicación corre el peligro de entorpecerse a causa de la aureola exótica y antirrational que envuelve «le mythe d'une culture nègre (o, agregamos, india) quasiment indélébile ... qui ... aurait maintenu envers et contre tout certaines valeurs dites 'nègres' (o indios): l'émotion', le 'communisme primitif et instinctif', le 'don de connaissance intuitive' et autres merveilles dont l'Occident se trouve évidemment dépourvu»<sup>37</sup>.

Las consideraciones precedentes, por supuesto, de ninguna manera pretenden poner en duda el valor literario de los autores mencionados, ni mucho menos la postura sinceramente socialista de Alejo Carpentier.

## NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> Angel Flores, «Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction,» *Hispania*, XXXVIII, 1955, partiendo de Kafka, reúne autores como R. Gallegos, Borges, Bioy-Casares, Asturias, mientras Luis Leal, «El realismo mágico en la literatura hispanoamericana», *Cuadernos Americanos*, 4, 1967, quiere que el realismo mágico descubra relaciones misteriosas entre el hombre y cuanto le rodea. Un típico ejemplo de la aplicación del concepto a una ficción que de alguna manera traspasa los límites de la realidad, es el trabajo de Germán Darío Carrillo, «Un relato de Gabriel García Márquez visto a través de la lupa del realismo mágico», *Razón y Fábula*, 23, 1971, que comprueba que ciertos rasgos «magicorrealistas» pueden rastrearse en el cuento estudiado —como si tal comprobación tuviese interés alguno. Un título más reciente: A. Fama, *Realismo mágico en la narrativa de Demetrio Aguilera Malta*, Madrid, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Miguel Angel Asturias, *El problema social del indio y otros textos*, recogidos y presentados por Claude Couffon, París, 1971, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Marc Cheymol, *Paris 1924: La seconde naissance de Miguel Angel Asturias*. En: Publications du Séminaire Miguel Angel Asturias, Université Paris X - Nanterre, 2, Déc. 1976. Los primeros cuentos y poemas en prosa de Asturias, «Sacrilégio del Miércoles Santo», «Un Beso Blanco», «A Orillas del Sena», redactados en París bastante antes de las *Leyendas de Guatemala*, «están impregnados de una atmósfera irreal, sino surreal» (p. 117), lo que equivale a decir que Asturias ensayaba ya el «realismo mágico» antes de aplicarlo a y fundamentarlo en lo indoamericano.

También Senghor inició su carrera literaria con un poema calcado sobre rasgos simbolistas y parnasianos. Aunque este hecho no signifique demasiado en cuanto a las peripecias de la «négritude» como la entiende su autor, por lo menos indica una de sus raíces. Porque la negritud, igual que el realismo mágico, es un producto de París, figurando como sus padres algunos intelectuales y estudiantes negros antillanos y africanos occidentales que en la metrópoli del colonialismo francés decidieron reavivar una cultura sometida y al mismo tiempo erigir los fundamentos de una nueva cultura negra que se distinguiría de la de los colonizadores.

<sup>4</sup> Prólogo a *El reino de este mundo*.

<sup>5</sup> Palabras de Carpentier.

<sup>6</sup> Algo de esto se desprende del comentario de Emir Rodríguez Monegal a *El reino de este mundo*: «Al nivel de Ti Noel (que es también el de Mackandal y Boukman y todos los esclavos) lo mágico es real. Al nivel del autor, lo mágico es maravilloso». «Lo Real y lo Maravilloso en *El reino de este mundo*». En: Klaus Müller-Bergh, sel.: *Asedios a Carpentier*, Santiago de Chile, 1972, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> *Négritude et Humanisme; Nation et voie africaine du socialisme.*

<sup>8</sup> Por ejemplo por Lilyan Kesteloot, *Les écrivains noirs de langue française: naissance d'une littérature*, Bruxelles, 1968, o por Jacques Chevrier, *Littérature nègre. Afrique, Antilles, Madagascar*, París, 1974.

<sup>9</sup> *Préface à la poésie de L. S. Senghor*. En: *Europe*, 553/554, 1975, p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41; para referirse a sí mismo, sólo debería reemplazar la última palabra por «espagnole».

<sup>11</sup> Cf. I. eGiss, *Panafricanismus - Zur Geschichte der Dekolonisation*, Frankfurt, 1968, p. 248.

<sup>12</sup> Marie-A. Macciochi, *L'art, les intellectuels et le fascisme*. En id. (ed.), *Éléments pour une analyse du fascisme*, 10/18, Union Générale d'éditions, París, 1976, vol. 2, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> Para el africano, el problema puede que no se plantee en esta forma.

<sup>14</sup> Cit. en Luis López Alvarez, «Magia y Política, Conversación con Miguel Ángel Asturias». En: *Índice*, 226, 1967.

<sup>15</sup> «¿Qué es la historia de América toda sino la crónica de lo real maravilloso?» (prólogo a *El reino de este mundo*).

<sup>16</sup> «l'être-dans-le-monde du noir», en palabras de Sartre.

<sup>17</sup> Asturias dice de Senghor: «Il s'agit, en somme, dans les vieux textes de la sagesse maya, d'écouter et de résumer le savoir et les vertus des Ancêtres.» *Préface...*, cit. en la nota 9, p. 45). Es evidente que se retrata también a sí mismo.

<sup>18</sup> Por ejemplo en los trabajos reunidos en el tomo *Négritude et Humanisme*, París, 1964; «la Force vitale, le Désir répondant à l'appel des forces telluriques» (p. 102); en el mismo artículo, «De la liberté de l'âme ou l'éloge du métissage», del año 1950, advierte ya que «l'éthique communautaire, fondée sur la notion de force vitale [a fait place] à la morale de l'argent» (p. 100).

<sup>19</sup> Senghor constata: «L'originalité la plus originale d'Asturias ne fut pas de chanter l'Indien..., mais la Métis», «Asturias le métis», en: *Europe*, 553/554, 1975, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> «Préface à la poésie de L. S. Senghor», *Europe*, 553/554, 1975, p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Négritud y americanismo o Let America be America*, en: *Diálogos*, 65, 1976, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> La negritud es un «humanismo pan-humano, que, como tal, se dirige a todas las razas, a todos los continentes», cit. por René L. F. Durand, «L. Sédar Senghor y la Negritude», en *Razón y Fábula*, 23, 1971, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Leal define el realismo mágico como un «movimiento» y una actitud ante la realidad, que trata de «descubrir lo que hay de misterioso en las cosas, en la vida, en las acciones humanas» o de «adivinar los inadvertidos matices del mundo externo» (op. cit. en la nota 1, pp. 231, 232, 235). Es una lástima que Luis Leal no nos indique qué es lo misterioso que hay en las cosas y sobre todo cómo lo descubre el escritor magicorrealista. Dice el crítico: «La existencia de lo real maravilloso es lo que ha dado origen a la literatura del realismo mágico» (p. 233). Esta explicación revela el punto débil de toda la problemática: supone que existe, de un lado, una realidad, en este caso maravillosa, y de otro lado, una obra que es reflejo de ella pero no pregunta cómo la realidad llega a pasar a la obra —como si la realidad se encargara de producir inmediatamente la obra y como si entre la realidad y la obra hubiese un vínculo de causa y efecto, sin que exista una instancia intermedia, que es el escritor, responsable tanto de una determinada y muy subjetiva visión de la realidad como de su elaboración literaria.

Otro ejemplo de la actitud apologética de los comentarios: «El extraño mundo de los negros, asentado en una circunstancia geográfica que es quintaesencia de lo natural maravilloso que bulle en el trópico antillano, es cantera inagotable de esta diferente dimensión de lo mágico que Carpentier nos describe en su prólogo y nos ofrece en su novela. Pero está consciente de que no sólo es Haití sino toda América la que está llena de tal sentido de lo real-maravilloso». Alexis Márquez Rodríguez, *La obra narrativa de Aleja Carpentier*, Caracas, 1970, p. 53.

Fernando Alegria es de los pocos críticos que muestran un poco cuál es el fondo real del realismo mágico cuando dice: «Carpentier escribe, como los cro-



nistas españoles de la Conquista, para un público europeo» o «Carpentier y Asturias regresan desde una Europa erudita e investigadora al mundo totémico, mágico, barroco y tropical de ciertas zonas de América ... Ambos vienen ... a comprobar la realidad de una visión entrevista en salas de conferencias francesas». *Alejo Carpentier: realismo mágico*. En: id., *Literatura y revolución*, México, 1971, pp. 103, 104-105. Lo mismo Edmundo Desnoes: En el concepto de lo real-maravilloso «hay algo de la visión romántica del europeo que, aunque fatigado de la civilización industrial, no está dispuesto a renunciar a ella y quiere alimentar la ilusión de un mundo primitivo, lleno de contrastes y magia. La realidad americana, sin embargo, es más pobre, elemental, atrasada y simplista que la de los países industrializados y desarrollados», «el mito de una etapa histórica ya superada por la civilización moderna». «El siglo de las luces». *Casa de las Américas*, número 26, cit. en: José Rodríguez Feo, «Breve recuento de la narrativa cubana», *Unión*, 4, 1967, pp. 135-136.

<sup>24</sup> René Depestre, cit. en Eduardo dos Santos, *A Negritude e a Luta pelas Independências na Africa Portuguesa*, Lisboa, 1975, p. 38.

<sup>25</sup> P. 45.

<sup>26</sup> P. 62; traducción nuestra.

<sup>27</sup> «en temps ordinaire les nègres cultivent le coton et au moment de la révolution ils chantent» (p. 81).

<sup>28</sup> P. 153.

<sup>29</sup> «La très bizarre formale senghorienne de division raciale du travail intellectuel (l'émotion est nègre comme la raison est hellène), vise uniquement à perpétuer un régime considéré comme néo-colonialiste et dont il est Président; la négritude doit être le soporifique du nègre. C'est l'opium» (pp. 114-115).

<sup>30</sup> Mohammed Reza Djali, «L'impérialisme culturel, entrave à l'épanouissement de l'humanité». En: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, mars 1977, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. L. S. Senghor, *Nation et voie africaine du socialisme*, París, 1961, p. 71: «Nous devrions tous avoir, dans notre bibliothèque, *La philosophie bantoue* du Père Placide Tempels ... Nous y apprendrions que nous avons déjà réalisé le Socialisme avant la présence européenne. Nous en concluons que nous avons vocation pour le renouveler en aidant à lui restituer ses dimensions spirituelles».

<sup>32</sup> Howard Schissel, *Socialisme du verbe, dans une économie dépendante*. En: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, mars 1977. De ejemplo sirva la siguiente frase de Senghor sobre Francia: «avec Miguel Angel Asturias, nous faisons encore appel à la France éternelle, mère des idées et des libertés, mais surtout mère de ces Arts qui recréent le monde en la *claireveillée de printemps*» («Asturias le métis», *Europe*, 553/554, 1975, p. 54) —la eterna Francia de las ideas y las artes hace olvidar el papel de la Francia contemporánea en el sector moderno de la economía senegalesa.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Chevrier, *Littérature nègre*, París, 1974, p. 54; la cita continúa «il faut donc se méfier de la négritude».

<sup>34</sup> René Maheu, «La culture dans le monde contemporain», Unesco, París, 1973, cit. en *Le Monde Diplomatique*, mars 1977, p. 33 (nuestra traducción).

<sup>35</sup> «La sociología de la dependencia en América Latina». *Revista Paraguaya de Sociología*, 8, 1971.

<sup>36</sup> «La contribución de las literaturas de la América Latina a la literatura universal en el siglo xx». *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, 4, 1976, p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> Jack Corzani, «Les littératures des Antilles - Guyane française (Exotisme et négritude)». *L'Information Littéraire*, 5, 1977, p. 215.

# En busca de una expresión antillana: lo real maravilloso en Carpentier y Alexis

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En el prólogo a su novela *El reino de este mundo*<sup>1</sup>, publicada en 1949, el escritor cubano Alejo Carpentier, dio a conocer al mundo de lengua española el concepto de lo «real maravilloso», en relación con el quehacer histórico haitiano. En el primer congreso de escritores, artistas e intelectuales negros, realizado en París en 1956, el escritor haitiano Jacques Stephen Alexis, dio a conocer al mundo de habla francesa el mismo concepto a través de su ponencia «Du réalisme merveilleux des haitiens»<sup>2</sup>. Aunque no es difícil comprender y explicar las coincidencias conceptuales de estos dos escritores caribes, es menester aclarar en qué radica la riqueza del tan afamado y debatido concepto, cómo vino a hacer referencia a, o a engendrarse en suelo haitiano, en qué medida sintetiza él una realidad que lo mismo se aplica a la historia que a la literatura, lo mismo es nacional que internacional, y luego, para terminar, cómo viene a entroncarse con, o a encarnarse en otro de los conceptos favoritos de fabricación casera, afrocaribeña, la negritud. Estas son las preguntas que nos proponemos contestar aquí mediante una exposición clara y auténtica de los conceptos primero, y de los argumentos después, que ambos escritores han elaborado cuidadosamente en sus textos.

Hay sin duda otros motivos al margen que nos llevan a bregar con esta cuestión. Ellos hacen referencia al uso indiscriminado y a la interpretación unilateral de una crítica literaria cuya lectura del texto bien podría llamarse liberal, bien podría caracterizarse como ultraizquierdista. Ambos modos de aproximación, sin que sus parámetros se acerquen, coinciden al tomar una postura exagerada, a favor o en contra de dicho concepto, que ignora por completo la relación entre el texto y el contexto. Ignora, en otras palabras, la especificidad de la cultura afrocaribeña, sus parámetros en común; ignora también la realidad haitiana, la secuencia de las escuelas literarias en busca de expresión, la nefasta influencia de la invasión americana de 1915, y la lucha por crear un concepto comparable aunque no idéntico al del realismo socialista. Desconoce, en última instancia, la ponencia «manifiesto» de Alexis.

De cara a esta realidad polémica, baste adelantar, por el momento, que todo concepto encierra su contrario. Su ser dialéctico radica en esta propiedad. Lo «real maravilloso» no está, entonces exento de esta calidad, y como la negritud, es susceptible de tener un primer momento fecundo y liberador, y un segundo nefasto y destructor. De hecho, una de sus calidades como concepto es expresar todas las posibilidades, traer en sí las fuerzas negativas, al grado de expresarlas, darles

espacio y, finalmente, negarlas. Sin embargo, volvamos a las fuentes primarias, a los textos mismos, para ver cómo lo explican sus autores.

El primer texto de Carpentier, el prólogo a su novela, después de enumerar una serie de acontecimientos básicos referentes al proceso histórico haitiano de la revolución de independencia de 1791-1804, define lo maravilloso como sigue:

lo maravilloso comienza a serlo de manera inequívoca cuando surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad (el milagro), de una revelación privilegiada de la realidad, de una iluminación inhabitual o singularmente favorecedora de las inadvertidas riquezas de la realidad, de una ampliación de las escalas y categorías de la realidad<sup>3</sup>.

Más tarde, en *Tientos y Diferencias*, en un artículo que ampliaba su prólogo y que hacía eco al título de la ponencia de Alexis, «De lo real maravilloso americano»<sup>4</sup>, Carpentier extendía hacia el terreno internacional lo que bien podría denominarse encarnación del «realismo maravilloso». Ahí daba ejemplos específicos de las peculiaridades y especificidades de una cultura y civilización por zonas, que vienen a tener resonancia en el sugerido concepto de «cultures zonales» de Alexis del cual hablaremos con más detalle luego. Sin embargo, lo que más nos interesa subrayar en este texto, lo que en nuestra opinión es una contribución al enriquecimiento del concepto es lo siguiente. Dice:

Arrastra el latinoamericano una herencia de treinta siglos, pero, a pesar de muchos pecados cometidos, debe reconocerse que *su estilo* se va afirmando a través de *su* historia, aunque a veces ese estilo puede engendrar verdaderos monstruos<sup>5</sup>.

Como es evidente, aquí ya vienen a unirse de lleno lo artístico (estilo), y lo histórico; pero también aquí la historia viene a ser estilo. Dicho de otra manera, la cultura y la civilización, manifiesta en cada estilo y en cada historia, viene a constituir el «ámbito propio» y «la belleza original que es la belleza del universo»<sup>6</sup>, a la cual contribuye una zona.

Para Alexis, mucho más sistemático en líneas generales, mucho más redondo y claro en su explicación de su política artística, que va mano a mano con la exposición de su teoría literaria, lo «real maravilloso» de los haitianos es «*donc partie intégrante du Réalisme Social, sous sa forme haïtienne il obéit aux mêmes préoccupations.*» Y, en resumen, lo que el «*réalisme merveilleux*» se propone es:

1. De chanter les beautés de la patrie haïtienne, ses grandeurs comme ses misères, avec le sens des perspectives grandioses que luo donnent les luttes de son peuple et la solidarité avec tous les hommes; atteindre ainsi à l'humain, à l'universel et la vérité profonde de la vie;

2. de rejeter l'art sans contenu réel et social;

3. de rechercher les vocables expressifs propres à son peuple, ceux qui correspondent à son psychisme, tout en utilisant sous une forme renouvelée, élargie les moules universels, en accord bien entendu avec la personnalité de chaque créateur;

4. d'avoir une claire conscience des problèmes précis, concrets actuels et des drames réels que confrontent les masses, dans le but de toucher, de cultiver plus profondément et d'entraîner le peuple dans ses luttes.<sup>7</sup>

La ambigüedad está prácticamente ausente de estas líneas. Mas, curiosa unión de teoría y práctica, si quisiéramos mostrar un primer ejemplo fiel a esta preceptiva literaria, no habría más que hojear la novela *El reino* de Carpentier, obra que parece seguir paso a paso estos lineamientos generales. Es más, Carpentier lo articula bien en su artículo de *Tientos*, en el que el primer ejemplo de lo «real maravilloso» que ofrece es precisamente sacado de la historia de Haití. Concretando, el concepto se ve encarnado en la creencia de los poderes licantrópicos de Mackandal, «dotado de los mismos poderes por la fe de sus contemporáneos, y que alentó con esa magia, una de las sublevaciones más dramáticas y extrañas de la historia»<sup>8</sup>.

En la formulación misma del concepto se sitúan frente a frente la lucidez conceptual de Alexis y las dificultades ideológicas que presenta la terminología descriptiva de Carpentier. Casi se diría que las palabras, mal escogidas, encierran una carga valorativa negativa; y que el vocabulario, de fuerte tono religioso, singularizado en palabras tales como «revelación», «iluminación», «fe», «pecado», dan pie a la crítica de una formulación o concepción del mundo que en el mejor de los casos es mágica-religiosa. Es más, si ponemos atención a la definición, lo maravilloso parece excluir, curiosamente, el sujeto activo, la praxis humana tan presente en los ejemplos. Así vemos que los verbos que acompañan a lo maravilloso parecen tener en términos humanos una función mecánica, pasiva, pues, lo maravilloso, como fuerza en sí, «surge», «comienza a ser», esto es, está impulsado por sí mismo, tiene, en la frase, la función de sujeto. La ausencia de un sujeto activo, junto con las palabras de contenido religioso, nos hacen sin duda pensar en el milagro y la magia.

No obstante, si ponemos atención a los ejemplos de Carpentier, veremos que en ellos abunda la acción creadora, los sujetos activos, sea Mackandal, Bouckman o sus seguidores, sean los buscadores de Manoa, El Dorado o la coronela Juana de Azurduy. Frente a esta ejemplificación, en la que abundan los ejemplos históricos y la acción, podemos volver a la primera descripción del prólogo y hacer hincapié en las palabras acompañadas de sus respectivos adjetivos: «inesperadas riquezas», etc. Todas estas expresiones revelan apertura, nuevos horizontes, cambio; Carpentier va así enlazando lo igual a lo desigual, uniendo los contrarios en un esfuerzo por captar la esencia de la historia, historia real, historia que es estilo, en un término literario.

Alexis no carece de estos problemas. Cuando trata de especificar y concretar qué es lo maravilloso, cae en trampas similares. Pero también cae en ellas en sus definiciones, en los deslindes que trata de establecer entre lo nacional y lo universal en el terreno del arte. Así, en su esfuerzo por explicar la dialéctica entre lo nacional (o zonal) y lo universal, global, y en su esfuerzo por incorporar el concepto de lo maravilloso al terreno estético, Alexis parte de la tesis de que en el arte hay universalidad. Y como sabe que no se ha explicado bien, añade las características de esta universalidad de lo estético que consiste en «amour du réel, de la nature, de la vie, amour de la liberté, de la justice et de la vérité, amour de l'homme pardessus tout, en un mot, humanisme nouveau.»<sup>9</sup>

Se encuentran aquí ahora, como antes en Carpentier, una serie de conceptos generales que pretenden significar, como aclarará más tarde el autor, que todos los pueblos de la tierra, crean, hacen arte (en este sentido, hay universalidad), sin que esto quite el grado de especificidad e idiosincrasia que cada uno de ellos incorpora al detallar una realidad nacional (que es en sí, cultural también). Se advierte en la serie nominal, un afán de precisión, al añadir frases preposicionales con función adjetiva que complementan la palabra amor. Casi se palpa aquí, como antes allá, la lucha contra la carga valorativa negativa que tienen

ciertas palabras; es como si se hubieran gastado, como si se les hubiera robado su contenido real. Por eso, para Alexis no es suficiente hablar de humanismo (o de universalismo, o de realismo), si no aclara antes que se trata de un humanismo nuevo.

Carpentier, en cambio, más afortunado en su tratamiento de lo universal, lleva a cabo su ilustración mediante una selección cuidadosa de ejemplos, una exposición de hechos y observaciones, un recuento impresionista, como él mismo admitirá, de las «cultures zonales»: la China, el Islam, la Unión Soviética, Europa y, finalmente, América. En cada una de ellas cataloga su experiencia, y en todas enumera él las manifestaciones específicas de la zona, que comprenden desde la magnificencia de la arquitectura y la pintura, hasta la sencillez o complejidad de la producción agrícola, el olor a la comida, el movimiento de la gente en las calles. Enumeración ordenada de aquellas «claves» y «textos» de auténtico origen nacional (o zonal), que vistos y conocidos en la realidad, se pueden reconocer en el arte —aun en el más abstracto y no figurativo.

Pero estas características peculiares, que requieren para su entendimiento la especialización de una disciplina, y que son parte del aporte cultural que una región o zona otorga a lo universal, son, cada una de ellas, en su peculiaridad, encarnaciones del sonado concepto de lo «real maravilloso». En este sentido, el ejemplo de Praga que da Carpentier ilustra bien esta relación dialéctica entre lo nacional (zonal) y lo universal de la cual se preocupan ambos escritores, y permite, a nivel abstracto y comparado, el paralelismo inconfundible entre el arte haitiano (antillano) y el arte checoslovaco (europeo) en el sentido de ser lo que Alexis llama la realización del sueño y de la idea. También aclara ciertas observaciones teóricas que ha hecho Carpentier en referencia a «ciertos sincronismos posibles americanos (y ahora europeos), recurrentes, por encima del tiempo, relacionando esto con aquello, el ayer con el presente»<sup>10</sup>. Pues en Praga, según dice aquél:

la reforma y la contrarreforma están presentes en las piedras... también nos hablan sus edificios y lugares de un pasado siempre suspendido entre los extremos polos de lo real y de lo irreal, de lo fantástico y lo comparable, de la conseja y del hecho<sup>11</sup>.

Y de ahí sigue Carpentier desglosando una serie de ejemplos que surgen de lo que él llama «ámbito propio» y «belleza original», que más tarde encontrarán eco en la enumeración de ciertos aspectos del vodú que se sitúan en la misma dimensión.

De esta manera, la influencia del ayer en el hoy, la encarnación de la dialéctica de la historia en la piedra (o en la escritura, la danza...), el reconocimiento de la deuda histórica en el proceso de plasmación artística, que le confiere a la vez su carácter histórico y su aspecto sincrónico, no son predominio exclusivo latinoamericano, como han creído algunos, sino por el contrario, son abstracciones susceptibles de encarnación universal. Lo que sí es peculiar es el modo cómo esto se realiza, y de ahí se desprende que parte de lo original latinoamericano sea en lo étnico, «la presencia fáustica del indio y del negro... (y) los fecundos mestizajes». Así es como nos vamos acercando a lo propio, a lo latinoamericano, a un tipo de realidad vivida en sus «misterios y posibilidades».

A más de una década de distancia, es obvio, pues, lo que Carpentier se proponía en aquel prólogo y en aquel artículo: primero, intentaba captar, en un concepto literario, la especificidad histórica latinoamericana; segundo, y de esto ya nos ocuparemos con más detalle más adelante, hacía referencia indirecta a la

polémica del predominio literario formal europeo sobre el latinoamericano; y debatía, entonces, cuestiones de estilo, formación ideológica, y si se quiere, incluso, preceptiva literaria, negando la originalidad del concepto de lo maravilloso del surrealismo, y contraponiendo a la invención fortuita y artificial de lo maravilloso de dicha escuela, la invención genuina de lo maravilloso real de la historia latinoamericana. Este último aspecto es el que vendrá a desarrollar Alexis para el caso antillano en forma más rigurosa y sistemática.

Tanto Alexis como Carpentier, entonces, tratan, en sus respectivos ensayos, de deslindar lo propio (haitiano, antillano, latinoamericano) de lo ajeno (europeo, asiático, islámico), al mismo tiempo que lo tratan de colocar y validar dentro del contexto global, universal, del cual forma parte. Pero su trabajo conceptual, como ya hemos visto, no está desprovisto de dificultades, problemas, contradicciones. De ellas ha surgido, en el caso de Carpentier, una interpretación tendenciosa de sus escritos, a la que aludíamos con anterioridad, que sigue por lo menos dos rumbos diversos, uno de apoyo, otro de rechazo.

El de apoyo ignora la unidad sintética estilo-historia, y utiliza el concepto de lo «real maravilloso» para validar, indiscriminadamente, cualquier producción latinoamericana. Haciendo eco a lo que Carlos Fuentes argumentaba en su libro *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*<sup>12</sup>, lo «real maravilloso» en este caso, como el concepto de la «écriture» en aquél, reforzó el sentimiento de que América era ahora —porque en verdad no lo había sido antes— un «continente con novelistas»<sup>13</sup>, y por un proceso de inversión, el concepto, panacea que permitía jugar con fuego sin quemarse, se vio de repente justificando lo opuesto de lo que su autor quería significar: no la originalidad, sino la copia; no lo orgánico, sino lo impuesto; no la declaración de independencia estética e histórica, sino la obediencia a los principios del neocolonialismo.

El de rechazo, por otra parte, ignorando la textura propia del Caribe, en la que la esclavitud y el mestizaje dieron el aporte dominante a su cultura y civilización, y otorgaron el otro concepto clave, el de la cimarronería<sup>14</sup>, al cual no se alude ni por casualidad, empezó a sospechar que el concepto de lo «real maravilloso» encerraba un contenido análogo al de la negritud; y sin hacer distinciones pertinentes entre los dos momentos de la negritud<sup>15</sup> vieron en él un racismo solapado, que jugaba tanto con las concepciones y mitos indígenas, como con la magia y el vodú de los negros. En resumen, «real maravilloso» y «negritud» vinieron a encarnar, en el mejor de los casos, un muy cuestionado «racismo antirracista»<sup>16</sup> —la frase es de Sartre—, y en el peor, un fascismo «de color», a la Leopold Senghor, o a la François Duvalier<sup>17</sup>.

No es de poca monta admitir las dificultades teóricas y conceptuales que presenta la búsqueda de una nueva expresión. Ya veíamos en páginas anteriores cómo la selección de términos para explicar el concepto de lo maravilloso marchaba a contrapelo, por rumbos mágico religiosos en el caso de Carpentier, y por rumbos conceptuales tan gastados como eran el amor a la verdad, a la naturaleza, a la vida, a la libertad, en el de Alexis. Incluso, sus ejemplos de la experiencia del trance en el vodú, son más susceptibles a la crítica excéptica del Occidente. Pero como ya apuntaba antes, su artículo «manifiesto», poco conocido, no vino a formar parte de la polémica en la cual Carpentier vino a ser el blanco.

Debemos reconocer con franqueza que a nivel de crítica literaria seria, hay ciertas frases desafortunadas y ciertas estructuras gastadas a las que Carpentier acude aunque no sea con mucha regularidad. Por ejemplo, en *Los pasos perdidos*<sup>18</sup>, el tratamiento formal de la protagonista Rosario, en la que el sincretismo racial cobra tonos sospechosos, y la interpretación de la selva como el cuarto día de la creación, apoyarían una crítica negativa de lo «real maravilloso», tal

como este concepto se ve encarnado ahí. Porque en este caso particular, lo maravilloso vendría a apoyar concepciones ideológicas cargadamente románticas e idealistas. La sincronía, lo atemporal, vendría menos a ser la representación de la influencia del ayer en el hoy —caso del ejemplo de Praga que mencionamos con anterioridad, y el cual está presente en esta novela en el ejemplo de El Dorado y los frailes—, y de la lucha dialéctica encarnada en los monumentos —que también está ahí el ejemplo de la catedral de las formas—, que el de la representación del verdadero atraso histórico de un continente atemporal, fiel a sí mismo; o, dicho en palabras del siglo XIX, vendría a representar la barbarie.

Poco margen de defensa presta esta obra tan desigual. En *El siglo de las luces*<sup>19</sup>, en cambio, donde Carpentier ironiza, la sincronía, o más bien dicho, la anacronía, según la cual «no había capacidad de entendimiento ni de medida» para ver ciertos conceptos o procesos en su justa dimensión, viene a encarnarse en el trágico caso de la aplicación de los principios de la revolución francesa a las Antillas, aplicación que termina por restaurar la esclavitud una vez abolida, y por retardar el proceso de la verdadera abolición hasta 1848. En esta obra Carpentier ilustra lo perjudicial y nefasto que es copiar y tratar de aplicar principios de una realidad a otra, sin tener en cuenta la capacidad orgánica del suelo a que se transplantan. En esta obra, rica en conceptos, crítica del efecto de la revolución francesa en las Antillas, Carpentier también expone, desde el punto de vista del esclavo, el significado de la transición entre trabajo esclavo y trabajo asalariado, y el de la transición entre colonia y neocolonia.

Siguiendo esta línea argumentativa, y para hacer justicia a Carpentier, de lo que se trata aquí no es, pues, de averiguar en qué medida su concepto se adecua a la creación indiferenciada latinoamericana, sino en qué medida éste forma parte de un esfuerzo conceptual más específico, que se inserta en el contexto general que trata de descubrir y aclarar lo específicamente antillano. ¿Por qué razón este concepto parece adecuarse a una realidad no muy transitada por la crítica latinoamericana? ¿Por qué razón cobra ésta su máxima expresión en la revolución haitiana de 1791-1804 —y en la cubana de 1959? Y, finalmente, ¿en qué medida viene a ser éste un esfuerzo que completa, en la primera mitad de este siglo, el concepto de «Nuestra América Mestiza» de Martí, o el de la primera negritud de Césaire, o el de *marronage* de reciente circulación?

Sin duda, el intento orgánico, lo unitario y original, están ahí presentes. Las verdades entrañables a esta porción continental, a esta zona en especial, que quiere afirmar con Martí la esencia del pueblo<sup>20</sup>, y que quiere combatir conceptos verdaderamente racistas, como eran el de la «aclimatación»<sup>21</sup>, o el de la propuesta de imaginación blanca para mejorar la raza<sup>22</sup>, están todavía por ser explotadas por la misma población antillana, que quiere descubrir al pueblo, y que tiene que deslindar pueblo de pueblo y negro de negro, al diferenciar al pueblo de Duvalier, o de Batista, Trujillo... Lo real situado al lado de lo maravilloso, la historia al lado del estilo (en cualquiera de sus manifestaciones), lo nacional paralelo a lo global, son muestras embrionarias de un pensamiento fecundo que afirma a la vez la independencia y la colaboración con las otras zonas de la retina. En este sentido es importante que un francocubano haya trabajado el concepto de lo «real maravilloso» en función de Haití, ya que según se podría interpretar, esta nación encierra los polos contradictorios de toda relación dialéctica: Haití, encarnación del aspecto positivo de lo «real maravilloso» antillano en el siglo XIX, en el XX viene a transformarse en lo negativo, mientras Cuba viene a ocupar en el XX, el lugar que correspondiera a aquél el siglo anterior.

Para desbrozar este terreno enmarañado, y para poner de paso en cuestión el afán asistemático y sin basamento de Carpentier, que quiere aplicar su con-

cepto a toda la realidad latinoamericana, habrá que entrar de lleno al artículo de Alexis. Este ensayo «manifiesto» sienta, sobre bases más fructíferas y sistemáticas, el debate iniciado por los críticos de Carpentier sobre un tópico antillano de actualidad, la búsqueda de la identidad nacional (zonal, continental), y cierra, en mi opinión, un debate infructuoso, inútil, irrelevante, sobre la relación arte colonial (neo-colonial)/arte metropolitano.

Para empezar, a Alexis le preocupan varias cosas, entre ellas, la función social del arte y la literatura, la responsabilidad del artista, el concepto de cultura, la identificación de lo específicamente nacional. Por eso, bajo el pretexto de explicar el concepto literario de lo «real maravilloso», y de entrar necesariamente en el debate del realismo versus el formalismo, lo que hace es a) sentar las bases de una política cultural; b) marchar hacia la elaboración de un *Programa general de trabajo* (el subrayado es de Alexis); c) afirmar el compromiso activo del escritor (y del crítico literario) con la causa popular; y finalmente, como subproducto, d) tratar de elaborar una preceptiva literaria en consonancia con lo anterior. En este último inciso se coloca el concepto de lo «real maravilloso». El concepto, su explicación, sus aspectos polémicos, vienen a ser sólo una de las partes interesantes de un intento teórico más general sobre creación cultural antillana en general y haitiana en particular.

De entrada, Alexis habla en nombre de un sujeto colectivo (los escritores haitianos), de la orientación nacional de la producción artística y de la visión dominante. El sujeto colectivo, el artista, es definido en función de su praxis social, como testigo primero, y en seguida, como profesor, educador, cantor. En pocas palabras, ser artista es, desde ya, tener una responsabilidad social, que consiste en expresar lo ideal, el sueño del pueblo. Sueño e ideal entendidos no como visión utópica de un mundo mejor irrealizable, se entiende, sino como la antítesis de la «dureza y la fealdad del momento». Esto es, aquello que Carpentier denominaba el milagro, la apertura realizada a través de la praxis humana de Mackandal y sus seguidores (primer concepto de pueblo. Pueblo como base social y grupo de presión política). El artista expresa esto en su escritura militante y en su responsabilidad ante su público. O, como dice bien Alexis parafraseando la famosa última tesis sobre Feuerbach, «Il ne s'agit pas de témoigner seulement pour le réel et de l'expliquer, il s'agit de transformer le monde, chacun ouvrant particulièrement dans la sphère qui lui est propre»<sup>23</sup>. Pero en esta misión de zapatero a tus zapatos hay que tener cuidado, porque Alexis habla de los artistas progresistas, definidos como aquellos que «confrontent leur points de vue sur les tâches présentes de l'art national en fonction de l'histoire de leur peuple, de ses traditions, de ses tendances manifestes, de ses goûts, de ses espoirs, de ses rêves, de ses certitudes et de ses combats.»<sup>24</sup> De aquellos que quieren juntarse para expresar la visión dominante, colectiva, visión dominante que todavía no domina, y que por tanto, debe elaborarse en un *Programa de trabajo* que decida las necesidades del arte nacional globalmente.

Arte nacional, entonces, no quiere decir para Alexis nacional chovinista, culturalista, sino que significa lo que Carpentier había querido significar, esto es, la especificidad histórica (única) de la producción artística nacional. Este enfoque nacional, colectivo, militante, nos va recortando un espacio antillano (no latinoamericano, como lo quiere ver Carpentier) en cuya historia ha predominado la búsqueda de esta identidad que es a la vez nacional y antillana. Como ya lo mencionábamos anteriormente, este es el afamado concepto de cultura zonal. Dice Alexis:



on doit se demander en présence de cette confluence des cultures nationales par zones, si nous n'assistons pas dans le monde d'aujourd'hui à un début de constitution de cultures zonales qui, à un étage supérieur, coifferaient les cultures nationales.<sup>25</sup>

Por otra parte, esta propuesta nos recuerda, en el sentido político, la organicidad de que hablaba Martí (que también hablaba a toda Latinoamérica) en el siglo pasado, y en el sentido cultural, el proceso de *creolization* de que habla Brathwaite en el presente jamaquino<sup>25</sup>. Porque, y para reforzar el sentido de unidad antillana, o la de los pasos visibles en busca de dicha unidad hay que reiterar las palabras de Alexis:

Quand on pense...qu'autour du bassin des Caraïbes et du golfe du Mexique ...les différentes nations qui y vivent ont connu dans le passé des conditions de peuplement et de migrations semblables, que ses migrations durent encore, que le stade semi-féodal et précapitaliste leur est commun à tous, que la même dépendance économique et politique est leur lot, on ne peut pas s'étonner du fait qu'elles connaissent une confluence de leur diverses cultures nationales. Certain réactions de ces peuples devant le réel, leur habitudes de vie sociales, leou réactions sentimentales, offrent parfois une ressemblance frappante, souvent même leur art a des tendances analogues, non seulement dans la contenu, mais aussi dans une certaine mesure, dans la forme expressive.<sup>27</sup>

Aquí cabe, pues, esa negritud auténtica que no se menciona porque es obvia.

El concepto de cultura, además de ser nacional (por zonas) y orgánico, se aplica a expresiones vitales que van más allá del angosto círculo del concepto de cultura entendido como el conjunto numérico de obras literarias escritas. Su concepto cae más bien dentro de la definición de cultura de que habla Brathwaite cuando usa el término de *creolization*; es decir, cultura como el resultado de un proceso de aculturación, interculturación e indigenización de todos los diversos grupos humanos, diversos en lo que toca a raza, clase y origen nacional geográfico, que en su vivir cotidiano dieron lugar a la formación de estructuras sociales en el curso del desarrollo histórico<sup>28</sup>. Y como Brathwaite, Alexis incorpora el amplio aporte popular en un concepto más identificable, actualmente, con el que daría la etnología, la antropología, y con el que va rindiendo poco a poco la sociología literaria.

Cultura para él es, en resumen, la tendencia a organizar colectivamente los elementos del conocimiento del universo y la sociedad en función del pasado y el presente —y para completar, siendo fiel a la visión del perspectivismo de Lukacs, tendrá que incluir, forzosamente, una visión del futuro<sup>29</sup>; cultura es recomponer una imagen para que sea más amplia que la que da la apariencia (la apertura de horizontes de Carpentier), imagen proyectada en la composición de lo psíquico, los actos, el comportamiento, la producción humana; cultura es, finalmente, una comunidad psíquica de gustos, tendencias, conceptos que se expresan en todos los dominios de la actividad humana<sup>30</sup>.

Pero este concepto abstracto, que habla de cuestiones a veces incomprensibles y hasta cierto punto asistemáticas, tales como el universo o el psiquismo, se ve complementado, aclarado, por una serie de distinciones pertinentes, que van desglosando no sólo aspectos polémicos de la cultura latinoamericana, sino también, van cercando el terreno de lo que más propiamente se llamará cultura nacional. Por ejemplo, Alexis argumenta contra el lugar común de las sociedades

sin cultura, aquello que en el XIX se polarizaba en civilización y barbarie, y que en este siglo dejó el residuo del concepto de culturas superiores e inferiores, en otras palabras, del llamado «imperialismo cultural», sin dejar por eso de reconocer dos parámetros fundamentales: 1) que el producto cultural tiene una relación *variable* (el subrayado es mío) con el desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas, y, 2) que la cultura se hace más compleja con el desarrollo del proceso de formación nacional. En esta manera peculiar de matizar, Alexis no explica sistemáticamente lo que entiende por variable o por complejo, aunque sí ilustra su tesis con un ejemplo afortunado. Nadie argumentaría, dice él, que el arte de Praxiteles es inferior, aunque todos sabemos que fue producto de una sociedad esclavista, donde las fuerzas productivas no estaban bien desarrolladas.

Alexis se opone de lleno al argumento de la cuantificación en el arte, y a la valoración que plusvaliza el arte de una región o nación sobre otra. Se opone también al concepto de originalidad entendido en sentido exclusivo, como el concepto que reclama la originalidad solamente para las obras de arte impresas (o manifiestas de manera y forma «imperecedera», en la pintura, la escultura, etcétera). Se pronuncia también contra la tendencia que pretende ver en las obras culturales, la cultura misma, y que por ende, hace la distinción entre las obras que son el aporte específico del hombre culto y las formas amorfas todavía aportadas colectivamente por la masa. La primera tesis, la de la originalidad, la contrarresta con el concepto de conciencia colectiva, que rinde cuenta, según él, de las formas, ritmos y símbolos populares<sup>31</sup>. Así, las obras de arte exteriorizan la cultura en un conjunto de obras testimonio, pero éstas se nutren del pueblo, de la masa, única fuente de cultura viva, base y soporte sobre cuyos hombros descansa el hombre culto, cuyo trabajo a veces regresa a la masa y la modifica.

Parte integrante de este afán que tiene Alexis de eliminar oposiciones falsas, es el desmonte de la polaridad cultura dominante, predominantemente en lengua y cultura francesa, y cultura popular, predominantemente africana, analfabeta, en *creole*. No quiere decir esto que Alexis niegue las diferencias de clase. Por el contrario, las coloca en su verdadera dimensión al llamarlas por su nombre científico, burguesía y proletariado (otro de los conceptos de pueblo), y enseguida matiza. Nos informa de un hecho social del que ya hablaba Brathwaite en el proceso de interculturación, al apuntar que aunque las reacciones íntimas, políticas, artísticas, religiosas y sentimentales de la clase dirigente corresponden a una estructura «semi-feudal» y pre-capitalista, ella, afectada del cosmopolitismo, responde, de todos modos, a la cultura popular, a la música, a los cuentos y leyendas que aprende ahora de sus sirvientes como antes de sus esclavos, y participa en los carnavales y, en general, se porta como haitiana.

Con el cuestionario del comportamiento de la clase dominante viene aparejada la cuestión del imperio. En el caso haitiano, se retorna a 1915, fecha de la invasión americana a la isla. Maximilien Laroche ha visto esto como el final de más de un siglo de independencia<sup>32</sup>. Con la invasión nació el movimiento indigenista; y con el indigenismo entronca ya de lleno, aunque todavía no explícitamente la cuestión de la negritud y el afro-antillanismo, movimiento de retorno, según Laroche: «Retour au pays natal, à la culture originelle, à la classe et à la race méprisées et exploitées.»<sup>33</sup> Aquí, Alexis se empieza a mover hacia su preceptiva literaria propiamente hablando, en la cual se desplaza sobre una línea fronteriza muy delicada, que escinde la belleza, el sueño y el ideal, de la fealdad del mundo circundante, pero que bien puede caer en el peligro de lo utópico falso.

En primer lugar, Alexis argumenta vehementemente contra el arte intelectualizado, puro, contra lo que Carpentier llamaba los *oblovovistas*, apolíticos de la generación del novecientos (1898), los modernistas<sup>34</sup>. Porque para Alexis, este

arte «n'ont aucun lien avec l'histoire de son pays, aucun contact avec la terre natale, aucune solidarité avec l'homme de notre temps et ses combats.»<sup>35</sup> También porque, según él argumenta, el arte puro, «la liberté sans frein en lieu et place d'un sens de la libération humaine...n'est que le fait d'une mince frange d'artistes liés a des classes sociales décadentes, l'expression de véritables pédérastes de la culture.»<sup>36</sup>

Se mete, pues, Alexis profundamente en las aguas de la polémica realismo/formalismo, y muy a la Lukacs, ve en el formalismo el producto de una toma de posición a favor de la clase dominante. El realismo para él, es la forma que caracteriza a la clase dirigente (más bien a la vanguardia, diría yo), cuando ésta es dinámica. En este dinamismo coinciden el realismo y el humanismo, sea éste de la variedad renacentista, individualista o «nuevo». El formalismo, en cambio, viene a ser la forma en que se expresa esta misma clase en su circuito descendente, decadente; viene a ser, en otras palabras, una tendencia recesiva. En la medida en que el realismo es un concepto artístico abstracto ligado a una clase en ascenso (en este sentido de dirigencia o vanguardia), en la medida que es una corriente «qui traverse et eclaire toute l'histoire de l'art» el realismo puede ser, según Alexis, naturalista, místico, nacional, social y, por supuesto, maravilloso —que también para él quiere decir nacional, social y popular. En el momento en que, como decía Carpentier, estilo es historia, el arte, las formas de expresión (entre ellas la famosa *écriture*) están íntimamente ligadas a la formación de la vanguardia, al empuje o decadencia de una clase, y no son expresiones estilísticas gratuitas.

De ahí a la afirmación de la negritud, de lo africano, de lo nacional antillano, no hay más que un paso. Alexis lo dice muy suavemente: «L'être humain ne peut être le fils de personne, on ne peut nier le passé et l'histoire, l'Haïtien...est encore dans une large mesure héritier d'éléments de culture venus de la lointaine Afrique.»<sup>37</sup> Pero esta afirmación de lo que bien podría incorporar la negritud, está totalmente implícita, señalada.

Volviendo a las formas, dice Alexis, el pueblo haitiano no ha logrado perfeccionar los modos artísticos de occidente porque tiene una visión peculiar de la realidad sensible, porque su ritmo de vida, relacionado (variablemente) con el desarrollo de sus formas productivas, presenta lo real con su cortejo de extraño. Si el occidente busca el intelecto, la unidad lógica, los cánones perfectos, los antillanos acuden a la expresión sensual, la intuición creadora y aun a lo deforme y lo chocante. Busca el arte lo real ligado al mito, a lo simbólico, lo estilizado, lo heráldico, totémico, jerárquico, y va despojando cada elemento hasta dejarlo sin esencia.

En estos parámetros estilistas se empieza a perder la sistematicidad de Alexis. Como antes en Carpentier, aquí empezamos a tocar lo chocante del estereotipo. Y es que Alexis se mueve en el estrecho margen, en la frontera entre el mal llamado primitivismo y la civilización. Nos asusta sobremanera asociar lo maravilloso con lo primitivo, con lo negro, para caracterizar el arte y la literatura de los pueblos antillanos de origen africano. Pero Alexis nos tranquiliza diciendo que la originalidad y singularidad de las formas estéticas propias a ellas no son inexplicables, i.e., se pueden explicar socialmente. La sociedad industrial, dice, se caracteriza por su concentración de masas (vida citadina), sus ejércitos industriales, el frenesí del taylorismo, el reposo insuficiente, la vida maquinizada. Es decir, todo aquello que encontrábamos magníficamente novelado en la primera parte de *Los pasos perdidos* de Carpentier. Los humanos de los países industrializados no han utilizado sus sentidos porque la civilización material les ha ahorrado el esfuerzo. Esta vida hace más lento, si no es que elimina la producción

de leyendas y el folklore. En comparación, los pueblos dependientes, que viven a querer y no en contacto con la naturaleza, se han visto obligados a aguzar los sentidos, la vista, el oído, el tacto. La realidad, por otra parte, no les es inteligible en todos sus aspectos. Por tanto, ellos (la comunidad dependiente), traspone las nociones de relatividad y de lo maravilloso a su visión de la realidad cotidiana. El ser dependiente vive a medio camino entre la civilización mecánica y la vida natural, y tiene, por ende, una sensibilidad y vivacidad *sui generis*, que otorga grandes posibilidades a la literatura. Por ejemplo:

un oiseau à vol rapide est avant tout une paire d'ailes, une femme qui allaite, frappa par ses seins globuleux et lourds, un fauve est avant tout un bruit de pas et un rusissement.<sup>38</sup>

Y más adelante, entrando de lleno en lo que se denominaría maravilloso, dice:

nous citerons le fait que le possédé de notre religion vaudoue arrive parfois à prendre un fer rouge dans ses mains sans se brûler et le lèche; il grimpe allègrement aux arbres même s'il est un vieillard, il arrive à danser pendant plusieurs jour et nuits d'affilée...Loin de toute conception mystique du monde, à la lumière de nombreux faits d'observation bien des valeurs devront être révisées par la science.<sup>39</sup>

Se puede comparar estos ejemplos a los de Carpentier y llegar, casi intuitivamente, a comprender las dificultades de una estilística histórica nacional y antillana, que demanda, al mismo tiempo, la integración y el deslinde entre lo real y lo maravilloso, entre lo que podríamos entender como el más estilizado formalismo, el arte no figurativo y el figurativo. Una estilística que además demanda tocar al pueblo, estar ligado a él, expresar sus ritmos y sus símbolos, sus mitos y ritos antepasados, y sus sueños e ideales futuros; un arte donde reine la imaginación que rehaga el mundo a su manera, y donde no exista a la vez un sólo detalle que no tenga su realidad práctica subyacente, inmediatamente inteligible para la masa de los hombres entre los cuales existe. Pocos han demandado tanto. ¿Quién de entre los escritores se atrevería, con tales mandatos y rigores a decir que su escritura es «real maravillosa»? ¿A quién seleccionarán los críticos como representantes de este nuevo concepto? ¿A Carpentier, a Jacques Roumain de *Gouverneur de la Rosee*<sup>40</sup>, a Cofiño López de *La última mujer y el próximo combate*<sup>41</sup>, al mismo Alexis? Acaso estas sean las mejores aproximaciones a una preceptiva literaria de apariencia simplista, pero muy rigurosa y difícil de cumplir en la práctica.

Para terminar, Alexis afirma que parte del combate por la expresión literaria nacional se lleva a cabo no en el terreno conceptual, estilístico, sino en la lucha concreta contra el subdesarrollo. La lucha por la grandeza literaria es inseparable de una campaña masiva de alfabetización organizada por el estado, a fin de que el 85 por 100 de iletrados puedan leer su literatura, impulsar a sus escritores en vez de detener la marcha literaria.

En resumen, estos dos escritores, teóricos antillanos de lo «real maravilloso», han demostrado en la práctica su compromiso inquebrantable con la fuerza popular. Ambos dan prueba de lo que una dedicación política y una alianza de clase genuina pueden rendir en materia de teoría literaria y de política artística<sup>42</sup>. Carpentier reside actualmente en París; es el representante cultural cubano; dona el monto de sus premios literarios al estado. «Jacques-Stephen Alexis, romancier, essayiste et conteur, était un écrivain optimiste. Considerant qu'il était lui-même

le resultat d'un syncretisme de culture diverses, il préférerait voir dans la colonisation non pas tellement un entrave, dont la revolution haitienne s'était d'ailleurs débarrassée, mais la source d'un symbiose, dont les Autillais d'aujourd'hui, et les Haitiens les premières, devaient tirer le meilleur parti.»<sup>43</sup> Jacques Stephen Alexis, activista intenso, militante en el terreno literario y político, hizo las intenciones de regresar al país natal procedente de Cuba en 1961. Tenía las ilusiones de poder entrar clandestinamente al terruño junto a sus compañeros; y como el Ti Noel de *El reino de este mundo* de Carpentier, murió quizás a la víspera del próximo combate. La policía lo declaró desaparecido.

## NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo*. Argentina: América Nueva, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques-Stéphén Alexis, «Du réalisme merveilleux des Haïtiens.» *Presence Africaine*, No. 8, 9, 10, Juin-Novembre, 1956, pp. 245-271.

<sup>3</sup> Prólogo a *El reino...*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *Tientos y Diferencias*. Montevideo: Arca, 1967, pp. 102-120.

<sup>5</sup> *Tientos...*, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> *Tientos...*, p. 102.

<sup>7</sup> «Du réalisme...», p. 247.

<sup>8</sup> *Tientos...*, p. 119.

<sup>9</sup> «Du réalisme...», p. 247.

<sup>10</sup> *Tientos...*, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> *Tientos...*, p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> Carlos Fuentes, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*. México: Mortiz, 1969. Para una crítica de la postura de Fuentes ver Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, «Sobre la idea de la novela en Carlos Fuentes», en *De mitólogos y novelistas*, Madrid, Turner, pp. 73-109.

<sup>13</sup> El que acuñó esta expresión fue Luis Alberto Sánchez, quien dedicó una obra entera a elaborarla. Ver su obra *América: novela sin novelistas*. Lima, Librería peruana, 1933. También para una crítica del concepto ver Horst Rogman, «'Realismo mágico' y 'negritud' como construcciones ideológicas», en este mismo número de *Ideologies and Literature*.

<sup>14</sup> Ver Herve and Nivole Fuyet and Guiy and Mary Levilain: «Decolonization and social classes in the Tragedy of King Christophe by Aime Césaire», in Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens. Cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean*. Savacou: Mona, 1974, pp. 31, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Ver Rene Depestre, «The adventures of Negritude,» in *Voices of liberation*, Irvin Silber ed., 1970, pp. 86-91.

<sup>16</sup> Ver Jean Paul Sartre, «Orphée Noir», prólogo a la *Anthologie de la nouvelle poesie negre et malgache de langue Française*. Leopold Senghor ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1972, pp. xiv, xi.

<sup>17</sup> Ver Rene Depestre, «The adventures», p. 87. También Horst Rogman, «Realismo mágico y «negritud».

<sup>18</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*. Caracas, R. Mus, 1970. Ver mi artículo «La esposa, la amante, la mujer ideal: tres tipos de relación formularia en *Los pasos perdidos*». *Repertorio Americano*, vol. núm. 2, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *El siglo de las luces*. Santiago de Chile, Orbe, 1969.

<sup>20</sup> José Martí, *Cuba, Nuestra América, los Estados Unidos*. México, Siglo XXI. Prólogo y selección de Roberto Fernández Retamar, pp. 111-244.

<sup>21</sup> Para una descripción magistral del proceso de «aclimatación» y sus implicaciones ver Edward Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>22</sup> El clásico de esta propuesta es Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie en la República Argentina*, Santiago de Chile, 1845.

<sup>23</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 247.

<sup>24</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 247.

<sup>25</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 258.

<sup>26</sup> Ver Edward Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*.

<sup>27</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 258.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*. Londres, Oxford University Press, 1971.

<sup>29</sup> Ver Georg Lukacs, *Realism in our time*. Nueva York, Harper, 1964.

<sup>30</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 250.

<sup>31</sup> Lucien Goldmann desarrolla el concepto de creaciones culturales ligadas a la visión de clase en *Cultural Creation*. Saint Louis, Telos Press, 1971.

<sup>32</sup> Maximilien Laroche, *Haití et sa littérature*. A. G. E. U. M., Cahiers No. 5, 1963, p. 76.

<sup>33</sup> Maximilien Laroche, *Le romancero aux étoiles et l'oeuvre romanesque de Jacques-Stephen Alexis*. Francia, Fernand Nathan, 1978, p. 7. Para una crítica del exagerado optimismo en la vuelta al Africa, ver Maryse Condé, *Le Roman Antillais*. Francia, Fernand Nathan, 1977, pp. 18-19.

<sup>34</sup> Aleja Carpentier, «Literatura y conciencia política en América Latina», en *Tientos y Diferencias*. Montevideo, Arca, 1967, pp. 75-89.

<sup>35</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 260.

<sup>36</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 260.

<sup>37</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 265.

<sup>38</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 265.

<sup>39</sup> «Du realisme...», p. 265.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Roumain, *Masters of the Dew*. Nueva York, Collier, 1971.

<sup>41</sup> Manuel Cofiño López, *La última mujer y el próximo combate*. México, Siglo XXI, 1976.

<sup>42</sup> Ver Jorge Rufinelli, «Jacques-Stephen Alexis: Maravilla y terror en Haití», *Hispanamérica*, año II, núm. 6, 1974, pp. 41-49.

<sup>43</sup> Maximilien Laroche, *Le romancero aux étoiles*, p. 6.

## Homer, Vergil, Camões: State and Epic

Neil Larsen

Robert Krueger

Under the heading «Epic-Theory» in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* one reads: «There was no speculation on the proper nature of epic until its usefulness had been questioned.»<sup>1</sup> To this highly suggestive observation it must be added that speculation did not prevent the subsequent production of epics nor the invention of a new «usefulness.» The inclusion of three texts—Homer's *Odyssey*, Vergil's *Aeneid* and Camões' *Os Lusíadas*—may now constitute a practical point of departure. Both *Os Lusíadas* and the *Aeneid* are themselves pieces of epic criticism which «speculate on the proper nature» of a genre in the very process of attempting to reproduce it. For Vergil this «nature» is fully embodied in Homer. The task is to reconstitute the Homeric epics so as, in effect, to take up where they left off—such, at least, is the popular account of Vergil's achievement. For Camões, who apparently never read or had access to anything more than a fragment of the *Odyssey*, the task is nevertheless superficially identical—only now it is the *Aeneid* which is the template, and what must be reproduced is already a reproduction. Standard contemporary criticism will, using such criteria, classify the *Aeneid* and *Os Lusíadas* as «secondary» or «learned» epics, opposed to the «primary» «primitive»—practically speaking, edenic—epics of Homer. The distinction incorporates but goes far beyond the transition from oral to written epic.

But history undermines and exposes this logic of simple precedence and imitation. Neither the *Aeneid* nor *Os Lusíadas* are mere aesthetic reproductions. They likewise reproduce explicitly political ideologies which emanate from a set of social relations and consciousness not proper to either the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. Though homologous in places, these two acts of reproduction—the aesthetic and the political, the «imitation» and the adaptation of epicity—appear unable to form a new, synthetic unity which can be simultaneously joined to both perspectives. What thereby strike the reader as both aesthetic and political *contradictions in terms* in the «learned» epics point to underlying contradictions which the historical materialist will recognize as involving classes, and in an even broader motion, modes of production. The result of «learned» epic production is therefore neither the creation of an entirely «new» epic «nature», nor the reconstitution of the «old,» but rather a process which, if correctly interpreted, will lead to the critical abandonment of the very conception of an epic «nature» and guide us to a more properly dialectical concept of an epic

relation to other, fundamental facets of existence. This, of course, must ultimately be understood as a relation of ideology to its basis in social life.

With the production of «learned» epics such as the *Aeneid* and *Os Lusíadas* this epic relation has undergone a radical shift—even, we might say, a revolution. We propose to be quite specific about the force that determines this change. In it, it is possible to see not only the source of political-aesthetic contradiction in the «learned» epics, but also the interpretive—hence ultimately social—ground upon which a certain synthetic epic unity is finally achieved. We refer, of course, to the State.

The oral epic tradition which culminates in Homer and a new written mode of literary production precedes development of the state and remains a purely tribal phenomenon. Homer, especially the Homer who produces the *Odyssey*, both witnesses and participates in a phase of the state's prolonged and regional birth. The Vergil of the *Aeneid* as well as the Camões of *Os Lusíadas* work busily to extend the state's physical and ideological presence, but at the same time that they are so much the children of the state they cannot recall maternal origins and so naturally assume that the state has always existed. It is in fact the state itself which has recruited *them* to stage *its* epic, thus mystifying and obscuring its own real history. The real, external, historical presence of the state is, we propose, the critical differentiator in the theoretically weak but empirically valuable «learned»/«primitive» opposition. What we show is that it is the presence or absence of the state which accounts for the superficial appearance of radical but exclusively formal and «cultural» differences between the three texts we have chosen to analyze. This presence/absence must be understood not only as denoting the actual state apparatus but additionally the presence or absence of *state society* and *state ideology*. A *state society* may be said to have fully emerged once it has so decisively broken the hold of the tribal relations which precede it that these older ties no longer pose any resistance to its hegemony; likewise, a *state ideology* only begins to exert itself fully once it has eliminated tribal ideologies from the social consciousness of any and all groups that constitute a material threat to state power. Perhaps the clearest indication that this has taken place is the disappearance of tribal relations, *known as such*, from the collective memory as a whole.

But there is much more to the relation than this, for it is not merely a question of a crucial but essentially fortuitous meeting of a political and an aesthetic phenomenon, but a case of necessary contact. The state not only stands above the «learned» epic as the principal cause of its formal difference, but is itself the central motivating force for the resurrection of an already antiquated form, for the act of «imitation» itself. Augustus personally commissions and oversees publication of the *Aeneid*. Camões, though not so obviously a draftee, is at least able to extract a modest pension from King Sebastião in reward for his efforts, something a simple mercenary could not have dreamt of obtaining. It will, of course, be possible to discover instances which are not so blatant (e.g., Dante or Milton). But here it is not the state whose influence has diminished—rather it is an increased congruence of the epic poet's own class and authorial production of ideology with the social and ideological problems already posed by the struggle for state power. This is a congruence *from within*, for the state has become increasingly capable of interiorizing itself as discrete set of political and even literary motives.

What appears from the outside to be both a fortuitous encounter and necessary contact is, however, revealed from within to be nothing short of a *kinship*—doubly so, since the inter-relation we propose to uncover and describe here



amounts to a common, though not simultaneous, genesis of both the state and the epic in the *division of labor*. This shall be the major theoretical emphasis of our study. Before we precede to the investigation of this genealogy, however, it must be well understood that the relations we have isolated as externally and internally causative are so isolated only for reasons of analysis and that the relation of state to epic takes, in actuality, the form a concrete and contradictory unity in which the internal contradiction is epistemologically pre-eminent.

The remaining bulk of our study now breaks down in the analysis of three strategic inter-relations:

(I) The inter-relation of the state and the division of labor. Under this heading we shall recapitulate the classic work of Marx and Engels on this topic, augmenting it with what we consider to be its implications for the study of *state ideology*.

(II) The inter-relation of the epic and the division of labor, under which we shall very generally and schematically undertake the generic derivation of the epic in the concrete historical development of the division of labor.

(III) The inter-relation of the epic and the state. Here we qualify the specific interconnections between particular epics and particular instances of state power and then proceed to make definitive textual interpretations of the three texts at hand.

## I

The best account of the inter-relation of the division of labor and the state is to be found in Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* which remains the crucial theoretical work of Marxism on this subject. In it Engels successfully avoids the abstract derivation of the state in Hegelian notions of «the ethical idea» and the «common» vs. the «particular» interest, etc. and theorizes on the basis of a fully historical-materialist derivation of the state out of the break-up of tribal society. He shows how new social factors arising from the development of classes and of exchange production (money, usury, commerce, etcetera) came into aggravated contradiction with the gentile natural economy.

... The gentile constitution had grown out of a society that knew no internal antagonisms and was adapted only for such a society. It had no coercive power except public opinion. But now a society had come into being that by the force of all its economic conditions of existence had to split up into freemen and slaves, into exploiting rich and exploited poor; a society that was not only incapable of reconciling these antagonisms, but had to drive them more and more to a head. Such a society could only exist either in a state of continuous, open struggle of these classes against one another or under the rule of a third power which, while ostensibly standing above the classes struggling with each other, suppressed their open conflict and permitted a class struggle at most in the economic field, in a so-called legal form. The gentile constitution had outlived its usefulness. *It was burst asunder by the division of labor and by its result, the division of society into classes. Its place was taken by the state.*<sup>2</sup> (emphasis ours)

Thus the state is called into existence as the practical means of *guaranteeing*, for the first time, the rule of an appropriating class. This it does through centralization

of public power, division of the *populus* according to territory, taxation, and police coercion. In brief, the state now begins to more and more consciously supervise that very process from which it springs—the division of labor.

State *rule* is typically the rule of a single class which has succeed in dominating all the others but which must concede to a sharpened and constant class struggle the necessity of representing its own interests as the «common» or «general» interest. Therefore among all of the state's practical requirements is the need for an ideology which will accomplish this mystification. Marx and Engels specify this ideology as an «illusory community»<sup>3</sup>—that is, not only the elevation but the *abstraction* and *generalization* of what are, in fact, not virtues of community at all, but the virtues of private owners. To this we would add only the following: *state ideology*, in the form of an «illusory community» must, in order to reproduce itself, narrate what amount to the necessary false theories<sup>4</sup> of a) its own origins in the division of labor, b) the origins of the classes in the division of labor, and hence c) both the division of labor and value itself. The «illusory community» must have the means to police the productive minds of the human bodies it divides, riding as it does the crest of the development which initially causes their split. It need not look far to find them: wealth, violence (as ideologemes), art, religion, education and even literature, all products of tribal life, are at its finger tips. The state simply is asserted as the ordering principle of a whole set of divisions which have previously led an interdependent existence *outside* the supervision of a single appropriating class. The state therefore seeks to infiltrate consciousness as itself the theory underlying the organization of *all* the modes of activity into an enforced set of hierarchical relations. This theory, as well as the theory of value implicit in the hierarchy of labor it stipulates, is, again, both necessary and false in that it is determined by relations of appropriation. Thus the fact that an Athenian aristocrat has no use for the cooking of his own food and acquires a slave (private productive labor) to cook it for him while he produces philosophical treatises must appear to be the *natural* result of the inferiority of the «craft» of cooking to the «art» of reasoning. Here we see the principal expression of the labor hierarchy in ideologized form—the «superiority» of intellectual over manual pursuits—wedded to its corresponding social reality: the private ownership of labor.

## II

The specialized production of narrative follows upon the division of manual and mental labor. This immediately equips it to (re)produce ideology. Narration develops out of the underlying activity common to both telling and accounting, a practice which in turn arises out of the natural economy that produces calendars, genealogies, memories, mnemonic accounting, etc. Previous to the division of manual and mental labor production serves as its own narration—the need satisfied by «telling» has not separated from the consciousness of production itself. «Intellectual in separation from manual labour arises as a means of the appropriation of products of labour by nonlabourers—not originally as an aid to production.»<sup>5</sup> Thus, a separate «telling» both follows upon and is itself an appropriation. Human activity meanwhile differentiates and expands to the point of constituting a «story» and creates through this same motion a group of individuals who need to hear it and another group organized to produce it.

But narration bears a special relation to the other divisions which arise around it. As economy of exchange proceeds, especially as the product of exchange becomes commodity, and money makes its appearance—the transition from the Bronze to

the Iron Age—«manual production becomes single production, but at the same time intellectual labour becomes universalized.»<sup>6</sup> Where, let us say, a potter cannot reproduce the consciousness which emanates from hunting or planting the story teller in the process of becoming an epic bard, thanks to the special nature of his raw material, is able to reproduce such consciousness, even including that of potting.

Because it is equipped not only with the special faculty of social memory but also with the capacity to store and prolong such memory, narrative production acquires a unique relation to history. It is when the accumulation of an historical analogue of knowledge becomes the special function of narrative production that it becomes most convenient to call it *epic* narration. The production of epic narration is thus charged with the mnemonic and oral inscription of not only the major divisions of labor but of their genealogy as well. Here we can begin to account for the generally attested fact that the earliest epic narrations are the incantations of myths which concern the productive deeds, usually creational, of divine beings in animal, semi-human and human form. The fact that these divinities are associated with natural divisions such as earth and sky does not contradict but in fact asserts the epic's essential concern for the major divisions in their historical aspect. Earth and sky only assume independent existences for the hunter, and even more so for the agriculturalist, because of and for whom a distinct earth and sky imply a special kind of production. Mythic figures like Ra or Coyote are the hypostatized and ideologized origins of the divisions of labor that have produced the major revolutions in production and human consciousness.

The emergence of well-defined social classes marks the commencement of tribal decline and is, to use Engels' term, the «admission» that the division of labor has entered into contradiction with itself. The phenomenon of inter-tribal warfare, which has previously been witnessed only as a mass undertaking in which an entire society moves to protect or extend itself, now becomes a means for reproducing the wealth and social dominance of a single division in the form of a class. If this class prolongs itself primarily through wars of plunder which require the participation of the other classes, then it also requires a means of legitimizing this activity, both to itself and to its social «inferiors.» Such a class of course lacks a materialist understanding of its own origins, but needs, at the same time, an idealization of its material practice; thus it inevitably realizes the replacement of a divine or semi-divine god or culture hero with a super-human warrior so as to accomplish this legitimation.

What the critic, historian and vulgarizer of literature normally understand by «epic hero»—a socially powerful male warrior in his «prime» who enjoys «splendid isolation» from the popular interests he supposedly embodies—is thus a sort of mechanized skeleton whose divine flesh has been eaten away by the demands of a new class order and then surgically replaced by the needs of that same class to propagate a principle of social unity under its control. The need to mythify the origins of the major divisions of labor—a need of the whole tribe—now becomes the need to *mystify* the more recent origin of a class division, as well as the nature of that class' major activity.<sup>7</sup>

But already the groundwork for contradiction has been laid. The epic cannot undertake the mystification of a major division without also expressing that division. The same process which has elevated warfare for plunder and made it the proper activity for the enrichment of a certain class has *not* carried along with it a narrative mode which belongs exclusively to that activity and that class. The heroic epic cannot be exclusively derived from heroics. Epic narration has already constituted itself as a separate labor which bears a special social relation

to all the divisions: if a tribal bard sings the mythic story of, say, the discovery and cultivation of corn, that is because such an advance in production and the division of labor has of necessity effected the very nature of work itself and contributed to the enrichment of the people as a whole, including the bard. The production of war for plunder may call certain new productions into existence —e.g., the engines of siege—, but given its simultaneous and strict class appurtenance, it separates itself from production as a whole, even to the point of retarding it. In order to become *epic* content, the new warfare must plunder narrative production just as it does a neighboring settlement. The *heroic epic*, unlike the mythic-cultural, must be *hired out*. The epic poet, who does not himself engage in warfare, becomes a retainer of the new dominant warrior-class; he works for interests which do not coincide with his own and those of the whole people. Every work of literature internalizes in some fashion its own social relations of production. We read those of the heroic epic in the absolutely alienated magnificence, excellence and isolation of the new epic heroes, in whom we perceive the hypostatization of a revolutionary social advance forced to portray itself as the activity of individual combat undertaken for personal prestige and wealth.

To speak specifically of Homer now only requires the addition of two further derivations: the advancement of this class of epic patrons in Attic Greece<sup>8</sup> to dominance in a new mode of production based on emerging commodity exchange, on increasing cultivation of large tracts of private property by increasingly large numbers of slaves and poor peasants, as well as on the practice of usurious mortgaging; and the extension of writing to the practice of literary transcription along with other scribal diversifications. The ruling class which Homer serves, and to which, if he belongs, he must relate as in some way an elevated servant, has taken on a more sedate existence, but still derives value from having and hearing the deeds of its heroic progenitors portrayed. That a need for a written recitative text has arisen implies both a preference and a need of this class for the version of a particular epic bard (Homer) over those of others, as well as an increased intellectual intercourse among its members made possible by their urbanization. Literary writing becomes a means for asserting class control over epic production. Oral epic production continues to supply material for written literary modes but itself formally passes out of «literary» history as an aesthetic ideology. The class of epic patrons has acquired «taste.» But as the reproduction of their way of life becomes more and more dependent on the relations established by wealth in the form of land and commerce and less so on the relations established by the tribe, so have their interests become more and more diametrically opposed to those of their fellow tribesmen: a large mass of slaves and poor peasants. And so, along with first features of taste come first features of the state.

The production of the heroic epic accompanies the split of society into classes and the transformation of the epic itself into a service for hire to a ruling class. But as the ruling warrior nobility of Attic Greece gradually shifts its primary activity from plundering to commerce and a landed exploitation of slave and peasant labor it apparently retains its demand for the epicalization of its warlike phase. On this basis, and because epic production inevitably retains its earliest, essential and now contradictory capacity of inscribing all the major divisions of labor, the epic poet of Homer's time must confront his task as involving an incipient class critique. The epic poets of Homer's time, much like the «demiurgi» or artisan class of that same period, «own» their own instruments of aesthetic production and can regard their activity as having a certain class, even professional privilege. Such a development helps to explain the extraordinary continuity of

oral epic production in Attic Greece from the Doric invasion down to Homer's time—a period of roughly four hundred years. It is also indicated in the rapid institutionalization of the Homeric texts by the rhapsodes and the imitative authors of the Cyclic epics. To explain these developments requires more than just the production of a single genius.

Homer realizes the potential class-criticism of epic in unsurpassed fashion—this, in our opinion, helps to explain the astounding ability of the Homeric epics to reproduce themselves aesthetically under successively revolutionized modes of production and social formations—albeit not without certain distortions. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are not the mere narrations of bellicose class exploits and heroic genealogies. They narrate heroics in a way that exposes their alienated character. Their task remains the elevation of a class, but a shift in the perspective from which this elevation is undertaken, a shift towards a more fully class perspective, increasingly distinct from ruling interests, begins to reverse the moral polarity of the original ranking of the divisions of labor in the classic, oral period of heroic epic production. It is not a matter of choosing this new perspective but of its being imposed by the reality of a class divided society increasingly distinct from ruling interests, begins to reverse the moral which means necessarily divided perspectives on virtually everything. This is what lends critical capacity to the epic, a capacity exercised implicitly by Homer in the *Iliad*—where the exclusive representation of warfare becomes the representation of its estrangement from the other, unportrayed divisions—and explicitly in the *Odyssey*—where the previously absent divisions now confront the epic hero with a critical force. We may say that the content of the *Iliad* but especially that of the *Odyssey* reflects at once the need of epic production to serve the tastes of a wealthy mercantile ruling class, the relative critical freedom guaranteed by an artisanal class position, and the nascent state which institutes these classes. The Homeric poet applies his labor under this given circumstance in which the class he serves requires a critically nationalist treatment of its distant ancestors. This is precisely because it originates from the general ancestral stock from which it must now nevertheless be portrayed as separate, i.e., as a class: ideology is inverted genealogy.

After Homer the epic passes out of its dominance as a literary mode and is replaced by the choral elegy and the lyric. The same guild relations that have contributed to the excellence of the Homeric texts now take on the primary job of preserving those texts and completing the cycle. They gradually produce the opposite of excellence. Be it the Antimachian, the Choerilan or the «little Iliad» of Callimachus, epic production becomes an alchemical pastime for a group of professional literati. The demand of wealthy patrons for the epic portrayal of thinly disguised «ancestral» deeds perhaps remains at previous levels—but it is one which the new written imitative production has transformed into the demand for a mere outward sign of wealth and prestige, an addition to property, i.e., literary product finally as commodity. Meanwhile the last vestiges of the tribal division of labor have all but disappeared, giving way to the strengthened state apparatus of Athenian and Hellenistic empire. Equally important is the rise of new literary modes which partially take over the job of inscribing, chronicling and mystifying the division of labor: historiography and philosophy, Herodotus and Plato.

Epic narration inscribes, genealogizes and mythifies the major divisions of labor which arise out of tribal life. Heroic epic narration inscribes, genealogizes and mystifies a class division which arises out of tribal decline. Both presuppose an aesthetic wholeness (in that they are both unique and comprehensive) in their

respective reproductions of tribal and «heroic» relations and consciousness. Textual Homer appropriates this wholeness as a standard for all subsequent ages, but the social and productive formation which produces him also determines the loss of this wholeness and the subordination of epic to other divisions of literary production and to the state in general. The class divisions of labor that lead to the state also make it necessary that the state assert its control over the different class activities. The more the state undertakes to do this the more it requires the ideological means to inscribe class divisions and the hierarchy of labor in the consciousness of its citizens. The epic has all along functioned as a kind of literary state; the task now is to make the state itself more literary.

### III

The theoretical basis has now been laid for an understanding of both state, epic, and their inter-relation through the historically mediating factor of the division of labor. Analysis of this inter-relation reveals a gradual and parallel evolutionary process marked by corresponding revolutions.

What schematically begins as an epic prefiguration of the state (Homer) proceeds to the ancient, slave-holder's state itself at the peak of its development. Augustan empire in turn produces an epic (Vergil) which is the purest generic expression of epic's new political status. With this the ancient state exhausts the limits of its economic and social base and collapses back into the ground of its origin. It has produced no revolutionary class capable of both political conquest of the state and advancing production to new levels. And as goes the state so goes the epic. It is only the rise of the bourgeois state which temporarily revives the epic as a genre which has regained its former elevated status, that is, as a production which compares itself implicitly with pre-state epic (Homer). Epic once again becomes the viable discourse of state ideology. But once again the (bourgeois) state can only appear as an absence (Camões) despite the fact that capitalist relations are burgeoning everywhere.

With the decline of tribal life there emerges the need of mental production to control the division of labor. We find that the epic supplies this need, inasmuch as it remains at this stage the narration of the division of labor itself. At the same time, the tribal need of mental production to control the other divisions establishes itself as a social conscience and consciousness through the epic.

The heroic epic narrates a class division of labor. It is therefore inserted into a class ideology that is not merely the reflex of the «superiority» of mental production, but the mental arm of an elevated class labor (warfare for plunder) which must recruit the labor of the other divisions in a similarly belligerent form. But war is now an alienated activity. Thus the narration of war, at the same time that it must reproduce an alienated social consciousness, must also try to reverse the effects of this alienation by an implicit or explicit call to the other subordinated labors. (This process is still familiar to moderns in the media-marketing of war in the ideological terms of peace.) Within epic itself this can only produce contradiction.

With Homer the epic enters the space left empty by a still absent state ideology. Again, it is precisely the further development of class society and the epic poet's acquisition of certain class privileges which enable it to take on this role. As the more orthodox heroic epic, the *Iliad* reveals what we have called class «criticism» of the division of labor in its open portrayal of war as an alienated activity. The «wrath» of Achilles, the «pride» of Agammemnon, the capricious and deadly

partisanship of the gods—what many have recognized as the tragic kernel of the *Iliad*—are simply the most salient features of a class critique of an heroic activity which can no longer recruit:

Then looking darkly at him Achilleus  
of the swift feet spoke:  
'O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind  
forever on profit,  
how shall any one of the Achaians readily  
obey you  
either to go on a journey or to fight men strongly  
in battle?' (*Iliad*, I, 148-151)

Thanks again to the epic's «constitution,» this critique attains a high degree of social objectivity.

But it is in the *Odyssey* that this critique—this powerful epic negativity—receives its fullest, most explicit, if less tragic, expression. It is here that the epic undertakes what it will never again be able to with any hope of success: a return to the mythic and cultural «epos,» that is, an ideological resumption of the tribal division of labor in its holistic relation to the epic. This attempt fails, as it must—but only partly so. For the result is not only epic failure but an epic success in the critical manipulation of a contradiction which assumes the aesthetic form of *anachronism*. The *Odyssey* looks simultaneously backwards to the pre-heroic days of myth and tribal society and forwards to a post-heroic ideology and division of labor which it, however, can only glimpse in the negative form of an absence and a need.

A brief survey of the *Odyssey's* best known narrative features makes this clear. The geographical center of the epic is Ithaka, the smallest and most primitive of the «realms» that have participated in the Trojan expedition. Telemachus can only refer to Odysseus' residence on the island as a «house» or «home,» particularly after he has made visits to the «palaces» and «mansions» of Nestor and Menelaos. Despite all its rusticity and, by implication, proximity to the old tribal ways, however, Ithaka has produced an Odysseus who is «the equal of Zeus in council» (*Iliad*; II, 169) who «can do anything» (*Odyssey*; I, 175), who is the «man for all occasions» (*Odyssey*; VIII, 433)—i.e., who is by far the most *urbane* of the Achaians, for it is only the city that brings all such skills together. Odysseus the warrior leaves Troy with a suitably large share of spoils, having produced the stratagem that brings the war to a close, but manages to lose it all on the way back, losing in effect his very reason for going in the first place. Restitution is brought about in Phaiakia only after completion of Odysseus' narration of the famed periplum, or series of mythological adventures, which take the hero to the outward limits of space and the rearward limits of history. Here Odysseus is clearly given the opportunity of resuming the duties of a tribal culture hero, and of restoring the epic to its previous privileged position with respect to the *whole* gamut of tribal productions. Odysseus is ideal for this role, «confronted» as Whitman notes, «by no hopeless division in himself; he is equipped, as if my magic, with every skill any situation might require, so that he needs only deliberate ways and means...»<sup>9</sup>

But such resumption is impossible. Odysseus can only regard the mythological world—to be precise, the content of the mythological epic—as a consumer. His «heroism» is much like that of a modern anthropologist:

I took my spear and broadsword, and I climbed  
a rocky point above the ship, for sight  
or sound of human labor... (*Odyssey*; X, 145-147)

Moreover, instead of the unalienated tribal world, he encounters a society of monsters, i.e., of anachronisms. The herd-tending *Kyklopes* who should by all rights provide a model of tribal organization are solitary, asocial cannibals who «have no muster and no meeting/no consultation or old tribal ways.» (*Odyssey*; IX, 74-75). The climatic irony of this epic revisitation comes of course in Book XI when the shade of Achilles cries bitterly to Odysseus, «light of councils»:

Better, I say to break sod as a farm hand  
for some poor country man, on iron rations,  
than lord it over all the exhausted dead. (XI, 468-70)

Return to Ithaka confronts Odysseus with an even more shocking alienation: that of his property, including his wife. Odysseus' flirtation with mythic heroism has resulted meanwhile in a threat to the amenities of his class position: a private landed estate including large numbers of cattle, pigs, goats and slaves (see Book XIV for Eumaios' outlay of Odysseus' capital); a cloistered wife; and the right of primogeniture («single sons (are) the rule» (XVI, 86) among the *Laertides*). For Odysseus' property is not, after all, tribal, and thus against the claims laid upon it by the suitors—the anachronistic claims of the members of the old tribal gens on the property of a deceased gentile—he has no protection other than force of arms. Conversely, the violent «heroic» resolution of this contradiction is temporary only and must finally be resolved *deus-ex-machina* fashion.

L. A. Post implicitly criticizes Homer for having «inserted the family within the framework of the state in the dull though statesmanlike ending of the *Odyssey*...»<sup>10</sup> As a representative, along with George De F. Lord, of what we might call the liberal, bourgeois humanist school of Homeric criticism (as opposed to the bourgeois Christian school of C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot), Post correctly identifies this insertion as part and parcel of what he, along with Aristotle, calls the «ethical» concern of the *Odyssey*. What he fails to identify is the anachronism and social contradiction involved in this insertion. The family (although particularly the extended gentile family, which is anachronized in the *Odyssey*) is the ethical center of the *tribe*, not of the state. To the state is reserved the task of displacing the ethical power of the family over society as a whole with its own, and of inverting (ideologizing) this relation.

But this displacement and inversion have not been achieved in the *Odyssey*. What Post calls the «framework of the state» is precisely the «dull» contrived quality of the ending, the supposed resolution of social contradictions which transcend the tribe via divine machinery, i.e., a degenerate tribal ideology. The *Odyssey* is, as practically everyone has noted, a transitional epic, but the transition is incomplete. In the «Epic of Moral Regeneration»<sup>11</sup> the «old code of heroic warriors» has been repudiated but no new code has come to take its place. In the *Odyssey*, as in no other epic text which follows in the Homeric tradition, epic expels its heroic-class basis, returns to its tribal ancestry for a replacement, fails to find it there and finally looks to a new ideology to fill the space of this failure, an ideology which will resolve a class contradiction in a new way. Thus the Homeric epic calls for the state, but only through the delineation of its absence. And in so doing it calls for its own replacement, both by genres which



do not contradict the needs of a new class order of things, and by political ideology itself.

From this point on, at least in the European tradition which marks its own historical origins in Hellenic civilization, the fate of the epic is tied to the state, for it is now the state and not the epic which assumes ideological control of the division of labor. So long as the class which wields the state apparatus also wields the state ideology which we have characterized as the necessary false theory of the division of labor that stipulates its hierarchization, the state can freely condemn the epic to the scholastic triviality of the Alexandrian empire. It can also elevate new genres as its ideological litter-bearers—for example, the dialogues of Plato, in particular *The Republic*, which must certainly rank as the state's crowning literary achievement. The simultaneous literary production of philosophy, historiography, lyric poetry, tragedy, comedy, etc., may itself be seen as the division of a unitary epic production. The old contradiction of the heroic epic persists, but it is the state now that operates as its primary, negative motivation.

The class exercise of the state, however, is not a simple affair and is itself liable to contradiction. Engels clarifies this:

Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed... By way of exception, however, periods occur, in which the warring classes balance each other so neatly that the state power as ostensible mediator, acquires for the moment a certain degree of independence of both.<sup>12</sup>

To this it is only necessary to add that control of the state may cause splits to develop *within* a single dominant class (e. g., Democrats and Republicans), a phenomenon which has its own peculiar ideological ramifications.

The *Aeneid* is, among other things, the product of such a split in its most antagonistic form: civil war.<sup>13</sup> Its ideological relation to the state is consequently of a more urgent and determined nature than is the case with the Alexandrian epics or the «historical» epics of Naevius and Ennius. In 1st century B. C. Italy «civilization is at stake,» that is, the ability of the dominant land and slave holding class to manage its own local and «overseas» affairs has been called into question by an internal conflict of small versus large land ownership, the latter represented by the Augustan faction.<sup>14</sup> Conflict centers around not only the final capture and exercise of state power but the manner in which such power is to be exercised, republican or imperial, Augustan or the «oriental» program of Antony. The conflict is «civil,» i.e., involves the whole of society in warring alliances.

Given such conditions it makes more sense to call Vergil the author of «the Epic of Success»—success not, in turn, of the epic, but of the new, strengthened, more highly perfected Augustan imperialist state. In order for the victory of the Augustan party to endure as more than a blatant usurpation, it must use its newly acquired state apparatus—the principal prize of civil war—to eliminate the conditions of civil war, that is, to effect the reorganization of society as a whole without, however, revolutionizing the relations of production. The division of labor is to be vastly elaborated, but only within the bureaucratic

and military wings of the empire, while the divisions flanking property are to be held firmly in place. So as to *appear* to be more than a usurpation, the Augustan faction must likewise appear to the various divisions as the manifestation of a «theory,» not only of the existing organizations and hierarchies of production, but of a new ruling class mission and version of self.

Others will fashion the molten  
Bronze with more skill (at least I believe  
this), will carve from the Marble live faces,  
will plead cases better and sketch out the  
paths of the heavenly bodies with pointers,  
and forecast the rising of stars.

You, Roman, remember to govern  
the peoples with power (these arts shall be  
yours) to establish the practice of  
peace, spare the conquered, and beat  
down the haughty. (*Aeneid*; VI, 855-862)

It inevitably adopts the existing literary means to express this; since there has been no revolution in the mode of production it cannot easily create new ones.

As Brooks Otis puts it, Augustus «lets it be known» that he wants an epic. Vergil, in a clear act of class and personal dependence, «volunteers,» but his particular authorship is of decidedly less importance to state-ideology than the genre he is called upon to produce. Epic, although it has suffered a literary division of labor of its own and has become a relic, offers the advantage of binding historiography, philosophy, lyric, etc., to a unitary purpose and of being itself an «elevated» medium. What was 700 years before a capacity for class critique now becomes a means of pre-empting such criticism in all the various generic branches of its production. Vergil's training had well equipped him to exercise such means.

But why a «Homeric» epic and not merely the Ennian singing of the victory at Actium? Formalism cites the dicta of Horace on this point. But Horace, no less than Vergil, was in the service of Maecenas and addressed his literary theory to the Emperor in epistolary form.

The battle of Actium took place in 31 B.C. Vergil is said to have commenced work on the *Aeneid* in 29 B.C. It seems rather obvious to conclude that in a mere space of 2-3 years the Augustan junta could not have erased from society all traces of a division which threatened to split the empire itself into two parts. The battle of Actium no doubt remained to be won as ideology.

Thus there would have been a clear advantage in recasting the «heroic» events culminating in Actium in the Homeric idiom: the assassination of Julius Caesar as the murder of Priam, the Antony-Cleopatra alliance as Aeneas' dangerous dalliance in Dido's Carthage, Actium and the end of civil war as the Italian *Iliad*, and finally the invention of an heroic and ancient genealogy in which the newly vanquished forces are portrayed in the ambiguous guise of noble savages. With the additional transformation of genealogy into the prophecy of an «imperium sine fine,» (see, e.g., the shield in Book VIII) the new Augustan regime could be made to appear as precisely what it was not but desperately wished to be: a naturally given, hence divine form of rule and social order, a new «civilization.» The popular view of the ascension of Augustan power and imperial renewal as the spontaneous overflow of Augustan personality without occasion for class struggle must itself be viewed as the gauge of Vergil's success in the painting of a moral portrait.

But what the Augustan state above all required of its literary expression was elevation—this is sufficient to explain in turn both the resurrection of *Homeric* epic and the utterly humorless, ponderous and formalist rigidity of an *Aeneid* that refuses aesthetic value to any of the divisions of human activity which do not contribute to the elevation of a class ideal. To call the *Aeneid* (as does Brooks Otis) a «psychological» epic may be correct, but it begs the question of precisely *whose* psychology? To this we answer: not merely an Augustan, but a state psychology which naturally produces the single emotion which the *Aeneid* so brilliantly evokes in all of its extensive and epic range: fear. The terror of the sack of Troy and the incessant nauseabund insecurity of Aeneas are the leftovers of the need to unite the highly contradictory elements of an Homeric aesthetic and the cultural inferiority complex of Augustan rule. Such may be expected when the state undertakes to «make civilization poetical.»<sup>15</sup>

Where the contradictoriness of the Homeric epic could result in a new version of old heroics, it results in the reverse for the *Aeneid* and the state-supervised epic in general: an old version of new «heroics.» It is now the state which calls for the epic; and a state revolution that is not simultaneously a social revolution, but only further entrenches the rule of a class of appropriators cannot produce new literature and must resort to various forms of literary parasitism.

With the production of the *Aeneid* the state has finally asserted its undisputed ideological rights over the epic. There can no longer be any question of tribal claims to the production or interpretation of epic content, for class and *state* society have decisively eliminated the basis for any such tribal hold-out. The gens itself has been swallowed up by the «learned» epic where it now functions as one of the principal ideologemes for an inverted state genealogy. In the *Aeneid* we find, indeed, a fascination with «barbarian» social forms (especially male kinship)—but it is state society's fascination for a reality *it* has annihilated and which therefore recedes into the irrecoverable past which calls up such emotions. At the same time, however, we must not forget that the state is *driven* to appropriate epic content in its increasing need for a literary format.

The transition from Vergil to Camões thus requires that we begin by tracing the development of the state over this historical period. In so doing we discover a retrograde motion which only recovers anything like an Augustan level of development in the Europe of approximately Camões' time. Engels describes the political-economic basis of this:

During the last years of the republic, Roman rule was already based on the ruthless exploitation of the conquered provinces. The emperors had not abolished this exploitation; on the contrary, they had regularized it. The more the empire fell into decay, the higher rose the taxes and compulsory services and the more shamelessly the officials robbed and blackmailed the people. Commerce and industry were never the business of the Romans, who lorded it over entire peoples. Only in usury did they excel all others, before and after them. The commerce that existed and managed to maintain itself for a time was reduced to ruin by official extortion . . . Universal impoverishment; decline of commerce, handicrafts, the arts, and of the population; decay of the towns; retrogression of agriculture to a lower stage—this was the final result of Roman world supremacy.<sup>16</sup>

The inadequacy of German tribal organization to the task of subjugating former Roman colonies made it necessary for the barbarian chieftains to place themselves at the head of the old Roman administrative bodies as kings. This fact, coupled

with the further inadequacy of slave labor to the cultivation of large, sparsely populated tracts of land, produced, in a relatively short period of time, the conditions for the development of a set of European feudal states. It is within the transition from a loosely defined group of military chieftains to a state-wielding nobility that we must place the development of the medieval national-chivalric epics such as *El Cantar de Mio Cid* and *Le Chanson de Roland*, the transcriptions of orally produced epics which could only have originated in a tribal division of labor. It is not the state which calls for their production so much as the primitive feudal nationalism by means of which a feudal ruling class protects its landed wealth from the claims of other such «national» classes.

Only with the arrival of new class interests which engage in open struggle for possession of the state apparatus do we again meet the conditions for the production of literary, «learned» epics. These are the same interests that rediscover the literary products of antiquity, including the state-produced epic of the philosophical Vergil (as opposed to the verse formulas of the medieval wizard). Though still nurtured on feudal ideologies and housed in feudal institutions, these interests already specify themselves as bourgeois by their increasing ties to a «free fund» of human labor and their production of the ideology which institutionalizes this new social relation. In the *Divina Commedia*, to the extent that this is an epic work, bourgeois interests fight each other for the Florentine state; in the mock chivalresques of Ariosto and Boiardo they have predominated in Florence and elsewhere and literally mock the ideology they have vanquished, reducing it to entertainment in commodity form. It is the Renaissance: the bygone days of bourgeois heroics. For it is only now that the division of labor exceeds its past Roman «glories» and produces a new class of individuals who, for all they may reproduce the intellect of the ancients, could never themselves have been produced by ancient social relations—the true bourgeois heroes: the humanists. Naturally, it is the humanists who take up production of the epic along with the task of advising kings and princes on the matter of advanced statecraft.

Nowhere does the bourgeois capture of the state occur without struggle; nowhere does it encounter such resistance as in Spain and Portugal. The reasons for this are many and complex and we cannot do justice to them here. They reduce above all, not to the absence of capitalist relations, but to the prolonged existence of a strong feudal nobility with well entrenched state power—a strength no doubt originating in part in the special demands placed on this class by the activity and results of the Reconquista.

With the growth of commercial empires in the 15th and 16th centuries class struggle for control of the state greatly sharpened, leading to the eventual predominance of the bourgeois merchants and financiers of empire in the Italian states and elsewhere outside Iberia, as well as to the strengthened absolutist state characteristic of the Renaissance. The commercial-imperial successes of Portugal, however, were brought about by a strong crown monopoly in which, to the contrary, a consolidated court nobility exercised both political and financial control. Oliveira Marques describes this process with a careful eye to its contradictoriness:

The backbone of commercial empires like those of Venice, Genoa, and, later, Holland had always been the existence of a strong middle class of enterprising bourgeois, motivated by the prospect of profit and the reinvestment of that profit in new profitable undertakings. Such a middle class... was lacking in Portugal. Instead of private initiatives supported or encouraged

by the state, the essence of the Portuguese expansion was a state enterprise, to which private interests or initiatives were applied... Moreover, the Crown had a feudal structure based upon privilege that allowed the nobility and the Church to siphon off a good share of the profits for themselves. Lacking a bourgeois mentality, nobles and clerics preferred to invest their new capital in land, in building... and in luxuries. As a result, the feudal structure of the country... was not essentially shaken by expansion and could survive for centuries. As a result, too, the state faced a permanent lack of capital for the maintenance of the empire and had to appeal to foreign money and initiatives, thus further endangering the growth of a native middle class.<sup>17</sup>

To put it briefly: the Portuguese crown aristocracy (the church may be effectively included in this category) could, by keeping the reins of state in its own hands and out of those of the local bourgeoisie, ensure its own enrichment; at the same time, however, the feudal conversion of wealth and the mentality that went along with it guaranteed the weakening of that state and its commercial empire relative to others.

With the inclusion of ideological forces, the situation surrounding the Portuguese state in the late 15th and the 16th centuries grows yet more complex. Although a politically and economically strong bourgeoisie was lacking, the strong influence of bourgeois ideas in the form of humanism was not—such ideas were imported in both bodily and printed form along with the various commodities and the banker's capital necessary to the maintenance of the first modern state which faced the task of reproducing its power globally. Thus there could arise a highly unusual situation in which the suppression of the local bourgeoisie politically and economically by means of the state could co-exist with the waging of active ideological struggle of bourgeois and feudal ideas as to the proper theory and practice of the state.

The *fidalgo* Luis de Camões received his humanist training most probably in the 1530's and early 40's, just in time to endow him with above mentioned contradiction in wholly internalized form. The composition of a Portuguese national epic based on Portuguese imperial feats was, according to Saraiva, proposed to João II as early as 1491 by the Italian humanist Angelo Poliziano, and was later raised by the local students of humanism João de Barros, Diogo de Teive and Antonio Ferreira.<sup>18</sup> Thus Camões' acceptance of this task as early as the 1540's demanded that he not only put his training to use in the reproduction of the «classical» Vergilian epic, but that he participate in a bourgeois ideological project. More—he must do it in the service of a state ruled by a feudal nobility of which he himself was a practically committed, if marginal, member.

Such conditions could only result in the placing of cataclysmic strains on the production and eventual content of an epic. The «theory» of the division would itself have to be forcibly rent into two contradictory halves and the generic unity of epic thus threatened with a break-up into the various literary modes which it had had the essential job of synthesizing. *Os Lusíadas* manifests these internal contradictions openly; and it is only at the cost of sustaining them in truly heroic fashion that it manages to insert itself into the generic history of epic.

The split betrays itself on the level of form. *Os Lusíadas* breaks down into two fundamental modes of discourse: the epic narration itself and a kind of running commentary often but not necessarily based on a separate moral or political aspect of narrated epic deeds. Whether voiced by the author, Vasco da Gama, or a character such as «o velho do Restelo,» this disruptive discourse

represents the irresistible pull of the contradictions within state ideology on the narrator himself. The richest example of this is in the final octaves of Canto VII where the poet is about to produce Paulo da Gama's audio-visual Portuguese history lesson to Catual, but breaks mid-line into an extended digression:

Um ramo na mão tinha... Mas, ó cego  
Eu, que cometo, insano e temerário  
Sem vós, Ninfas do Tejo e do Mondego... (Canto VII, oct. 78, 1-3)

Invocation immediately shifts to lament in which the poet specifies his own double relation of service to the «Tagides»—«cantando/O vosso Tejo e os vossos Lusitanos» and «Agora o mar, agora experimentando/Os perigos Mavórcios inumanos» (oct. 79, 1-2; 5-6)—; places it within the division of labor—«nua mão sempre a espada e noutra a pena» (79, 8)—; and points to its alienation—«Agora, com pobreza avorrecida/Por hospícios alheios degradado» (80, 1-2). In octaves 81 and 82 he commences an invective against the class of epic patrons, «aqueles que eu cantando andava.../...Trabalhos nunca usados me inventaram/Com que em tão duro estado me deitaram!» (oct. 81, 3; 7-8); and «Vede, Ninfas, que engenhos de senhores/O vosso Tejo cria valerosos./que assi sabem prezar...» (oct. 82, 1-3). He vows not to waste his talents («favor») on such thankless «subidos» (oct. 83). And finally in octaves 84-86 he locates them directly within the state apparatus and delivers an orthodox humanist critique:

- 84: Nem creais, Ninfas, não, que fama desse  
A quem ao bem comum e do seu Rei  
Antepuser seu proprio interesse...
- 85: Nenhum que use de seu poder bastante  
Pera servir a seu desejo feio  
E que, por comprazer ao vulgo errante  
Se muda em mais figuras que Proteio.  
Nem, Camenas, também cuideis que cante  
Quem, com hábito honesto a grave, veio  
Por contentar o Rei, no oficio novo,  
A despir e roubar o pobre povo!
- 86: Nem quem acha que é justo e que é direito  
Guardar-se a lei do Rei severamente,  
E não acha que é justo e bom respeito  
que se pague o suor da servil gente;  
Nem quem sempre, com pouco experto peito,  
Razões aprende, e cuida que é prudente,  
Pera taxar, com mão rapace e escassa,  
Os trabalhos alheios que não passa.

Saraiva, who also cites this passage, makes the following notation:

...O humanista sustenta uma noção da nacionalidade e simultâneamente de Estado, que estão muito próximas do patriotismo moderno. O Estado, personificado no rei, traduz-se na lei, em principio igual para todos, e expressão da justiça; no seu significado profundo representa a abolição do privilégio feudal.<sup>19</sup>

The humanist state-ideology here elicited also recognizes the new classes which have a stake in the abolition of the feudal state (again recognized only in the «Cupid's war on mankind» passage in Canto IX): «o vulgo errante,» «o povo,» and «a servil gente»; that is, the dislodged peasantry-small urban proletariat (literally «errante» in that period), the incipient bourgeoisie, and the small slave population which then inhabited Lisbon and other cities.

But neither the humanist state nor the oppressed classes that dictate its revolutionary character in its earliest, theoretical stage can find their way into the strictly *epic* content of the epic. Not only can they not be narrated, their inscription requires that narration be interrupted and even threatened with an ultimate failure. There is just one class that can claim heroic portrayal, the class which holds state power: «os barões,» better known as «o peito Lusitano.» This class, however, appears to place little or no value on its own epic representation. Thus Camões vows to sing «Aqueles sós... que aventuraram/Por seu Deus, por seu Rei, a amada vida,/ Onde, perdendo-a, em fama a dilataram./ Tão bem de suas obras merecida.» (VII, 87, 1-4)—in other words, the military *servants* of the state, principally himself.

In *Os Lusíadas* the state again calls for the epic, but the «illusory community» that presupposes the epic does not prevail—a fragmented, divided textuality has inflicted both society and narration. The bourgeois state, like the state itself in Homer's time, can only exist within the epic as a surrounded absence, although in this instance it is marked by departures from narrative continuity. Contradiction within state-ideology itself (something totally absent in the *Aeneid*) in turn infects the genre of heroic epic and already prophesies its death at the hands of the novel, albeit not a Portuguese one. A further ironic manifestation of this contradiction is to be seen in the flourishing production of historiography based on mercantile expansion (Barros, Gões, Correia, etc.) contemporary or just previous to the production of *Os Lusíadas* and authored by bourgeois intellectuals without, or less burdened by, the class-contradictions of poor Camões. It is to these works we must look, according to Saraiva, to discover the presence of the full epic personality that has been butchered in the Portuguese national epic. Likewise it is to the humanist himself we must look to find an epic relation to the division of labor. To quote Engels: «The men who founded the modern rule of the bourgeoisie had anything but bourgeois limitations.»<sup>20</sup>

Analysis has shown that the ideological relation of the epic to the division of labor enters into contradiction with the split of society into classes and that the epic changes from an initially negative and ascendent force in this relation to a declining and subordinate one as the state assumes more and more the superstructural function which epic had previously exercised. The revolutionary bourgeois struggle for state power, like the initial stages of the ancient state, further complicates and aggravates this relation and calls reproduction of the genre itself into serious question.

What remains now is to examine the bourgeois (formalist, «humanist») point of view with regard to the three specific texts and apply our analysis to a readerly perception of their clearest differences. Our objective, again, is to replace the unsatisfactory account of these differences as exclusively formal or «cultural»—i.e., as ahistorical or historically ideal—with an historical materialist account which focuses on the line of social and ideological development which we have understood to be the state, as it develops out of the division of labor.<sup>21</sup>

To both simplify our readerly relation to the texts and heighten its immediacy we look for the state where we might least expect to find it: within the most radically subjective «moments» of the three epic heroes themselves: Odysseus,

Aeneas and Vasco da Gama. We thus make an appeal to a certain psychological impressionism, both in its own right and in the effort to expose its various material and ideological bases in the state and division of labor.

To pinpoint Odysseus' radical subjectivity requires that one choose from a wide range of passages and, as it were, distinct mind states of a most subjective hero. Odysseus is, for example, the only one of the three who talks to himself. But Odysseus does more than address his own character; he also reproduces it for an audience, as for example in books VI-XII for the Phaiakian court. Here Odysseus sings his own exploits in a version presumably faithful to the «truth.»

In the beginning of the second half of the *Odyssey*, reproduction takes on the additional complexity of alteration. On three separate occasions (in books XIII, XIV, and XIX) and to three separate interlocutors (Athena, Eumaios and Penelope) Odysseus invents the story of his arrival on Ithaka, identifying himself as a native of Krete. Although already disguised as a beggar in the latter two, in each instance he alters the story to fit the needs of the particular deception, a skill for which he receives the praise of undeceived Athena as «of all men now alive/...the best in plots and storytelling» (XIII, 276-277). A comparison of the variants indeed reveals a breathtaking exercise of narrational skill. Odysseus repeatedly weaves features of his actual experience into the fictive texture, even to the point of including himself as a third person. Here is a hero who has so mastered and known his own subjectivity as to be able to assemble it out of a pack of lies.

We choose to analyze a section of the second variant, told to the swineherd Eumaios in book XIV. Disguised as a nameless beggar, Odysseus responds to the swine herd's request for an autobiography with an account of his birth to a wealthy Kretan father, Kastor Hylakides, by his concubine and slave, describing how he improved on the poor inheritance left him upon Kastor's death by marriage into a wealthy family. There follows this passage:

My strength's all gone,  
but from the husk you may divine the ear  
that stood tall in the old days. Misery owns me  
now, but then great Ares and Athena  
gave me valor and man-breaking power,  
whenever I made choice of men-at-arms  
to set a trap with me for my enemies.  
Never, as I am a man, did I fear Death  
ahead, but went in foremost in the charge,  
putting a spear through any man whose legs  
were not as fast as mine. That was my element,  
war and battle. Farming I never cared for,  
nor life at home, nor fathering fair children.  
I reveled in long shops with oars, I loved  
polished lances, arrows in the skirmish,  
the shapes of doom that others shake to see.  
Carnage suited me; heaven put those things  
in me somehow. Each to his own pleasure!  
Before we young Akhaians shipped for Troy  
I led men on nine cruises in corsairs  
to raid strange coasts, and had great luck;  
taking rich spoils on the spot, and even more



in the division. So my house grew prosperous,  
my standing therefore high among the Kretans. (XIV, 174-197)

The tale continues, taking its fictional hero through the ten years at Troy, a brief return to Krete, raid and capture on the Egyptian coast, a sojourn there and in Phoenicia, voyage to Threspotia where news of Odysseus is heard, and, finally, arrival on Ithaka as an impoverished escapee from the slave market.

What strikes one most in this yarn is not so much its plausibility, though plausible it is within the narrational confines set by the epic, but rather its tawdry even picaresque quality. This, of course, is meant to establish rapport with Odysseus' interlocutor, an aged slave who has himself come to Ithaka under similar circumstances. At the same time, however, it is the tale of a hero—at least all the narrative tags are there: a military command at Troy and at sea, excellence in the bearing of arms, and the acquisition of wealth in the form of plunder, «even more in the division.» The picaresque here derives, not from the absence of heroics, but from a shift in the perspective from which they are viewed. Odysseus as the unnamed Kretan (only to Penelope does he give himself the name «Aithon») casts off his dogskin helmet and his weapons and throws himself on the mercy of the Egyptian king, leaving his men to be slaughtered when it appears the raid has gone sour. We note this same anti-heroic stance in the first tale especially, told to an Athena disguised as a young shepherd. The murder of one Orsilokhos is described:

I acted; I

hit him with a spearcast from a roadside  
as he came down from the open country. Murky  
night shrouded all heaven and the stars.  
I made that ambush with one man at arms,  
We were unseen. I took his life in secret,  
finished him off with my sharp sword. (XIII, 237-243)

Here Odysseus clearly designs his unabashed boast of a killing to impress and terrify what appears to be a young, impressionable shepherd. And one cannot help but speculate, given such a capacity for rhetorical finesse, whether Odysseus has not also freely used his powers to his advantage in the narration of his «true» story to the lords and ladies of Phaiakia.

But to return to the passage cited—amidst the narrational interstices of an infinitely variable discourse on heroics we hit upon an admission in the form of a psychological coinage: «That was my element... Farming I never cared for... Carnage suited me; heaven put those things in me somehow,» etc. Surrounded as it is by details of a wholly false autobiography, the reader's inclination is to excuse this comment as a piece of specious psychology to make the story more credible. But such a rationalization might also lend credulity to other heroic narrations undertaken by Odysseus, and in a certain way it is conspicuously absent from them. Why, after all, did Odysseus leave Ithaka for Troy, if relative wealth and prestige were already guaranteed him at home? Perhaps carnage does suit him, a fact he has been unable to admit except when disguised as an aged victim of hard luck who has nothing to lose. As to how he should have acquired such a predilection, Odysseus assigns the matter to divine providence and does not allow it to trouble his mind. «To each his own pleasure!»

Aeneas also has a hard-luck story. We mean not the *Aeneid* itself but specifically books II and III in which the Trojan exile tells to Dido the story of the sack of Troy and his flight in search of a site for its rebuilding. There are indeed other occasions for the conveyance of his subjectivity, as, for example, his painful leave-taking of Dido and his vacillation before the execution of Turnus, but all in all they are relatively few for an epic hero who has been characterized as the most subjective of all and the product of a «subjective» style.<sup>22</sup> It is true that these instances have a poignance for the reader, but without anticipating the argument too much we can explain this quality as the manifestation, not of a heightened subjectivity, but of a subjectivity that has entered into an antagonistic contradiction with objective conditions—a heightened alienation.

Like Odysseus, Aeneas tells part of his own story, though without any clear motivation for altering it. His actions upon the sack and fall of Troy are largely dictated by circumstance in the form of mortal danger, familial duty and divine commandment, so there is little occasion for a psychology of personal predilection. What emerges in books II and III is a dull and «honest» account of the anxiety which is the only emotion his burdens allow him. Aeneas' most developed statement of this subjectivity comes in book II: Troy's downfall has been revealed to him in a vision by his mother Venus, and he somehow manages to return to his house where he finds his family still alive. Father Anchises despairs all and threatens suicide, whereupon the outraged son can only respond with a vow to make his final stand against the Greeks and thus achieve his self-destruction in an alternate mode. Wife Creusa points out to him that if such is his will he might just as well stay at home and protect his family. Then comes the double portent of pale fire about the head of Iulus and the shooting star which lands on Mt. Ida, signs which Anchises joyfully interprets as the guarantee of successful flight and the renewal of Troy. Flight thereupon is decided. Aeneas shoulders Anchises and the household gods, takes Iulus in his right hand, and departs with Creusa taking up the rear.

Now all the breezes frightened,  
 Each sound disturbed me, fearful alike for comrade  
 And burden, I whom, shortly before, the weapons  
 Aimed at me or the squads of hostile Greeks  
 Had not excited. (II, 727-730)

There follows the disappearance of Creusa (her wifely duty?) and Aeneas' frenzied search for her which leads him back into the fray, finally ending with her reappearance as a ghost. Throughout this sequence the hero cannot shake the fear that has come upon him. This seems a properly naturalistic detail, but its sudden development begs explanation. Where was this fear before the appearance of the portents and the decision to flee the city? Aeneas himself implicitly asks this question but cannot answer it—the transition mystifies him and even makes him a little neurotic. Of course, he is afraid *for* the lives of his family, etc., but if so, where was this fear while he battled Greeks in the streets?

The question goes begging throughout the *Aeneid*, for it is this fear in variant modes and degrees which remains constantly with Aeneas until his re-entry into warfare in book VII. and even then one senses that it is only repressed, not dissipated. That it is primarily a fear associated with an obligation is registered in that its first appearance marks the transition from an Iliadic Aeneas obliged only to die an heroic death in defense of his *gens* to an Augustan Aeneas charged

with the founding of a dynastic empire. This change occasions what is literally the hero's most extended commentary on his own state of mind. And while its naturalism may persuade us, and many critics as well, this does not exempt it from analysis as a feature of epic characterization and ultimately of ideology. Where Odysseus is both the familiar and master of his subjectivity and is able to reproduce it as both heroic and anti-heroic content, Aeneas is the unwitting victim of his, unable to comprehend it when it forces itself upon his consciousness. To insist, as does Brooks Otis, on Aeneas as the typification of «pietas» or the eventual antithesis of «indignar amor» is not in any way to argue for the «modern» psychological concerns of the *Aeneid* as somehow more advanced than those of the epic of barbarism, but only for their increased dogmatization in the service of an ideology inherently more typifying than that of the Homeric epic.

Of Camões' Vasco da Gama A. J. Saravia remarks:

O Gama de Camões nem figura chega a ser, de apagado e incharacterístico que é. Move-se hieraticamente, como se seguisse um rígido protocolo que lhe tolhe a liberdade de movimentos. Serve apenas para fazer discursos, para recitar os belos discursos de Camões. Falta-lhe inteiramente a presença, e não nos deixa recordação.<sup>23</sup>

From such an epic hero we do not expect much subjectivity, nor do we find it. Anything old Vasco might have to offer recedes from view next to the emphatic, complex, but non-epical personality of the epic poet Luis de Camões. Nevertheless, «o Capitão» does narrate the «terras» and «guerras» of the Portuguese feudal nobility and thus by sheer chronological necessity must arrive at the example of his own deeds. His entry into the catalogue of cantos III-V occurs in octave 77 of canto IV. King Manuel, after waking from his imperialist dream-vision of the two old men rivers Indus and Ganges, calls together a council for the purpose of selecting «a gente que mandar.» Gama, in what is his only reference to himself as other than the motorization of his official function, tells it from «his» point of view:

Eu, que bem mal cuidava que em efeito  
Se pusesse o que o peito me pedia  
Que sempre grandes cousas deste jeito,  
Pressago, o coração me prometia,  
Não sei por que razão, por que repeito,  
Ou por que bom sinal que em mi se via,  
Me põe o inclito Rei nas mãos a chave  
Deste cometimento grande e grave. (IV, 77; 1-8)

Gama emerges here as the most minimal of subjects: the receiver of a command who must appear to adopt some attitude towards his task. Feudal relations dictate that this be the ceremoniously modest acceptance of the lord's will—an act, to use Saraiva's term, of protocol. We remind ourselves that Gama is addressing the «king» of Melinde, who remains potentially hostile and must be won to colonial service through an appeal to his own «royal» prerogative. (Imperialists to this day are the loudest defenders of «Third World» «national sovereignty.») But even in this minimal occasion for subjectivity, as it were, a blip in the vassal-lord relation, a coherent psychology fails to assemble itself. Gama, whose «heart has always promised him» an heroic service to his country, can yet not fathom why he should be selected, and is taken by surprise. The subject is custom built to

fit objectivity but, paradoxically, bears no comprehensible relation to it. He either thinks or acts, but cannot do both simultaneously. Gama must be animated. Where action should accompany thought it can only take the disembodied form of divine intervention, as in the forced removal of the fleet from the port of Mombça; when thought should accompany action it becomes an abstract mental mechanism such as «o reflexo lume do polido/Espelho» described in the Vergilian epic simile of octaves 87-88 in canto VIII. Like the Ptolemaic «máquina do mundo» of canto X, Gama's «juizo» can only fluctuate in a perpetually static motion, an apt analogy for the class vacillation that inflicts the epic as a whole. Possessing neither body nor «soul» inasmuch as he lacks the logic, psychic or otherwise, which binds them together, Gama can receive no physical or mental description other than that of octaves 97 and 98, canto II: a mere suit of clothes.

We thus observe a reduction of heroic subjectivity: from the complex personal abundance of Odysseus to the naturalistic alienation of Aeneas to the bare cipher that is Gama. This is not, however, the result of some dwindling literary resource but of a burgeoning «national» ideal which the epic is called upon to produce in heroic form. The process by which ruling class ideology reproduces its exercise of state power has been demonstrated: it epicalizes the state. What we have perceived as the *psychological degradation* of the epic hero needs now to be understood as an actual ideological byproduct arising out of the historic contradiction between epic and state, in which the ideological prefiguration of the state (Homer) becomes the subordination of epic itself to the ideological designs of imperialist state power (Vergil, Camões).

We begin simplistically by emphasizing that neither Odysseus, Aeneas nor Gama are real human beings, and as such they do not possess psyches. The «heroic» consciousness reproduced in their respective texts belongs neither to them nor, finally, to an individual author or reader, but to a class of producers and consumers, or as the case may be, to a number of such classes simultaneously. Moreover, this consciousness does not spring fully developed from the mere existence of these classes, but from the labor and the division of labor that gives them birth and puts them at odds. Psychology itself can only commence to exist once the division of mental and manual labor has occurred, and it becomes necessary to view mentality as a separate component of specific productive activities. Along with the development of an official state «theory» of the division of labor there thus naturally arises an official state psychology which has the job of making a ruling class mentality appear to be simultaneously a virtue and a lowest common denominator of society as a whole. (If the rapacious industrial bourgeoisie of 19th-early 20th century North America had produced an epic, its hero would have demonstrated «ingenuity.») Since it would be self-defeating to openly depict the class-basis of this mentality and technically impossible to insert it into all the classes successively, an individualized mentality must be sought which can seem to straddle the divisions even when engaged in doing precisely the opposite. This formula for mentality is already at hand in the hero of the tribal epic, the first genre by means of which a mass psychology has so far been evoked.

Odysseus is clearly depicted as belonging to a dominant class which, at the time of the *Odyssey's production*, had not yet made a decisive break with tribal relations and thus was in no position to exert *ideological* control over the divisions of labor that were not tribal in nature—precisely those associated with class. For this reason the class-basis of his mentality could be and *was* exposed, a fact which in turn produces his marvelously complex and exact subjectivity. Odysseus is under no obligation to hide the material reality of his rank in

society, thus he is free to exercise the wide, epic range of abilities and strengths with which that rank endows him. He «can do anything» and never lose a sense of identity or suffer moral recrimination. We see this with utter clarity in his straightforward and boastful accounts of «heroic» activities—murder, piracy, betrayal, etc.—which modern state society would either condemn as criminal or institutionalize as legal under extenuating circumstances of class rule. There are no police to arrest him, no jails in which to throw him, no courts to exonerate him; even a god or two are on his side.

Nevertheless, he does suffer a certain compulsion, and even a retribution. For all his mythological expertise, Odysseus is not a tribal but a class hero. He has something to protect. We have already noted it: private property. For this property he is as likely to be plundered as he is to plunder somebody else's. That to which he hopes, ultimately, to return from his western adventures (and which he has seen with his own eyes in Phaiakia where a «levy» is made upon the realm to invest him with wealth) is the same thing which alternately causes him to flee from the older, more civilized, eastern lands, of Egypt, Phoenicia and Krete: an institution which protects private property and prosecutes its violators. The reader has already guessed the institution we mean. It is the same one which will eventually deprive Odysseus of his individual rights as an epic hero and turn him into the criminal demagogue of Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*.

We arrive at a surprisingly exact notion of how the state determines Aeneas' subjectivity if we give a modern interpretation to the cognate of his well known epithet: «Pious,» i.e., he has something to hide. Afraid lest he be discovered, he adopts the mask of propriety. Of course, the Aeneas of the *Aeneid* is nothing but this mask and this fear—what must be hidden remains, for the most part, hidden by means of the pre-emptive censorship exercised by state ideology. This is not more nor less than that which Odysseus is free to reveal: the basis of class rule. The new Augustan ruling class cannot afford an Odysseic treatment of its recent exploits; nor, on the other hand, can it strike their violent character from the social record. Thus, in a clever stroke, it recruits a scholarly pacifist to give the state a fictitious heroic-genealogic setting and pronounce it a «lesser-evil» . . . to «make civilization poetical.» «Pious» Aeneas is class- and state-bound Aeneas. He emerges from a Trojan war which has become a world war between «Europe» and «Asia» into a world in which there are no classes (no slave ever appears in the *Aeneid* despite being by far the most numerous class of the empire) but only «patria» which either cordially invite each other to share the rule (Dido and Latinus to Aeneas) or fight tragically to the death over it (Turnus). Thus Aeneas does nothing which is not either an Homeric pastiche or an act of civic duty. He can produce no true autobiography, no subjective history, (what, for example, were the circumstances of his birth, his marriage, etc?) because, like the class he is meant to typify, he has none apart from the state. His fear is simultaneously the insecurity of Augustan rule and the terror which is the duty of a proto-fascist citizen—both a severely alienated state and an alienated subject-ion. It is not the sight of the arms of Pallas but an obedience to class interests which prompts Aeneas' final act: the carrying out of a state-decreed death sentence.

Fundamentally the same ideological demands produce the vague Gama. But where the class that elevates itself in Aeneas embues him with the new mentality of usurpation Gama is the impersonation of a class order that, although it will continue to rule in Portugal for some time, has entered its dotage. The fact that it is a politically strengthened nobility under the leadership of individuals like Henry the Navigator that carries out the exploration of Africa, India, Brazil, etc.,

can not exclude the significance of the foreign banker's capital that underwrites the expeditions, of the humanist mentality that argues for their most progressive aspects, nor that of the bourgeois chroniclers who produce a new mode of literature based on first-hand experience of the voyages. The Portuguese nobiliary mentality is, finally, unable to «experimentar» the task it has undertaken, and so is its hypostatic mannequin, Gama. The state power and aesthetic ideology that commission Camões' epic prevent, despite themselves, the epic subjectivization of one most unusual and complex individual experiences of the Renaissance. No wonder Camões used the texts of Barros and Gões instead of his own memory to produce his exotic landscapes and demographies—it was simply more convenient, since the class that was to have its rule epicalized could not produce an image of itself under such new conditions. Any possibility of realizing the ideals of the Crusades as anything other than *literary* content must have vanished along with the belief in Prester John. The replacement of nobiliary memory with a bourgeois text must be seen as the implication of Camões' class in a final turn towards a psychological decrepitude.

Gama as hero recedes into the long unbroken line of noble forebears whose catalogue it is his function to deliver. His practical interchangeability as a noun with «o peito Luistano» is grammatically indebted to a class exercise of state power as as old as the nation itself and which has literally come to believe in the myth of its own popularity. The bourgeois advice which at first appears to do it a service at length wakes the nobiliary state from its long dream of order, whence the grotesque resort to the Inquisition and counter-reformational mentality. But Gama lacks even this reactionary verve: the delicate epic shell of *Os Lusíadas* cannot stand such commotion. The narrator himself must address the threat to the feudal state. But, as concerns the state, the narrator is not a reactionary but, as Saraiva calls him, «um humanista desterrado,»<sup>24</sup> both the state's critic and its victim. The reactionary state to which Camões and the fictional Gama return in 1570 is, conversely, the force which deals the last coup to both epic and epic poet:

No mais, Musa, no mais, que a Lira tenho  
 Destemperada e a voz enrouquecida,  
 E não do canto, mas de ver que venho  
 Cantar a gente surda e endurecida.  
 O favor com que mais se acende o engenho  
 Não no dá a pátria, não, que está metida  
 No gosto da cobiça e na rudeza  
 Dhua austera, apagada e vil tristeza. (X, Oct. 145; 1-8)

Camões, who thought to have superseded the division of mental and manual labor as it most afflicted his class («nua mão sempre a espada, noutra a pena»), suffers the split of his personality along exactly the same lines.

The vigorous survival of the Homeric texts and their continuing unsurpassability as written epic literature have already been attributed to the unique historical conditions of their production—conditions which permitted an ingenious Homer(s) to realize himself. This fact can only retain a formal or cultural mystique so long as Homeric scholars and readers persist in mystifying the history of the state, in Attic Greece and in general. Modern bourgeois individualism can claim an Odysseic precedent (e.g., Tennyson's «Ithaka») just as feudal or slaveholding «heroism» could, but only by imagining Odysseus as the implicit citizen of a «democratic» republic. Odysseus, however, remains a barbarian on the

threshold of «civilization» who still has the opportunity of looking backwards and composing himself out of a tribal panorama. Aeneas is no more his aesthetic equal than Horatio Alger.

In the first heroic catalogue of *Os Lusíadas* Gama relates one of the incidents in the career of Afonso I:

O grão Rei incansabil, ajuntando  
Gentes de todo o Reino, cuja usança  
Era andar sempre as terras conquistando  
Cercar vai Badajoz, e logo alcança  
O fim do seu deseja, pelejando  
Com tanto esforço e arte e valentia,  
Que a fez fazer as outras companhia. (III, oct. 68)

The «gentes» referred to here are, for both Gama and Camões, the same «cavaleiros» who propose the conquest and Christianization of Islam and all Asia. In a novel published in Spain some 43 years later than *Os Lusíadas*, a well known «cavaleiro» proposes similar measures for the defense of the patria:

«—Cuerpo de tal! —dijo a esta sazón don Quijote—. ¿Hay más sino mandar Su Majestad por público pregón que se junten en la corte para un día señalado todos los caballeros andantes que vagan por España, que aunque no viniesen sino media dozena, tal podría venir entre ellos, que solo bastase a destruir toda la potestad del Turco? Esténme vuestras mercedes atentos, y vayan conmigo. ¿Por ventura es cosa nueva deshacer un solo caballero andante un ejército de doscientos mil hombres, como si todos juntos tuvieran una sola garganta, o fueran hechos de alfenique? etc.»<sup>25</sup>

The feudal warrior mentality now—43 years later—exists only in the novels of chivalry; and the author of this proposal, for all his patriotic fervor, is judged insane.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A. Preminger, F. Warnke and O. B. Hardison, eds., *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> «Out of this very contradiction between the particular and the common interests, the common interest assumes an independent form as the *state*, which is divorced from the real individual and collective interests, and at the same time as an *illusory community*, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every familiar conglomeration and tribal conglomeration...»

Although reliance on Hegelian terminology weakens it, this brief analysis, once submitted to the corrective of Engels' historical account in *Origin of the Family...* reveals the essence of state ideology.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> We mean «necessary» and «false» in the sense given these terms by Alfred Sohn-Rethel in his discussion of «necessary false consciousness»:

«Necessary false consciousness, is not faulty consciousness. It is, on the contrary, logically correct, inherently incorrigible consciousness. It is called false, not against

its own standards of truth, but as against social existence... Necessary false consciousness, then, is (1) necessary in the sense of faultless systematic stringency... (2) necessarily determined genetically... (3)... determined genetically so as to be false by necessity... and (4) necessary pragmatically... for the perpetuation of the social order in which it holds sway over men's minds.»

Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor* (London: MacMillan Press, 1978), pp. 197-198.

<sup>5</sup> *Intellectual and Manual Labor*, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> *Intellectual and Manual Labor*, p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> Compare this transformation to that of magic into religion, described by Christopher Caudwell in «The Breath of Discontent,» *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* (New York: Dodd and Mead Co., 1949). «The development of classes in society makes magic into religion, and gives religion a characteristic form reflecting the class structure in turn as the form of a specific level of economic production,» p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Here we assume the hypothesis advanced by Cedric Whitman in *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), which locates production of the Homeric epics in 8th century B.C. Attic Greece, either in Athens or within its direct influence (see chapter entitled «Athens, 1200-700 B.C.»).

<sup>9</sup> Whitman, p. 296.

<sup>10</sup> L. A. Post, «The Epic of Success» in *Homer's Odyssey: A Critical Handbook*, ed. Conny Nelson (Belmont California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1969), p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> See George De F. Lord, «The Epic of Moral Regeneration», in Nelson.

<sup>12</sup> *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p. 168.

<sup>13</sup> This we maintain even in the face of W. R. Johnson's comment in *Darkness Visible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) that «great writers are never the products of the times they live in...» and «the only world that Vergil lived in was the poetic one he created...» (p. 135).

<sup>14</sup> See Karl Marx «Letter to F. Engels, London, March 8, 1855.»

<sup>15</sup> Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 394.

<sup>16</sup> *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *History of Portugal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 2nd ed., p. 265.

<sup>18</sup> A. J. Saraiva, *Camões* (Lisboa: Jornal de Foro, 1963), pp. 151-152.

<sup>19</sup> Saraiva, p. 179.

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> We might pursue this task from any number of starting points. Perhaps the most obvious would be a simple notational record of features of the state as they both quantitatively and qualitatively appear in the three texts. We have compiled such a record as a preparatory aid to this analysis. But while the results are exceedingly rich they are also so diverse as to prohibit inclusion within the physical limits of this essay. As might be expected, the state and/or its tribal predilection loses a narrated or implied presence only rarely, especially in the two state-supervised epics where political features acquire a great specificity.

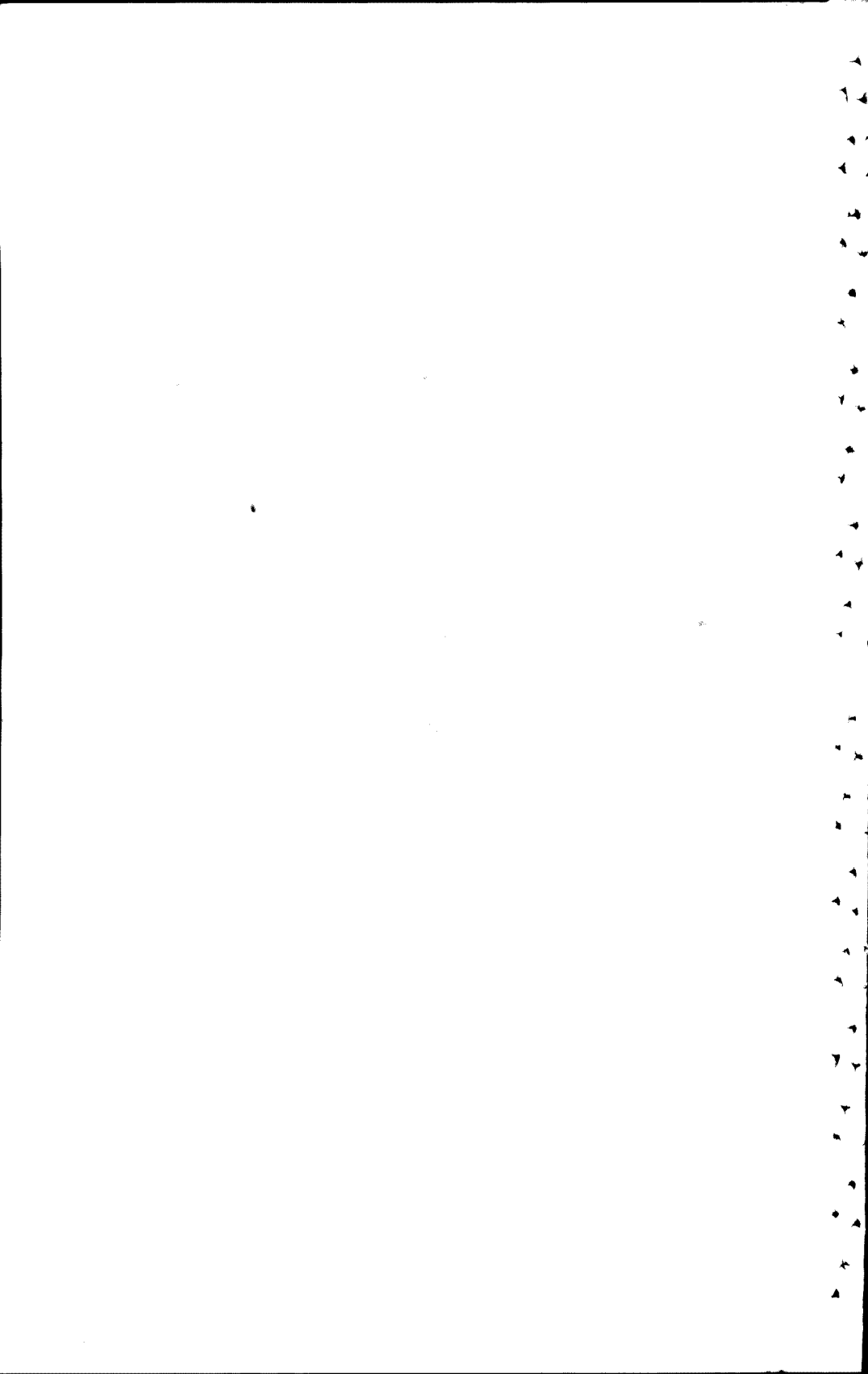
<sup>22</sup> See chapter 3 of Otis.

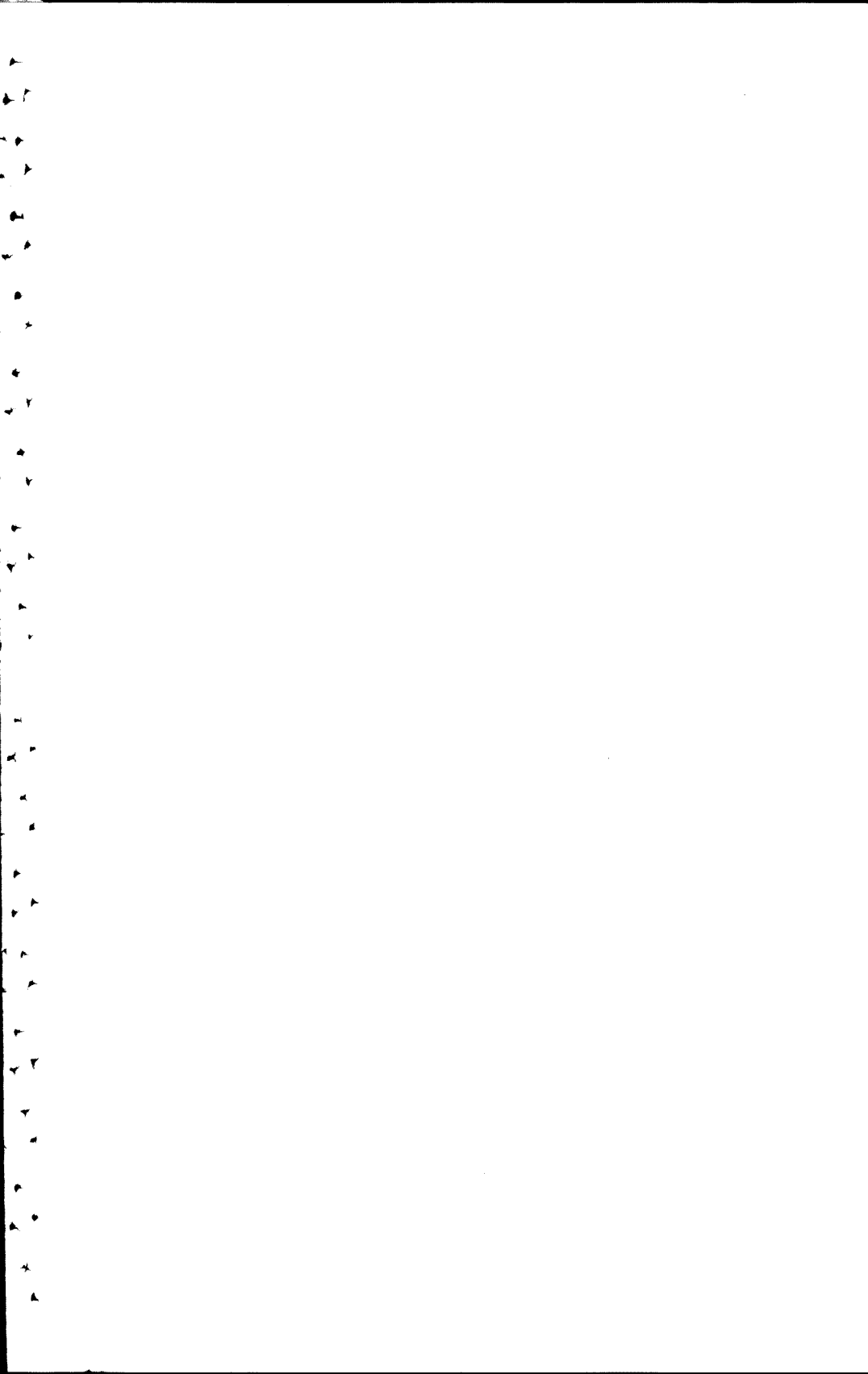
<sup>23</sup> Saraiva, pp. 182-183.

<sup>24</sup> Saraiva, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Barcelona: Anaya-Américas, 1974), pp. 543-544.









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