Caliban
and Other Essays

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Caliban:  
Notes Toward a Discussion of  
Culture in Our America

A Question

A European journalist, and moreover a leftist, asked me a few days ago, "Does a Latin-American culture exist?" We were discussing, naturally enough, the recent polemic regarding Cuba that ended by confronting, on the one hand, certain bourgeois European intellectuals (or aspirants to that state) with a visible colonialist nostalgia; and on the other, that body of Latin-American writers and artists who reject open or veiled forms of cultural and political colonialism. The question seemed to me to reveal one of the roots of the polemic and, hence, could also be expressed another way: "Do you exist?" For to question our culture is to question our very existence, our human reality itself, and thus to be willing to take a stand in favor of our irremediable colonial condition, since it suggest that we would be but a distorted echo of what occurs elsewhere. This elsewhere is of course the metropolis, the colonizing centers, whose "right wings" have exploited us and whose supposed "left wings" have pretended and continue to pretend to guide us with pious solicitude—in both cases with the assistance of local intermediaries of varying persuasions.

While this fate is to some extent suffered by all countries emerging from colonialism—those countries of ours that enterprising metropolitan intellectuals have ineptly and successively termed barbarians, peoples of color, underdeveloped.

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oped countries, Third World—I think the phenomenon achieves a singular crude-ness with respect to what Martí called "our mestizo America." Although the thesis that every man and every culture is mestizo could easily be defended and although this seems especially valid in the case of colonies, it is nevertheless apparent that in both their ethnic and their cultural aspects capitalist countries long ago achieved a relative homogeneity. Almost before our eyes certain readjust-ments have been made. The white population of the United States (diverse, but of common European origin) exterminating the aboriginal population and thrust the black population aside, thereby affording itself homogeneity in spite of diversity and offering a coherent model that its Nazi disciples attempted to apply even to other European conglomaters—an unforgivable sin that led some members of the bourgeoisie to stigmatize in Hitler what they applauded as a healthy Sunday diversion in westerns and Tarzian films. Those movies proposed to the world—and even to those of us who are kin to the communities under attack and who rejoiced in the evocation of our own extermination—the monstrous racial criteria that have accompanied the United States from its beginnings to the genocide in Indochina. Less apparent (and in some cases perhaps less cruel) is the process by which other capitalist countries have also achieved relative racial and cultural homogeneity at the expense of internal diversity.

Nor can any necessary relationship be established between mestizaje ["racial intermingling, racial mixture"—ed. note] and the colonial world. The latter is highly complex despite basic structural affinities of its parts. It has included countries with well-defined millennial cultures, some of which have suffered (or are presently suffering) direct occupation (India, Vietnam), and others of which have suffered indirect occupation (China). It also comprehends countries with rich cultures but less political homogeneity, which have been subjected to extremely diverse forms of colonialism (the Arab world). There are other peoples, finally, whose fundamental structures were savagely dislocated by the direct activity of the European despite which they continue to preserve a certain ethnic and cultural homogeneity (black Africa). Indeed, the latter has occurred despite the colonialists' criminal and unsuccessful attempts to prohibit it. In these countries mestizaje naturally exists to a greater or lesser degree, but it is always accidental and always on the fringe of the central line of development.

But within the colonial world there exists a case unique to the entire planet: a vast zone for which mestizaje is not an accident but rather the essence, the central line: ourselves; "our mestizo America." Martí, with his excellent knowledge of the language, employed this specific adjective as the distinctive sign of our culture—a culture of descendants, both ethnically and culturally speaking, of ab-origines, Africans, and Europeans. In his "Letter from Jamaica" (1815), the Liberator, Simón Bolívar, had proclaimed, "We are a small human species: we possess a world encircled by vast seas, new in almost all its arts and sciences."

In his message to the Congress of Angostura (1819), he added:

Let us bear in mind that our people is neither European nor North American, but a composite of Africa and America rather than an emanation of Europe; for even Spain fails as a European people because of her African blood, her institutions, and her character. It is impossible to assign us with any exactitude to a specific human family. The greater part of the native peoples has been annihilated; the European has mingled with the American and with the African, and the African has mingled with the Indian and with the European. Born from the womb of a common mother, our fathers, different in origin and blood, are foreigners; all differ visibly in the epidermis, and this dissimilarity leaves marks of the greatest transcendence.

Even in this century, in a book as confused as the author himself but full of intuitions (La raza cósmica, 1925), the Mexican José Vasconcelos pointed out that in Latin America a new race was being forged, "made with the treasure of all previous ones, the final race, the cosmic race."2

This singular fact lies at the root of countless misunderstandings. Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Arab, or African cultures may leave the Euro-North American enthusiastic, indifferent, or even depressed. But it would never occur to him to confuse a Chinese with a Norwegian, or a Bantu with an Italian; nor would it occur to him to ask whether they exist. Yet, on the other hand, some Latin Americans are taken at times for apprentices, for rough drafts or dull copies of Europeans, including among these latter whites who constitute what Martí called "European America." In the same way, our entire culture is taken as an apprenticeship, a rough draft or a copy of European bourgeois culture ("an emanation of Europe," as Bolívar said). This last error is more frequent than the first, since confusion of a Cuban with an Englishman, or a Guatemalan with a German, tends to be impeded by a certain ethnic tenacity. Here the riori patentes appear to be less ethically, although not culturally, differentiated. The confusion lies in the root itself, because as descendants of numerous Indian, African, and European communities, we have only a few languages with which to understand one another: those of the colonizers. While other colonials or ex-colonials in metropolitan centers speak among themselves in their own language, we Latin Americans continue to use the languages of our colonizers. These are the languages of France capable of going beyond the frontiers that neither the aboriginal nor Creole languages succeed in crossing. Right now as we are discussing, as I am discussing with those colonizers, how else can I do it except in one of their languages, which is now also our language, and with so many of their conceptual tools, which are now also our conceptual tools? This is precisely the extraordinary outcry that we read in a work by perhaps the most extraordinary writer of fiction who ever existed. In The Tempest, William Shakespeare's last play, the deformed Caliban—enslaved, robbed of his island, and trained to speak by Prospero—rebukes Prospero thus: "You taught me language, and my profit on't! Is, I know
how to curse. The red plague rid you/ For learning me your language!'" (1. 2.362–64).

Toward the History of Caliban

Caliban is Shakespeare's anagram for “cannibal,” an expression that he had already used to mean “anthropophagus,” in the third part of Henry IV and in Othello and that comes in turn from the word carib. Before the arrival of the Europeans, whom they resisted heroically, the Carib Indians were the most valiant and warlike inhabitants of the very lands that we occupy today. Their name lives on in the name Caribbean Sea (referred to genially by some as the American Mediterranean, just as if we were to call the Mediterranean the Caribbean of Europe). But the name carib in itself—as well as in its deformation, cannibal—has been perpetuated in the eyes of Europeans above all as a defamation. It is the term in this sense that Shakespeare takes up and elaborates into a complex symbol. Because of its exceptional importance to us, it will be useful to trace its history in some detail.

In the Diario de Navegación [Navigation logbooks] of Columbus there appear the first European accounts of the men who were to occasion the symbol in question. On Sunday, 4 November 1492, less than a month after Columbus arrived on the continent that was to be called America, the following entry was inscribed: “He learned also that far from the place there were men with one eye and others with dogs’ muzzles, who ate human beings.” On 23 November, this entry: “[the island of Haiti], which they said was very large and that on it lived people who had only one eye and others called cannibals, of whom they seemed to be very afraid.” On 11 December it is noted “...that caribus refers in fact to the people of El Gran Can,” which explains the deformation undergone by the name carib—also used by Columbus. In the very letter of 15 February 1493, “dated on the caravelle off the island of Canaria” in which Columbus announces to the world his “discovery,” he writes: “I have found, then, neither monsters nor news of any, save for one island [Quarves], the second upon entering the Indies, which is populated with people held by everyone on the islands to be very fierce, and who eat human flesh.”

This carib/cannibal image contrasts with another one of the American man presented in the writings of Columbus: that of the Arauco of the Greater Antilles—our Taino Indian primarily—who he describes as peaceful, meek, and even timorous and cowardly. Both visions of the American aborigine will circulate vertiginously throughout Europe, each coming to know its own particular development: The Taíno will be transformed into the paradisiacal inhabitant of a utopic world; by 1516 Thomas More will publish his Utopia, the similarities of which to the island of Cuba have been indicated, almost to the point of rapture, by Ezequiel Martínez Estrada. The Carib, on the other hand, will become a cannibal—an anthropophagus, a bestial man situated on the margins of civilization, who must be opposed to the very death. But there is less of a contradiction than might appear at first glance between the two visions; they constitute, simply, options in the ideological arsenal of a vigorous emerging bourgeoisie. Francisco de Quevedo translated “utopia” as “there is no such place.” With respect to these two visions, one might add, “There is no such man.” The notion of an Edenic creature comprehends, in more contemporary terms, a working hypothesis for the bourgeois left, and, as such, offers an ideal model of the perfect society free from the constrictions of that feudal world against which the bourgeois is in fact struggling. Generally speaking, the utopic vision throws upon these lands projects for political reforms unrealized in the countries of origin. In this sense its line of development is far from extinguished. Indeed, it meets with certain perpetuators—apart from its radical perpetuators, who are the consequential revolutionaries—in the numerous advisers who unflaggingly propose to countries emerging from colonialism magic formulas from the metropolis to solve the grave problems of the metropolis: it leaves us and which, of course, they have not yet resolved in their own countries. It goes without saying that these proponents of “There is no such place” are irritated by the insolent fact that the place does exist and, quite naturally, has all the virtues and defects not of a project but of genuine reality.

As for the vision of the cannibal, it corresponds—also in more contemporary terms—to the right wing of that same bourgeoisie. It belongs to the ideological arsenal of politicians of action, those who perform the dirty work in whom the charming dreamers of utopias will equally share. That the Caribs were as Columbus (and, after him, an unending throng of followers) depicted them is about as probably as the existence of one-eyed men, men with dog muzzles or tails, or even the Amazons mentioned by the explorer in pages where Greco-Roman mythology, the medieval bestiary, and the novel of chivalry all play their part. It is a question of the typically degraded vision offered by the colonizer of the man he is colonizing. That we ourselves may have at one time believed in this version only proves to what extent we are infected with the ideology of the enemy. It is typical that we have applied the term cannibal not to the extinct aborigines of our isles but, above all, to the African black who appeared in those shameful Tarzan films. For it is the colonizer who brings us together, who reveals the profound similarities existing above and beyond our secondary differences. The colonizer's version explains to us that owing to the Caribs' immeasurable bestiality, there was no alternative to their extermination. What it does not explain is why even before the Caribs, the peaceful and kindly Araucanos were also exterminated. Simply speaking, the two groups suffered jointly one of the greatest ethnicide recorded in history. (Needless to say, this line of action is still more alive than the earlier one.) In relation to this fact, it will always be necessary to point out the case of
those men who, being on the fringe both of utopianism (which has nothing to do with the actual America) and of the shameless ideology of plunder, stood in their midst opposed to the conduct of the colonialists and passionately, lucidly, and valiantly defended the flesh-and-blood aborigine. In the forefront of such men stands the magnificent figure of Father Bartolomé de las Casas, whom Bolívar called “the apostle of America” and whom Martí extolled unreservedly. Unfortunately, such men were exceptions.

One of the most widely disseminated European utopian works is Montaigne’s essay “De los canibales” [On Cannibals], which appeared in 1580. There we find a presentation of those creatures who “retain alive and vigorous their genuine, their most useful and natural, virtues and properties.” Giovanni Flora’s English translation of the Essays was published in 1603. Not only was Flora a personal friend of Shakespeare, but the copy of the translation that Shakespeare owned and annotated is still extant. This piece of information would be of no further importance but for the fact that it proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the Essays was one of the direct sources of Shakespeare’s last great work, The Tempest (1612). Even one of the characters of the play, Gonzalo, who incarnates the Renaissance humanist, at one point closely glosses entire lines from Flora’s Montaigne, originating precisely in the essay on cannibals. This fact makes the form in which Shakespeare presents his character Caliban/cannibal even stranger. Because if in Montaigne—in this case, as unquestionable literary source for Shakespeare—“there is nothing barbarous and savage in that nation . . . except that each man calls barbarism whatever is not his own practice,” in Shakespeare, on the other hand, Caliban/cannibal is a savage and deformed slave who cannot be degraded enough. What has happened is simply that in depicting Caliban, Shakespeare, an implacable realist, here takes the other option of the emerging bourgeois world. Regarding the utopian vision, it does indeed exist in the work but is unrelated to Caliban; as was said before, it is expressed by the harmonious humanist Gonzalo. Shakespeare thus confirms that both ways of considering the American, far from being in opposition, were perfectly reconcilable. As for the concrete man, present him in the guise of an animal, rob him of his land, enslave him so as to live from his toil, and at the right moment exterminate him; this latter, of course, only if there were someone who could be depended on to perform the arduous tasks in his stead. In one revealing passage, Prospero warns his daughter that they could not do without Caliban: “We cannot miss him: he does make our fire / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / that profit us” (1.2.311–13). The utopian vision can and must do without men of flesh and blood. After all, there is no such place.

There is no doubt at this point that The Tempest alludes to America, that its island is the mythification of one of our islands. Astrana Marin, who mentions the “clearly Indian (American) ambience of the island,” recalls some of the actual voyages along this continent that inspired Shakespeare and even furnished him, with slight variations, with the names of not a few of his characters: Miranda, Fernando, Sebastian, Alonso, Gonzalo, Setebos. More important than this is the knowledge that Caliban is our Carib.

We are not interested in following all the possible readings that have been made of this notable work since its appearance, and shall merely point out some interpretations. The first of these comes from Ernest Renan, who published his drama Caliban: Suite de ‘La Tempête’ in 1878. In this work, Caliban is the incarnation of the people presented in their worst light, except that this time his conspiracy against Prospero is successful and he achieves power—which iniquity and corruption will surely prevent him from retaining. Prospero lurks in the darkness awaiting his revenge, and Ariel disappears. This reading owes less to Shakespeare than to the Paris Commune, which had taken place only seven years before. Naturally, Renan was among the writers of the French bourgeoisie who savagely took part against the prodigious “assault of heaven.” Beginning with this event, his antidemocratic feeling stiffened even further. “In his Philosophical Dialogues,” Lidsky tells us, “he believes that the solution would lie in the creation of an elite of intelligent beings who alone would govern and possess the secrets of science.” Characteristically, Renan’s aristocratic and fascist elitism and his hatred of the common people of his country are united with an even greater hatred for the inhabitants of the colonies. It is instructive to hear him express himself along these lines.

We aspire [he says] not only to equality but to domination. The country of a foreign race must again be a country of serfs, of agricultural laborers or industrial workers. It is not a question of eliminating the inequalities among men but of broadening them and making them law.

And on another occasion:

The regeneration of the inferior or bastard races by the superior races is within the providential human order. With us, the common man is nearly always a déclassé nobleman, his heavy hand is better suited to handling the sword than the mental tool. Rather than work he chooses to fight, that is, he returns to his first state. Regere imperio populos—that is our vocation. Pour forth this all-consuming activity onto countries which, like China, are crying aloud for foreign conquest. . . . Nature has made a race of workers, the Chinese race, with its marvelous manual dexterity and almost no sense of honor; govern them with justice, levying from them, in return for the blessing of such a government, an ample allowance for the conquering race, and they will be satisfied; a race of tillers of the soil, the black . . . a race of masters and soldiers, the European race. . . . Let each do that which he is made for; and all will be well.
It is unnecessary to gloss these lines, which, as Césaire rightly says, came from the pen not of Hitler but of the French humanist Ernest Renan.

The initial destiny of the Caliban myth on our own American soil is a surprising one. Twenty years after Renan had published his Caliban—in other words, in 1898—the United States intervened in the Cuban war of independence against Spain and subjected Cuba to its tutelage, converting her in 1902 into her first neocolony (and holding her until 1959), while Puerto Rico and the Philippines became colonies of a traditional nature. The fact—which had been anticipated by Martí years before—moved the Latin-American intelligentsia. Elsewhere I have recalled that “ninety-eight” is not only a Spanish date that gives its name to a complex group of writers and thinkers of that country, it is also, and perhaps most importantly, a Latin-American data that should serve to designate a no less complex group of writers and thinkers on this side of the Atlantic, generally known by the vague name of modernistas. It is “ninety-eight”—the visible presence of North American imperialism in Latin America—already foretold by Martí, which informs the later work of someone like Darío or Rodó.

In a speech given by Paul Groussac in Buenos Aires on 2 May 1898, we have an early example of how Latin-American writers of the time would react to this situation:

> Since the Civil War and the brutal invasion of the West [he says], the Yankee spirit had rid itself completely of its formless and “Calibanesque” body, and the Old World has contempated with disquiet and terror the newest civilization that intends to supplant our own, declared to be in decay.¹⁶

The Franco-Argentine writer Groussac feels that “our” civilization (obviously understanding by that term the civilization of the “Old World,” of which we Latin Americans would, curiously enough, be a part) is menaced by the Calibanese Yankee. It seems highly improbable that the Algerian or Vietnamese writer of the time, trampled underfoot by French colonialism, would have been ready to subscribe to the first part of such a criterion. It is also frankly strange to see the Caliban symbol—in which Renan could with exactitude see, if only to abuse, the people—being applied to the United States. But nevertheless, despite this blurred focus—characteristic, on the other hand, of Latin America’s unique situation—Groussac’s reaction implies a clear rejection of the Yankee danger by Latin-American writers. This is not, however, the first time that such a rejection was expressed on our continent. Apart from cases of Hispanic writers such as Bolívar and Martí, among others, Brazilian literature presents the example of Joaquín de Sousa Andrada, or Sousândrade, in whose strange poem, O Gasta Errante, stanza 10 is dedicated to “O inferno Wall Street,” “a Walfurgismacht of corrupt stockbrokers, petty politicians, and businessmen.”¹⁷ There is besides

José Verissimo, who in an 1890 treatise on national education impugned the United States with his “I admire them, but I don’t esteem them.”

We do not know whether the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó—who’s famous phrase on the United States, “I admire them, but I don’t love them,” coincides literally with Verissimo’s observation—knew the work of that Brazilian thinker but it is certain that he was familiar with Groussac’s speech, essential portions of which were reproduced in La Razón de Montevideo on 6 May 1898. Developing and embellishing the idea outlined in it, Rodó published in 1900, at the age of twenty-nine, one of the most famous works of Latin-American literature: Ariel. North American civilization is implicitly presented there as Caliban (scarcely mentioned in the work), while Ariel would come to incarnate—or should incarnate—the best of what Rodó did not hesitate to call more than once “our civilization” (223, 226). In his words, just as in those of Groussac, this civilization was identified not only with “our Latin America” (239) but with ancient Rome, if not with the Old World as a whole. The identification of Caliban with the United States, proposed by Groussac and popularized by Rodó, was certainly a mistake. Attacking this error from one angle, José Vasconcelos commented that “if the Yankees were only Caliban, they would not represent any great danger.”¹⁸ But this is doubtless of little importance next to the relevant fact that the danger in question had clearly been pointed out. As Benedetti rightly observed, “Perhaps Rodó erred in naming the danger, but he did not err in his recognition of where it lay.”¹⁹

Sometime afterward, the French writer Jean Guéhenno—who, although surely aware of the work by the colonial Rodó, knew of course Renan’s work from memory—restated the latter’s Caliban thesis in his own Caliban purée [Caliban speaks], published in Paris in 1929. This time, however, the Renan identification of Caliban with the people is accompanied by a positive evaluation of Caliban. One must be grateful to Guéhenno’s book—and it is about the only thing for which gratitude is due—for having offered for the first time an appealing version of the character.²⁰ But the theme would have required the hand or the rage of a Paul Nizan to be effectively realized.²¹

Much sharper are the observations of the Argentine Aníbal Ponce, in his 1935 work Humanismo burgés y humanismo proletario. The book—which a student of Che’s thinking conjectures must have exercised influence on the latter—devotes the third chapter to “Ariel; or, The Agony of an Obstinate Illusion.” In commenting on The Tempest, Ponce says that “those four beings embody an entire era: Prospero is the enlightened despot who loves the Renaissance; Miranda, his progeny; Caliban, the suffering masses [Ponce will then quote Renan, but not Guéhenno]; and Ariel, the genius of the air without any ties to life.”²² Ponce points us the equivocal nature of Caliban’s presentation, one that reveals “an enormous injustice on the part of a master.” In Ariel he sees the intellectual, tied to Prospero in “less burdensome and crude a way than Caliban, but also in his
service.” His analysis of the conception of the intellectual ("mixture of slave and mercenary") coined by Renaissance humanism, a concept that "taught as nothing else could an indifference to action and an acceptance of the established order" and that even today is for the intellectual in the bourgeois world "the educational ideal of the governing classes," constitutes one of the most penetrating essays written on the theme in our America.

But this examination, although made by a Latin American, still took only the European world into account. For a new reading of The Tempest—for a new consideration of the problem—it was necessary to await the emergence of the colonial countries, which begins around the time of the Second World War. That abrupt presence led the busy technicians of the United Nations to invent, between 1944 and 1945, the term economically underdeveloped area in order to dress in attractive (and profoundly confusing) verbal garb what had until then been called colonial area, or backward areas.

Concurrently with this emergence there appeared in Paris in 1950 O. Mannoni’s book Psychologie de la colonisation. Significantly, the English edition of this book (New York, 1956) was to be called Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization. To approach his subject, Mannoni has created, no less, what he calls the "Prospéro complex," defined as "the sum of those unconscious neurotic tendencies that delineate at the same time the picture of the paternalistic colonial and the portrait of 'the race whose daughter has been the object of an [imaginary] attempt to rape at the hands of an inferior being.'" In this book, probably for the first time, Caliban is identified with the colonial. But the odd theory that the latter suffers from a "Prospéro complex" that leads him neurotically to require, even to anticipate, and naturally to accept the presence of Prospero colonizer is roundly rejected by Frantz Fanon in the fourth chapter ("The So-called Dependence Complex of Colonized Peoples") of his 1952 book Black Skin, White Masks.

Although he is (apparently) the first writer in our world to assume our identification with Caliban, the Barbadian writer George Lamming is unable to break the circle traced by Mannoni:

Prospéro [says Lamming] has given Caliban language; and with it an unstated history of consequences, an unknown history of future intentions. This gift of language meant not English, in particular, but speech and concept as a way, a method, a necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be reached in any other way. It is this way, entirely Prospéro's enterprise, which makes Caliban aware of possibilities. Therefore, all of Prospéro's future—for future is the very name of possibilities—must derive from Prospéro's experiment, which is also his risk. Provided there is no extraordinary departure which explodes all of Prospéro's premises, then Caliban and his future now belong to Prospéro . . . Prospéro lives in the absolute certainty that

Language, which is his gift to Caliban, is the very prison in which Caliban's achievements will be realized and restricted.

In the decade of the 1960s, the new reading of The Tempest ultimately established its hegemony. In The Living World of Shakespeare (1964), the Englishman John Wain will tell us that Caliban

has the pathos of the exploited peoples everywhere, poignantly expressed at the beginning of a three-hundred-year wave of European colonization; even the lowest savage wishes to be left alone rather than be "educated" and made to work for someone else. and there is an undeniable justice in his complaint: "For I am all the subjects that you have;/ Which once was mine own king." Prospero retorts with the inevitable answer of the colonist: Caliban has gained in knowledge and skill (though we recall that he already knew how to build dams to catch fish, and also to dig pig-nuts from the soil, as if this were the English countryside). Before being employed by Prospero, Caliban had no language: " . . . thou didst not, savage./ Know thy own meaning, but wouldst gabble like/ A thing most brutish." However, this kindness has been rewarded with ingratitude. Caliban, allowed to live in Prospero's cell, has made an attempt to ravish Miranda. When sternly reminded of this, he imperiously says, with a kind of slavering guffaw, "Oh ho! Oh ho!—would it have been done!/ Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else! This isle with Calibans." Our own age [Wain concludes], which is much given to using the horrible word "miscegenation," ought to have no difficulty in understanding this passage.

At the end of that same decade, in 1969, and in a highly significant manner, Caliban would be taken up with pride as our symbol by three Antillian writers—each of whom expresses himself in one of the three great colonial languages of the Caribbean. In that year, independently of one another, the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire published his dramatic work in French Une tempête: Adaptation de "La Tempête" de Shakespeare pour un théâtre nègre; the Barbadian Edward Brathwaite, his book of poems Islands, in English, among which there is one dedicated to "Caliban" and the author of these lines, an essay in Spanish, "Cuba hasta Fidel," which discusses our identification with Caliban. In Césaire's work the characters are the same as those of Shakespeare. Ariel, however, is a mulatto slave, and Caliban is a black slave; in addition, Eszô, "a black god-devil" appears. Prospero's remark when Ariel returns, full of scruples, after having unleashed—following Prospero's orders but against his own conscience—the tempest with which the work begins is curious indeed: "Come now!!" Prospero says to him, "Your crisis! It's always the same with intellectuals!" Brathwaite's poem called "Caliban" is dedicated, significantly, to Cuba: "In Havana that morning . . ." writes Brathwaite, "It was December second, nineteen fifty-six.}
It was the first of August eighteen thirty-eight. / It was the twelfth October fourteen ninety-two. / How many bangs how many revolutions?" 29

Our Symbol

Our symbol then is not Ariel, as Rodó thought, but rather Caliban. This is something that we, the mestizo inhabitants of these same isles where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language — today he has no other — to curse him, to wish that the "red plague" would fall on him? I know no other metaphor more expressive of our cultural situation, of our reality. From Túpac Amaru, Tiradentes, Toussaint-Louverture, Simon Bolívar, Father Hidalgo, José Artigas, Bernardo O'Higgins, Benito Juárez, Antonio Maceo, and José Martí, to Emiliano Zapata, Augusto César Sandino, Julio Antonio Mella, Pedro Albizu Campos, Lázaro Cárdenas, Fidel Castro, and Ernesto Che Guevara, from the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, the Alcaldin, the popular music of the Antilles, José Hernández, Eugenio María de Hostos, Manuel González Prada, Rubén Darío (yes, when all is said and done), Baldomero Lillo, and Horacio Quiroga, to Mexican muralism, Heitor Villa-Lobos, César Vallejo, José Carlos Mariátegui, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Carlos Gardel, Pablo Neruda, Alejo Carpentier, Nicolás Guillén, Aimé Césaire, José María Argüelles, Violeta Parra, and Franz Fanon — what is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?

As regards Rodó, if it is indeed true that he erred in his symbols, as has already been said, it is no less true that he was able to point with clarity to the greatest enemy of our culture in his time — and in ours — and that is enormously important. Rodó’s limitations (and this is not the moment to elucidate them) are responsible for what he saw unclearly or failed to see at all. But what is worthy of note in his case is what he did indeed see and what continued to retain a certain amount of validity and even virulence.

Despite his failings, omissions, and ingenuity (Benedetti has also said), Rodó’s vision of the Yankee phenomenon, rigorously situated in its historical context, was in its time the first launching pad for other less ingenious, better informed and more foresighted formulations to come. . . . the almost prophetic substance of Rodó’s Arielism still retains today a certain amount of validity. 31

These observations are supported by indisputable realities. We Cubans become well aware that Rodó’s vision fostered later, less ingenious, and more radical formulations when we simply consider the work of our own Julio Antonio Mella, on whose development the influence of Rodó was decisive. In “Intelec-
Put into perspective, it is almost certain that these lines would not bear the name they have were it not for Rodó’s book, and I prefer to consider them also as a homage to the great Uruguayan, whose centenary is being celebrated this year. That the homage contradicts him on not a few points is not strange. Medardo Vitier has already observed that “if there should be a return to Rodó, I do not believe that it would be to adopt the solution he offered concerning the interests of the life of the spirit, but rather to reconsider the problem.”

In proposing Caliban as our symbol, I am aware that it is not entirely ours, that it is also an alien elaboration, although in this case based on our concrete realities. But how can this alien quality be entirely avoided? The most venerated word in Cuba—mambi—was disparagingly imposed on us by our enemies at the time of the war for independence, and we still have not totally deciphered its meaning. It seems to have an African root, and in the mouth of the Spanish colonists implied the idea that all independentistas were so many black slaves—emancipated by that very war for independence—who of course constituted the bulk of the liberation army. The independentistas, white and black, adopted with honor something that colonialism meant as an insult. This is the dialectic of Caliban. To offend us they call us mambi, they call us black; but we reclaim as a mark of glory the honor of considering ourselves descendants of the mambi, descendants of the rebel, runaway, independentista black—never descendants of the slave holder. Nevertheless, Prospero, as we well know, taught his language to Caliban and, consequently, gave him a name. But is this his true name? Let us listen to this speech made in 1971:

To be completely precise, we still do not even have a name; we still have no name; we are practically unbaptized—whether as Latin Americans, Ibero-Americans, Indo-Americans. For the imperialists, we are nothing more than despised and despicable peoples. At least that was what we were. Since Girón they have begun to change their thinking. Racial contempt—to be a Creole, to be a mestizo, to be black, to be simply, a Latin American, is for them contemptible.

This, naturally, is Fidel Castro on the tenth anniversary of the victory at Playa Girón.

To assume our condition as Caliban implies rethinking our history from the other side, from the viewpoint of the other protagonist. The other protagonist of The Tempest (or, as we might have said ourselves, The Hurricane) is not of course Ariel but, rather, Prospero. There is no real Ariel-Caliban polarity: both are slaves in the hands of Prospero, the foreign magician. But Caliban is the rude and uncontrolable master of the island, while Ariel, a creature of the air, although also a child of the isle, is the intellectual—as both Ponce and Césire have seen.

**Again Martí**

This conception of our culture had already been articulately expressed and defended in the last century by the first among us to understand clearly the concrete situation of what he called—using a term I have referred to several times—“our mestizo America”: José Martí39 to whom Rodó planned to dedicate the first Cuban edition of Ariel and about whom he intended to write a study similar to those he devoted to Bolívar and Artigas (see 1559, 1375), a study that in the end he unfortunately never realized.

Although he devoted numerous pages to the topic, the occasion on which Martí offered his ideas on this point in a most organic and concise manner was in his 1891 article “Our America.” I will limit myself to certain essential quotations. But I should first like to offer some observations on the destiny of Martí’s work.

During Martí’s lifetime, the bulk of his work, scattered throughout a score of continental newspapers, enjoyed widespread fame. We know that Rubén Darío called Martí “Maestro” (as, for other reasons, his political followers would also call him during his lifetime) and considered him the Latin American whom he most admired. We shall soon see, on the other hand, how the harsh judgments on the United States that Martí commonly made in his articles, equally well known in his time, were the cause of acerbic criticism by the pro-Yankee Sarmiento. But the particular manner in which Martí’s writings circulated—he made use of journalism, oratory, and letter but never published a single book—bears little responsibility for the relative oblivion into which the work of the Cuban hero fell after his death in 1895. This alone explains the fact that nine years after his death—and twelve from the time Martí stopped writing for the continental press, devoted as he was after 1892 to his political tasks—an author as absolutely ours and as far above suspicion as the twenty-year-old Pedro Henríquez Ureña could write in 1904, in an article on Rodó’s Ariel, that the latter’s opinions on the United States are “much more severe than those formulated by two of the greatest thinkers and most brilliant psycho-sociologists of the Antilles: Hostos and Martí.”40 Insofar as this refers to Martí, the observation is completely erroneous; and given the exemplary honesty of Henríquez Ureña, it led me, first, to suspect and later, to verify that it was due simply to the fact that during this period the great Dominican had not read, had been unable to read. Martí adequately. Martí was hardly published at the time. A text such as the fundamental “Our America” is a good example of this fate. Readers of the Mexican newspaper El Partido Liberal could have read it on 30 January 1891. It is possible that some other local newspaper republished it, although the most recent edition of Martí’s Complete Works does not indicate anything in this regard. But it is most likely that those who did not have the good fortune to obtain that newspaper knew nothing about the article—the most important document published in America from the end of the past
century until the appearance in 1962 of the Second Declaration of Havana—for almost twenty years, at the end of which time it appeared in book form (Havana, 1910) in the irregular collection in which publication of the complete works of Martí was begun. For this reason Manuel Pedro González is correct when he asserts that during the first quarter of this century the new generations did not know Martí. "A minimal portion of his work" was again put into circulation, starting with the eight volumes published by Alberto Ghiraldo in Madrid in 1925. Thanks to the most recent appearance of several editions of his complete works—actually still incomplete—"he has been rediscovered and reevaluated." González is thinking above all of the dazzling literary qualities of this work ("the literary glory" as he says). Could we not add something, then, regarding the works' fundamental ideological aspects? Without forgetting very important prior contributions, there are still some essential points that explain why today, after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and because of it, Martí is being "rediscovered and reevaluated." It was no mere coincidence that in 1953 Fidel named Martí as the intellectual author of the attack on the Moncada Barracks nor that Che should use a quotation from Martí—"it is the hour of the furnace, and only light should be seen"—to open his extremely important "Message to the Tricontinental Congress" in 1967. If Benedetti could say that Rodó's time "was different from our own... his true place, his true temporal homeland was the nineteenth century," we must say, on the other hand, that Martí's true place was the future and, for the moment, this era of ours, which simply cannot be understood without a thorough knowledge of this work.

Now, if that knowledge, because of the curious circumstances alluded to, was denied or available only in a limited way to the early generations of this century, who frequently had to base their defense of subsequent radical arguments on a "first launching pad" as well-intentioned but at the same time as weak as the nineteenth-century work Ariel, what can we say of more recent authors to whom editions of Martí are now available but who nevertheless persist in ignoring him? I am thinking, of course, not of scholars more or less ignorant of our problems but, on the contrary, of those who maintain a consistently anticolonialist attitude. The only explanation of this situation is a painful one: we have been so thoroughly steeped in colonialism that we read with real respect only those anticolonial authors disseminated from the metropolis. In this way we cast aside the greatest lesson of Martí; thus, we are barely familiar with Artigas, Recabarren, Mella, and even Mariátegui and Ponce. And I have the sad suspicion that if the extraordinary texts of Che Guevara have enjoyed the greatest dissemination ever accorded a Latin American, the fact that he is read with such avidity by our people is to a certain extent due to the prestige his name has even in the metropolitan capitals—where, to be sure, he is frequently the object of the most shameless manipulation. For consistency in our anticolonialist attitude we must in effect turn to those of our people who have incarnated and illustrated that attitude in their behavior and thinking. And for this, there is no case more useful than that of Martí.

I know of no other Latin-American author who has given so immediate and so coherent an answer to another question put to me by my interlocutor, the European journalist whom I mentioned at the beginning of these lines (and whom, if he did not exist, I would have had to invent, although this would have deprived me of his friendship, which I trust will survive this monologue): "What relationship," this guileless wit asked me, "does Borges have to the Incas?" Borges is almost a reductio ad absurdum and, in any event, I shall discuss him later. But it is only right and fair to ask what relationship we, the present inhabitants of this America in whose zoological and cultural heritage Europe has played an unquestionable part, have to the primitive inhabitants of this same America—those peoples who constructed or were in the process of constructing admirable cultures and who were exterminated or martyred by Europeans of various nations, about whom neither a white nor black legend can be built, only an inert truth of blood, that, together with such deeds as the enslavement of Africans, constitutes their eternal dishonor. Martí, whose father was from Valencia and whose mother was from the Canaries, who wrote the most prodigious Spanish of his—and our—age, and who came to have the greatest knowledge of the Euro–North American culture ever possessed by a man of our American, also asked this question. He answered it as follows: "We are descended from Valencian fathers and Canary Island mothers and feel the inflamed blood of Tamanaco and Paramaconi coursing through our veins; we see the blood that fell amid the brambles of Mount Calvary as our own, along with that shed by the naked and heroic Caracas as they struggled breast to breast with the gunzalos in their iron-plated armor." I presume that the reader, if he or she is not a Venezuelan, will be unfamiliar with the names evoked by Martí. So was I. This lack of familiarity is but another proof of our subjection to the colonialist perspective of history that has been imposed on us, causing names, dates, circumstances, and truths to vanish from our consciousness. Under other circumstances—but closely related to these—did not the bourgeois version of history try to erase the heroes of the Commune of 1871, the martyrs of 1 May 1886 (significantly reclaimed by Martí)? At any rate, Tamanaco, Paramaconi, the naked and heroic Caracas were natives of what is today called Venezuela, of Carib blood, the blood of Caliban, coursing through his veins. This will not be the only time he expresses such an idea, which is central to his thinking. Again making use of such heroes, he was to repeat sometime later: "We must stand with Guachipero, Paramaconi [heroes of Venezuela, probably of Carib origin], and not with the flames that burned them, nor with the ropes that bound them, nor with the steel that beheaded them, nor with the dogs that devoured them." Martí's rejection of the ethnocide that Europe practiced is total. No less total is his identification with the American peoples that offered heroic resistance to the invader, and in whom Martí say the natural forerunners of
the Latin-American independentistas. This explains why in the notebook in which this last quotation appears, he continues writing, almost without transition, on Aztec mythology ("no less beautiful than the Greek"), on the ashes of Quetzacoatl, on "Ayachucón on the solitary plateau," on "Bolívar, like the rivers," 47

Marti, however, dreams not of a restoration now impossible but of the future integration of our America—an America rising organically from a firm grasp of its true roots to the heights of authentic modernity. For this reason, the first quotation in which he speaks of feeling valiant Carib blood coursing through his veins continues as follows:

It is good to open canals, to promote schools, to create steamship lines, to keep abreast of one's own time, to be on the side of the vanguard in the beautiful march of humanity. But in order not to falter because of a lack of spirit or the vanity of a false spirit, it is good also to nourish oneself through memory and admiration, through righteous study and loving compassion, on that fervent spirit of the natural surroundings in which one is born—a spirit matured and quickened by those of every race that issues from such surroundings and finds its final repose in them. Politics and literature flourish only when they are direct. The American intelligence is an indigenous plumage. Is it not evident that America itself was paralyzed by the same blow that paralyzed the Indian? And until the Indian is caused to walk, America itself will not begin to walk well. ["AAA," 337]

Marti's identification with our aboriginal culture was thus accompanied by a complete sense of the concrete tasks imposed upon him by his circumstances. Far from hampering him, that identification nurtured in him the most radical and modern criteria of his time in the colonial countries.

Naturally, Martí's approach to the Indian was also applied to the black. 48 Unfortunately, while in his day serious inquiries into American aboriginal cultures (which Martí studied passionately) had already been undertaken, only in the twentieth century would then appear similar studies of African cultures and their considerable contribution to the makeup of our mestizo America (see Frobenius, Delafosse, Suret-Canale; Ortiz, Ramos, Herskovits, Roumain, Metraux, Bastide, Franco). 49 And Martí died five years before the dawning of our century. In any event, in his treatment of Indian culture and in his concrete behavior toward the black, he left a very clear outline of a "battle plan" in this area.

This is the way in which Martí forms his Caliban-esque vision of the culture of what he called "our America." Martí is, as Fidel was later to be, aware of how difficult it is even to find a name that in designating us defines us conceptually. For this reason, after several attempts, he favored that modest descriptive formula that above and beyond race, language, and secondary circumstances embraces the communities that live, with their common problems, "from the [Rio] Bravo to Patagonia," and that are distinct from "European America." I have already said that although it is found scattered throughout his very numerous writings, this conception of our culture is aptly summarized in the article-manifesto "Our America," and I direct the reader to it: to his insistence upon the idea that one cannot "rule new peoples with a singular and violent composition, with laws inherited from four centuries of free practice in the United States, or nineteen centuries of monarchy in France. One does not stop the blow in the chest of the plainsman's horse with one of Hamilton's decrees. One does not clear the concealed blood of the Indian race with a sentence of Siéyès"; to his deeply rooted concept that "the imported book has been conquered in America by the natural man. Natural men have conquered the artificial men of learning. The authentic mestizo has conquered the exotic Creole" (my emphasis); and finally to his fundamental advice:

The European university must yield to the American university. The history of America, from the Inca to the present, must be taught letter perfect, even if that of the Argonauts of Greece is not taught. Our own Greece is preferable to that Greece that is not ours. We have greater need of it. National politicians must replace foreign and exotic politicians. Graft the world onto our republics, but the trunk must be that of our republics. And let the conquered pedant be silent: there is no homeland of which the individual can be more proud than our unhappy American republics.

The Real Life of a False Dilemma

It is impossible not to see in this text—which, as has been said, summarizes in lightning fashion Martí's judgment on this essential problem—his violent rejection of the imposition of Prospero ("the European university [...] the European book [...] the Yankee book"), which "must yield" to the reality of Caliban ("the [Latin] American university [...] the Latin American enigma"). "The history of America, from the Inca to the present, must be taught letter perfect, even if that of the Argonauts of Greece is not taught. Our own Greece is preferable to that Greece that is not ours." And later: "Common cause must be made with the oppressed so as to secure the system against the interest and customs of the oppressors."

But our America has also heard, expressed with vehemence by a talented and energetic man who died three years before Martí's work appeared, the thesis that was the exact opposite: the thesis of Prospero. 50 The interlocutors were not called then Prospero and Caliban, but rather Civilization and Barbarism, the title that the Argentinean Domingo Faustino Sarmiento gave to the first edition (1845) of his great book on Facundo Quiroga. I do not believe that autobiographical con-
essions are of much interest here, but since I have already mentioned, by way of self-inflicted punishment, the forgettable pleasures of the westerns and Tarzan films by which we were inoculated, unbeknownst to us, with the ideology that we verbally repudiated in the Nazis (I was twelve years old when the Second World War was at its height), I must also confess that only a few years afterward, I read this book passionately. In the margins of my old copy, I find my enthusiasms, my rejections of the “tyrant of the Republic of Argentina” who had exclaimed, “Traitors to the American cause!” I also find, a few pages later, the comment, “It is strange how one thinks of Perón.” It was many years later, specifically after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 (when we began to live and to read the world in another way), that I understood I had not been on the best side in that otherwise remarkable book. It was not possible to be simultaneously in agreement with Facundo and with “Our America.” What is more, “Our America”—along with a large part of Martí’s entire work—is an implicit, and at times explicit, dialogue with the Sarmiento theses. If not, what then does this lapidary sentence of Martí’s mean: “There is no battle between civilization and barbarism, only between false erudition and nature.” Eight years before “Our America” appeared (1891)—within Sarmiento’s lifetime—Martí had already spoken (in the sentence I have quoted more than once) of the “pretex of civilization, which is the vulgar name under which contemporary European man operates, has the natural right to seize the land of foreigners, which is the name given by those who desire foreign lands to every contemporary human being who does not come from Europe or European America.” In both cases, Martí rejects the false dichotomy that Sarmiento, falling into the trap adroitly set by the colonizer, takes for granted. For this reason, when I said sometime ago that “in coming out on the side of ‘barbarism’ Martí foreshadows Fanon and our Revolution” (a phrase that some hasty people, without noticing the quotation marks, misunderstood—as if Fanon, Fidel, and Che were apostles of barbarism), I wrote “barbarism” in this way, between quotation marks, to indicate that in fact there was not such state. The presumed barbarism of our peoples was invented with crude cynicism by “those who desire foreign lands”; those who, with equal effrontery, give the “popular name” of “civilization” to the “contemporary” human being who comes “from Europe or European America.”

What was surely more painful for Martí was to see a man of our America—a man whom, despite incurable differences, he admired in his positive aspects—fall into this very grave error. Thinking of figures such as Sarmiento, it was Martínez Estrada (who had previously written so many pages extolling Sarmiento) who in 1962 wrote in his book Diferencias y semejanzas entre los países de la América Latina [Similarities and Differences among Latin-American Countries]:

We can immediately establish the premise that those who have worked, in some cases patriotically, to shape social life in complete accordance with models of other highly developed countries, whose practices are the result of an organic process over the course of centuries, have betrayed the cause of the true emancipation of Latin America.

I lack the necessary information to discuss here the virtues and defects of this bourgeois antagonist and shall limit myself to pointing out this opposition to Martí, and the coherence between his thought and conduct. As a postulator of Civilization, which he found incarnated in archetypal form in the United States, he advocated the extermination of the indigenous peoples according to the savage Yankee model; what is more, he adored that growing republic to the north that had by mid-century still not demonstrated so clearly the flaws that Martí would later discover. In both extremes—and they are precisely that: extremes, margins of their respective thinking—he and Martí differed irreconcilably.

Jaime Alazraki has studied with some care “El indigenismo de Martí y el antindigenismo de Sarmiento.” [The indigenism of Martí and the anti-indigenism of Sarmiento]. I refer the reader interested in the subject to this essay; here I shall only draw on some of the quotations from the works of both included in that study. I have already mentioned some of Martí’s observations on the Indian.

Alazraki recalls others:

No more than peoples in blossom, no more than the bulbs of peoples, were those the valiant conquistador marched upon; with his subtle craftiness of the old-time opportunist, he discharged his powerful firearms. It was a historic misfortune and a natural crime. The well-formed stalk should have been left standing, the entire flowering work of Nature could then be seen in all its beauty. The conquistadors stole a page from the Universe!

And further:

Of all that greatness there remains in the museum scarcely a few gold cups, a few stones of polished obsidian shaped like a yoke, and one or two wrought rings. Tenochtitlán does not exist, nor Tulan, the city of the great fair, Texcoco, the city of the palaces, is no more. Indians of today, passing before the ruins, lower their heads and move their lips as if saying something; they do not put on their hats again until the ruins are left behind.

For Sarmiento, the history of America is the “hands of abject races, a great continent abandoned to savages incapable of progress.” If we want to know how he interpreted the maxim of his compatriot Alberdi that “to govern is to populate,” we must read this: “Many difficulties will be presented by the occupation of so extensive a country; but there will be no advantage comparable to that gained by the extinction of the savage tribes.” That is to say, for Sarmiento, to govern is also to depopulate the nation of its Indians (and gauchos). And what of the heroes
of the resistance against the Spaniards, those magnificent men whose rebellious blood Martí felt coursing through his veins? Sarmiento has also questioned himself about them. This is his response:

For us, Colocolo, Lautaro, and Caupolicán, notwithstanding the noble and civilized garb with which they are adorned by Ercilla, are nothing more than a handful of loathsome Indians. We would have them hanged today were they to reappear in a war of the Araucanos against Chile, a country that has nothing to do with such rabble.

This naturally implies a vision of the Spanish conquest radically different from that upheld by Martí. For Sarmiento, “Spanish—repeated a hundred times in the odious sense of impious, immoral, ravisher and impostor—is synonymous with civilization, with the European tradition brought by them to these countries.” And while for Martí, “there is no racial hatred, because there are no races,” the author of *Conflicto y armonía de las razas en América* (Conflict and Harmony among the Races in America) bases himself thus on pseudoscientific theories:

> It may be very unjust to exterminate savages, suffocate rising civilizations, conquer peoples who are in possession of a privileged piece of land. But thanks to this injustice, America, instead of remaining abandoned to the savages, incapable of progress, is today occupied by the Caucasian race—the most perfect, the most intelligent, the most beautiful and most progressive of those that people the earth. Thanks to these injustices, Oceania is filled with civilized peoples, Asia begins to move under the European impulse, Africa sees the times of Carthage and the glorious days of Egypt reborn on her coasts. Thus, the population of the world is subject to revolutions that recognize immutable laws; the strong races exterminate the weak ones and the civilized peoples supplant the savages in the possession of the earth.

> There was no need then to cross the Atlantic and seek out Renan to hear such words: a man of this America was saying them. The fact is that if he did not learn them on this side of the ocean, they were at least reinforced for him here—not in our America but in the other, “European[,] America[,]” of which Sarmiento was the most fanatical devotee in our mestizo lands during the nineteenth century. Although in that century there is no shortage of Latin Americans who adored the Yankees, our discovery of people among us equal to Sarmiento in their devotion to the United States would be due above all to the ranting secession in which our twentieth-century Latin America has been so prodigal. What Sarmiento wanted for Argentina was exactly what the United States had achieved for itself. The last words he wrote (1888) were: “We shall catch up to the United States. . . . Let us become the United States.” His travels in that country produced in him a genuine bedazzlement, a never-ending historical orgasm. He tried to establish in his homeland the bases for an enterprising bourgeoisie, similar to what he saw there. Its present fate makes any commentary unnecessary.

What Martí saw in the United States is also sufficiently well known that we need not dwell upon the point. Suffice it to recall that he was the first militant anti-imperialist of our continent; that he denounced over a period of fifteen years “the crude, inequitable, the decadent character of the United States, and the continued existence therein of all the violence, discord, immorality, and disorder for which the Hispano-American peoples are censured” 56; that a few hours before his death on the battlefield, he confided in a letter to his great friend, the Mexican Manuel Mercado, “Everything I have done to this day, and everything I shall do is to that end[,] . . . to prevent in time the expansion of the United States into the Antilles and to prevent her from falling, with ever greater force, upon our American lands.” 57

Sarmiento did not remain silent before the criticism that Martí—frequently from the very pages of *La Nación*— leveled against his idolized United States. He commented on one occasion on this incredible boldness:

> Don José Martí lacks only one requirement to be a journalist . . . He has failed to regenerate himself, to educate himself, so to speak, to receive inspiration from the country in which he lives, as one receives food so as to convert it into life-giving blood. . . . I should like Martí to give us less of Martí, less of the parebred Spaniard, and less of the South American, and in exchange, a little more of the Yankee—the new type of modern man. . . . It is amusing to hear a Frenchman of the *Courier des États-Unis* laughing at the stupidities and political incompetence of the Yankees, whose institutions Gladstone proclaims the supreme work of the human race. But to criticize with magisterial airs that which a Latin American, a Spaniard, sees there, with a confetti of political judgement transmitted to him by the books of other nations—as if trying to see sunspots through a blurred glass—is to do the reader a very grave injustice and lead him down the path of perdition. . . . Let them not come to us, then, with their insolent humility of South Americans, semi-Indians and semi-Spaniards, to find evil.58

Sarmiento, who was as vehement in his praise as his invective, here places Martí among the “semi-Indians.” This was in essence true and for Martí a point of pride; but we have already seen what it implied in the mouth of Sarmiento . . .

For these reasons, and despite the fact that highly esteemed writers have tried to point out possible similarities, I think it will be understood how difficult it is to accept a parallel between these two men, such as the one elaborated by Emeterio S. Santovenia in the 262 sloppy pages of *Genio y acción: Sarmiento y Martí*. A sample will suffice: according to this author, “Above and beyond the discrepan-
cies in the achievements and limitations of their respective projections concerning America, there does emerge a coincidence [sic] in their evaluations [those of Sarmiento and Martí] of the Anglo-Saxon role in the development of political and social ideas that fertilized the tree of total emancipation in the New World.”59

This luxuriant undergrowth of thought, syntax, and metaphor gives some indication of what our culture was like when we were part of the “free world,” of which Mr. Santovenia (as well as being one of Batista’s ministers in his moments of leisure) was so eminent a representative.

**On the Free World**

But the portion of the free world that corresponds to Latin America can boast today of much more memorable figures. There is Jorge Luis Borges, for example, whose name seems to be associated with “memorable.” The Borges I have in mind is the one who only a short time ago dedicated his (presumably good) translation of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* to United States President Richard Nixon. It is true that Borges wrote in 1926, “I want to speak to the Creoles—to those who feel their existence deeply rooted in our lands, not to those who think the sun and the moon are in Europe. This is a land of born exiles, of men nostalgic for the far-off and the foreign: they are the real gringos, regardless of their parentage, and I do not address myself to them.” It is also true that Sarmiento is presented at that time as a “North American Indian brave, who loathed and misprized anything Creole.”60 But the fact is that Borges is not the one who has gone down in history. This “memorious” individual decided to forget the little book of his youth, that he wrote only a few years after having been a member of “the sect, the blunder, called Ultrasim.” In his eyes that book and the ideas in it were also a blunder. Pathetically faithful to his class,61 it was a different Borges who would become so well known, attain such great circulation abroad, and experience the public acclaim of immeasurable literary prizes—some of which are so obscure that he would seem to have awarded them himself. The Borges in question, to whom we shall dedicate a few lines here, is the one who echoes Sarmiento’s grotesque “We belong to the Roman Empire,” with this declaration not of 1926 but of 1955: “I believe that our tradition is Europe.”62

It might seem strange that the ideological filiation of such an energetic and blustering pioneer would come to be manifest today in a man so sedate, a writer such as Borges—the archetypal representative of a bookish culture that on the surface seems far removed from Sarmiento’s constant vitality. But this strangeness only demonstrates how accustomed we are to judging the superstructural products of our continent, if not of the whole world, without regard to their concrete structural realities. Except by considering these realities, how would we recognize the insipid disasters who are the bourgeois intellectuals of our time as descending from those vigorous and daring thinkers of the rising bourgeoisie? We need only consider our writers and thinkers in relation to the classes whose world view they expound in order to orient ourselves properly and outline their true filiations. The dialogue we have just witnessed between Sarmiento and Martí was, more than anything else, a class confrontation.

Independently of his (class) origin, Sarmiento is the implacable ideologue of an Argentine bourgeoisie that is attempting to transport bourgeois policies of the metropolitan centers (particularly those of North America) to its own country. To be successful, it must impose itself, like all bourgeoisies, upon the popular classes; it must exploit them physically and condemn them spiritually. The manner in which a bourgeoisie develops at the expense of the popular classes’ brutalization is memorably demonstrated, taking England as an example, in some of the most impressive pages of *Das Kapital*. “European America,” whose capitalism succeeded in expanding fabulously—unhampered as it was by the feudalistic order—added new circles of hell to England’s achievements: the enslavement of the Negro and the extermination of the indomitable Indian. These were the models to which Sarmiento looked and which he proposed to follow faithfully. He is perhaps the most consequential and the most active of the bourgeois ideologues on our continent during the nineteenth century.

Martí, on the other hand, is a conscious spokesman of the exploited classes. “Common cause must be made with the oppressed,” he told us, “as to secure the system against the interests and customs of the oppressors.” And, since beginning with the conquest Indians and blacks have been relegated to the base of the social pyramid, making common cause with the oppressed came largely to be the same as making common cause with Indians and blacks—which is what Martí does. These Indians and those blacks had been intermingling among themselves and with some whites, giving rise to the mestizaje that is at the root of our America, where—according to Martí—“the authentic mestizo has conquered the exotic Creole.” Sarmiento is a ferocious racist because he is an ideologue of the exploiting classes, in whose ranks the “exotic Creole” is found, Martí is radically antiracist because he is a spokesman for the exploited classes, within which the three races are fusing. Sarmiento opposes what is essentially American in order to inculcate—with blood and fire, just as the conquistadors had tried to do—alien formulas here. Martí defends the autochthonous, the genuinely American. This does not mean, of course, that he foolishly rejected whatever positive elements might be offered by other realities: “Graft the world onto our republics,” he said, “but the trunk must be that of our republics.” Sarmiento also sought to graft the world onto our republics, but he would have their trunks uprooted in the process. For that reason, if the continuators of Martí are found in Mella and Vallejo, Fidel and Che, and in the new culture of revolutionary Latin America, the heirs of Sarmiento (in spite of his complexity) are, in the final anal-
ysis, the representatives of the Argentine vice-bourgeoisie. They are, moreover, a defeated class, because the dream of bourgeois development that Sarmiento envisaged was not even a possibility. There was simply no way an eventual Argentine bourgeois could develop. Latin America was a late arrival to that fiesta, for as Maríaígegui wrote: "The time of free competition in the capitalist economy has come to an end, in all areas and in every aspect. We are now in an era of monopolies, of empires. The Latin-American countries are experiencing a belated entry into competitive capitalism. The dominant positions are already well established. The fate of such countries, within the capitalist order, is that of simple colonies."

Incorporated into what is called with a bit of unintentional humor the "free world," our countries—in spite of our shields, anthems, flags, and presidents—would inaugurate a new form of not being independent: neocolonialism. The bourgeois, for whom Sarmiento had outlined such delightful possibilities, became no more than an vice-bourgeoisie, a modest local shareholder in imperial exploitation—first the English, then the North American.

It is in this light that one sees more clearly the connections between Sarmiento—whose name is associated with grand pedagogical projects, immense spaces, railways, ships—and Borges, the mention of whom evokes mirrors that multiply the same miserable image, unfathomable labyrinths, and a sad, dimly lit library. But apart from this, if the "American-ness" of Sarmiento is always taken for granted (although it is obvious in him, this is not to say he represents the positive pole of that "American-ness"), I have never been able to understand why it is denied to Borges. Borges is a typical colonial writer, the representative among us of a now-powerless class for whom the act of writing—and he is well aware of this, for he is a man of dialectical intelligence—is more like the act of reading. He is not a European writer; there is no European writer like Borges. But there are many European writers—from Iceland to the German expressionists—whom Borges has read, shuffled together, collated. European writers belong to very concrete and provincial traditions—reaching the extreme case of a Pégy, for example, who boasted of never having read anything but French authors. Apart from a few professors of philology, who receive a salary for it, there is only one type of person who really knows in its entirety the literature of Europe: the colonial. Only in the case of mental imbalance can a learned Argentine writer ever boast of having read nothing but Argentine—or even Spanish-language—authors. And Borges is not imbalanced. On the contrary, he is an extremely lucid man, one who exemplifies Martí's idea that intelligence is only one—and not necessarily the best—part of a man.

The writing of Borges comes directly from his reading, in a peculiar process of phagocytosis that identifies him clearly as a colonial and the representative of a dying class. For him the creation par excellence of culture is a library; or better yet, a museum—a place where the products of culture from abroad are assembled. A museum of horrors, of monsters, of splendors, of folkloric data and artifacts (those of Argentina seen with the eye of a curator)—the work of Borges, written in a Spanish difficult to read without admiration, is one of the American scandals of our time.

Unlike some other important Latin-American writers, Borges does not pretend to be a leftist. Quite the opposite. His position in this regard leads him to sign a petition in favor of the Bay of Pigs invaders, to call for the death penalty for Debray, or to dedicate a book to Nixon. Many of his admirers who deplore (or say they deplore) these acts maintain that there is a dichotomy in the man that permits him, on the one hand, to write slightly immortal books and, on the other, to sign political declarations that are more puerile than malicious. That may well be. It is also possible that no such dichotomy exists and that we ought to accustom ourselves to resting unity to the author of "The Garden of Forking Paths." By that I do not propose that we should find errors of spelling or syntax in his elegant pages but rather that we read them for what, in the final analysis, they are: the painful testimony of a class with no way out, diminished to saying in the voice of one man, "The world, unfortunately, is real; I, unfortunately, am Borges."

It is interesting that the writing/reading of Borges is enjoying a particularly favorable reception in capitalist Europe at the moment when Europe is itself becoming a colony in the face of the "American challenge." In a book of that very title, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber explains with unmasked cynicism, "Now then, Europe is not Algiers or Senegal!" In other words, the United States cannot do to Europe what Europe did to Algiers and Senegal! I have bad news for Europe: it seems that, in spite of everything, they can indeed do it; they have, in fact, been doing it now for some time. And if this occurs in the area of economies—along with complex political derivations—the European cultural superstructure is also manifesting obvious colonial symptoms. One of them may well be the apogee of Borges's writing/reading.

But of course the heritage of Borges, whose kinship with Sarmiento we have already seen, must be sought above all in Latin America, where it will imply a further decline in impetus and quality. Since this is not a survey, but rather a simple essay on Latin-American culture, I shall restrict myself to a single example. I am aware that it is a very minor one; but it is nonetheless a valid symptom. I shall comment on a small book of criticism by Carlos Fuentes, La nueva novela hispanoamericana [The new Spanish-American novel].

As spokesman for the same class as Borges, Fuentes also evinced leftist whims in his younger days. The former's El tamaño de mi esperanza [The extent of my hope] corresponds to the latter's La muerte de Artemio Cruz [The death of Artemio Cruz]. But to continue judging Fuentes by that book, without question one of our good novels, would be as senseless as continuing to judge Borges by his early book—the difference being that Borges, who is more consistent (and in
all ways more estimable: Borges, even though we differ so greatly from him, is a truly important writer), decided to adopt openly his position as a man of the Right, while Fuentes operates as such but attempts to conserve, from time to time, a leftist terminology that does not lack, of course, references to Marx. In The Death of Artemio Cruz, a secretary who is fully integrated into the system synthesizes his biography in the following dialogue:

"You're very young. How old are you?"
"Twenty-seven."
"When did you receive your degree?"
"Three years ago. But...
"But what?"
"Theory and practice are different."
"And that amuses you?"
"A lot of Marxism. So much that I even wrote my thesis on surplus value."
"It ought to be good training, Padilla."
"But practice is very different."
"Is that what you are, a Marxist?"
"Well, all my friends were. It's a stage one goes through."

This dialogue expresses clearly enough the situation of a certain sector of the Mexican intelligentsia that, though it shares Borges's class circumstances and behavior patterns, differs from him for purely local reasons, in certain superficial aspects. I am thinking, specifically, of the so-called Mexican literary mafia, one of whose most conspicuous figures is Carlos Fuentes. This group warmly expressed its sympathy for the Cuban Revolution until, in 1961, the revolution proclaimed itself and proved to be Marxist-Leninist—that is, a revolution that has in its forefront a worker-peasant alliance. From that day on, the support of the mafia grew increasingly diluted, up to the last few months when—taking advantage of the wild vociferation occasioned by a Cuban writer's month in jail—they broke ostentatiously with Cuba.

The symmetry here is instructive: in 1961, at the time of the Bay of Pigs, the only gathering of Latin-American writers to express in a manifestos its desire that Cuba be defeated by mercenaries in the service of imperialism was a group of Argentines centered around Borges. Ten years later, in 1971, the only national circle of writers on the continent to exploit an obvious pretext for breaking with Cuba and culminating the conduct of the revolution was the Mexican mafia. It is a simple changing of the guard within an identical attitude.

In that light one can better understand the intentions of Fuentes's short book on the new Spanish-American novel. The development of this new novel is one of the prominent features of the literature of these past few years, and its circu-

lation beyond our borders is in large part owing to the worldwide attention our continent has enjoyed since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959.7

Logically, this new novel has occasioned various interpretations, numerous studies. That of Carlos Fuentes, despite its brevity (less than one hundred pages), comprehends a thoroughgoing position paper on literature and politics that clearly synthesizes a shrewd rightist viewpoint within our countries.

Fuentes is quick to lay his cards on the table. In the first chapter, exemplarily entitled "Civilization and Barbarism," he adopts for openers, as might be expected, the thesis of Sarmiento: during the nineteenth century "it is possible for only one drama to unfold in this medium: that which Sarmiento established in the subtitle of Facundo—Civilization and Barbarism." That drama constitutes the conflict "of the first one hundred years of Latin-American society and its novel."68 The narrative corresponding to this conflict comprehends four factors: "an essentially alien [to whom?] natural order," which was "the real Latin-American protagonist"; the dictator on the national or regional scale; the exploited masses; and the fourth factor, "the writer, who invariably stands on the side of civilization against barbarism" (11–12; my emphasis). This, according to Fuentes, implies "a defense of the exploited," but Sarmiento revealed what it consisted of in fact. The polarity that characterized the 1900s, he continued, does not go unchanged in the following century. "In the twentieth century the intellectual himself is forced to struggle within a society that is, internally and externally, much more complex," a complexity owing to the fact that these countries will be penetrated by imperialism, while sometime later there will take place "a revolt and upsurge... in the underdeveloped world." Among the international factors that must be taken into account in the twentieth century, socialism, is one that Fuentes forgets to include. But he slips in this opportune formula: "We have the beginning of the transition from epic simplicity to dialectical complexity" (13). "Epic simplicity" was the nineteenth-century struggle in which, according to Fuentes, "the writer [he means writers like him] invariably stands on the side of civilization against barbarism," that is, becomes an unconditional servant of the new oligarchy and a harsh enemy of the American masses.

"Dialectical complexity" is the form that collaboration takes in the twentieth century, when the oligarchy in question has revealed itself as a mere intermediary for imperialist interests and "the writer" such as Fuentes must now serve two masters. Even when it is a question of such well-heeled masters, we have known since the Holy Scriptures that this does imply a certain "dialectical complexity," especially when one attempts to make everyone believe one is in fact serving a third master—the people. Notwithstanding its slight omissions, the synthesis offered by the lucid Fuentes of one aspect of imperialist penetration in our countries is interesting. He writes:

In order to intervene effectively in the economic life of each
Latin-American country, it requires not only an intermediary ruling class, but a whole array of services in public administration, commerce, publicity, business management, extractive and refining industries, banking, transportation, and even entertainment: bread and circuses. General Motors assembles automobiles, takes home profits, and sponsors television programs. [14].

As a final example (even though that of General Motors is always valid) it might have been more useful to mention the CIA, which organizes the Bay of Pigs invasion and pays, via transparent intermediaries, for the review Mundo nuevo, one of whose principal ideologues was none other than Carlos Fuentes.

With these political premises established, Fuentes goes on to postulate certain literary premises before concentrating on the authors he will study (Vargas Llosa, Carpentier, García Márquez, Cortázar, and Goytisolo) and concluding with more observations of a political nature. I am not interested in lingering over his criticism per sé but simply in underscoring a few of its ideological lines, which are, in any case, apparent: at times, this little book seems a thoroughgoing ideological manifest.

A critical appreciation of literature requires that we start off with a concept of criticism itself: one ought to have answered the elemental question, What is criticism? The modest opinion of Krystina Pomorska would seem acceptable. According to Tzvetan Todorov,

... she defends the following thesis: every critical method is a generalization upon the literary practice of its time. Critical methods in the period of classicism were elaborated as a function of classical literary works. The criticism of the romantics reiterates the principles (the irrational, the psychological, etc.) of romanticism itself.69

Reading Fuentes’s criticism on the new Spanish-American novel, then, we are aware that his “critical method is a generalization upon the literary practice of its time” — the practice of other literatures, that is, not the Spanish-American. All things considered, this fits in perfectly with the alienated and alienating ideology of Fuentes.

After the work of men like Alejo Carpentier, whom some profiteers of the “boom” have tried in vain to disclaim, the undertaking assumed by the new Spanish-American novel—an undertaking that, as certain critics do not cease to observe, might appear accomplished by now or “surpassed” in the narrative of capitalist countries—implies a reinterpretation of our history. Indifferent to this incontestable fact—which in many cases bears an ostensible relationship to the new perspectives the revolution has afforded our America and which is in no small way responsible for the diffusion of our narrative among those with a desire to know the continent about which there is so much discussion—Fuentes dissolves the flesh and blood of our novels, the criticism of which would require, before anything else, understanding and evaluation of the vision of history presented in them, and, as I have said, calmly applies to the schemes derived from other literatures (those of capitalist countries), now reduced to mere linguistic speculations.

The extraordinary vogue enjoyed by linguistics in recent years has moved more than one person to conclude that “the twentieth century, which is the century of so many things, would seem to be above all the century of linguistics.”70 We, in contrast, would say that, among those “many things,” the establishment of socialist governments and decolonization carry much more weight as outstanding features of this century. I might add as a modest personal example of this vogue that as recently as 1955, when I was a student of linguistics under André Martinet, linguistic matters were confined in Paris to university lecture halls. Outside the classroom we talked with our friends about literature, philosophy, and politics. Only a few years later, linguistics—whose structuralist dimension, as Lévi-Strauss described it, encompasses the other social sciences—was in Paris the obligatory theme of all discussions. In those days literature, philosophy, and politics all ran afoot of structuralists. (I am speaking of some years ago; presently, structuralism seems to be on the decline. However, in our part of the world the insistence on such an ideology will last for sometime yet.)

Now I have no doubt that there exist specifically scientific factors to which we can credit this vogue of linguistics. But I also know that there are ideological reasons for it over and above the subject matter itself. With respect to literary studies it is not difficult to determine these ideological reasons. Indeed, the virtues and limitations of critical strategies ranging from Russian formalism to French structuralism cannot be shown without them. And among them is the attempt at ahistorization peculiar to a dying class: a class that initiated its trajectory with daring utopias in order to chase away time and that endeavors now, in the face of adversity, to arrest that trajectory via impossible neohronics. In any case, one must recognize the convergence between these studies and their respective conterminous literature. However, when Fuentes glosses over the concrete reality of the current Spanish-American novel and attempts to impose upon it systems derived from other literatures and other critical methodologies, he adds—with a typically colonial attitude—a second level of idealization to his critical outlook. In a word, this is summed up in his claim that our present-day narrative—like that of apparently coetaneous capitalist countries—is above all a feat of language. Such a contention, among other things, allows him to minimize nicely everything in that narrative having to do with a clear historical conception. Furthermore, the manner in which he lays the foundations of his linguistic approach demonstrates a pedantry and a provincialism typical of the colonial wishing to demonstrate to those in the metropolis that he too is capable of grappling with fashionable themes namely, themes from abroad—and wishing at the same time
to enlighten his fellow countrymen, in whom he is confident of finding an ignorance even greater than his own. This is the sort of thing he spews forth:

Change comprehends the categories of process and speech, of diachrony; structure comprehends those of system and language, of synchrony. The point of interaction for all these categories is the word—which joins diachrony and synchrony, speech and language through discourse: along with process and system, through the event, and even event and discourse themselves. [33]

These banalities (which any handy little linguistics manual could have taken care of), nonetheless should arouse in us more than a smile. Fuentes is elaborating as best he can here a consistent vision of our literature, of our culture—a vision that, significantly, coincides in its essentials with that proposed by writers like Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Severo Sarduy.

It is revealing that for Fuentes the thesis of the preponderant role of language in the new Spanish-American novel finds its basis in the prose of Borges, "without which there would simply not exist a modern Spanish-American novel," since, according to Fuentes, "the ultimate significance" of that prose is "to bear witness, first off, that Latin America is lacking a language and must therefore establish one." This singular triumph is achieved by Borges, Fuentes continued, "in his creation of a new Latin-American language, which, by pure contrast, reveals the lie, the acquiescence and the duplicity, of what has traditionally passed for 'language among us'" (26).

Naturally, based on such criteria the ahistorization of literature can attain truly delirious expressions. We learn, for example, that Witold Gombrowicz's Pornography could have been related by a native of the Amazon jungles and that neither nationality nor social class, in the final analysis, explain the difference between Gombrowicz and the possible narrator of the same initiation myth in a Brazilian jungle. Rather, it is explained precisely by the possibility of combining discourse in different ways. Only on the basis of the universality of linguistic structures can there be conceded, a posteriori, the peripheral data regarding nationality and class. [22]

And consequently, we are told as well that "it is closer to the truth, in the first instance, to understand the conflict in Spanish-American literature as related to certain characteristics of the literary endeavor" (24; my emphasis), rather than to history; furthermore:

The old obligation to denounce is transformed into a much more arduous enterprise: the critical elaboration of everything that has gone unspoken in our long history of lies, silences, rhetoric, and academic

... complications. To invent a language is to articulate all that history has concealed. [30; my emphasis]

Such an interpretation, then, allows Fuentes to have his cake and eat it too. Thus conceived, literature not only withdraws from any combatant role (here degraded by a clever adjective: "the old obligation to denounce"), but its withdrawal, far from being a retreat, becomes a "much more arduous enterprise," since it is to articulate no less than "all that history has concealed." Further on we are told that our true language is in the process of being discovered and created and that "in the very act of discovery and creation it threatens, in a revolutionary way, the whole economic, political, and social structure erected upon a vertically false language" (94–95; my emphasis).

This shrewd, while at the same time superficial, manner of expounding right-wing concerns in left-wing terminology reminds us—though it is difficult to forget for a single moment—that Fuentes is a member of the Mexican literary mafia, the qualities of which he has attempted to extend beyond the borders of his country.

Furthermore, that these arguments constitute the projection onto literary questions of an inherently reactionary political platform is not conjecture. This is said throughout the little book and is particularly explicit in its final pages. Besides the well-known attacks on socialism, there are observations like this one: "Perhaps the sad, immediate future of Latin America will see fascist populism, a Peronist sort of dictatorship, capable of carrying out various reforms only in exchange for a suppression of revolutionary impulse and civil liberties" (96). The "civilization vs. barbarism" thesis appears not to have changed in the least. But in fact it has—it has been aggravated by the devastating presence of imperialism in our countries. In response to this reality, Fuentes erects a scarecrow: the announcement that there is opening before us

a prospect even more grave. That is, in proportion to the widening of the abyss between the geometric expansion of the technocratic world and the arithmetic expansion of our own ancillary societies, Latin America is being transformed into a world that is superfluous [Fuentes's emphasis] to imperialism. Traditionally we have been exploited countries. Soon we will not even be that [my emphasis]. It will no longer be necessary to exploit us, for technology will have succeeded in—to a large extent it can already—manufacturing substitutes for our single-product offerings. [96]

In light of this, and recalling that for Fuentes the revolution has no prospects in Latin America—he insists upon the impossibility of a "second Cuba" (96) and cannot accept the varied, unpredictable forms the process will assume—we should almost be thankful that we are not "superfluous" to imperialist technol-
ogy, that it is not manufacturing substitutes (as "it can already") for our poor products.

I have lingered perhaps longer than necessary on Fuentes because he is one of the most outstanding figures among the new Latin-American writers who have set out to elaborate in the cultural sphere a counterrevolutionary platform that, at least on the surface, goes beyond the coarse simplifications of the program "Appointment with Cuba," broadcast by the Voice of (the United States of) America. But the writers in question already had an adequate medium: the review Mundo Nuevo [New World], financed by the CIA, whose ideological foundations are summed up by Fuentes's short book in a manner that the professorial weightiness of Emir Rodriguez Monegal or the neo-Barthean flutterings of Severo Sarduy—the magazine's other two "critics"—would have found difficult to achieve. That publication, which also gathered together the likes of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Juan Goytisolo, is to be replaced shortly by another, which will apparently rely upon more or less the same team, along with a few additions. I am speaking of the review Libre [Free]. A fusion of the two titles speaks for itself: Mundo Libre [Free World].

The Future Begun

The endeavor to include ourselves in the "free world"—the hilarious name that capitalist countries today apply to themselves and bestow in passing on their oppressed colonies and neo-colonies—is a modern version of the nineteenth-century attempt by Creole exploiting classes to subject us to a supposed "civilization"; and this latter, in its turn, is a repetition of the designs of European conquistadors. In all these cases, with only slight variations, it is plain that Latin America does not exist except, at the very most, as a resistance that must be overcome in order to implant true culture, that of "the modern peoples who gratify themselves with the epithet of civilized." Pareto's words here recall so well those of Martí, who wrote in 1883 of civilization as "the vulgar name under which contemporary European man operates."

In the face of what the conquistadors, the Creole oligarchs, and the imperialists and their flunkies have attempted, our culture—taking this term in its broad historical and anthropological sense—has been in a constant process of formation: our authentic culture, the culture created by the mestizo populace, those descendants of Indians and blacks and Europeans whom Bolívar and Artigas led so well; the culture of the exploited classes, of the radical petite bourgeoisie of José Martí, of the poor peasantry of Emiliano Zapata, of the working class of Luis Emilio Recabarren and Jesús Menéndez; the culture "of the hungry Indian masses, of the landless peasants, of the exploited workers" mentioned in the Second Declaration of Havana (1962), "of the honest and brilliant intellectuals who abound in our suffering Latin-American countries"; the culture of a people that now encompasses "a family numbering two hundred million brothers" and that "has said: Enough! and has begun to move."

That culture—like every living culture, especially at its dawn—is on the move. It has, of course, its own distinguishing characteristics, even though it was born—like every culture, although in this case in a particularly planetary way—of a synthesis. And it does not limit itself in the least to a mere repetition of the elements that formed it. This is something that the Mexican Alfonso Reyes, though he directed his attention to Europe more often than we would have wished, has underscored well. On speaking with another Latin American about the characterization of our culture as one of synthesis, he says:

Neither he nor I were understood by our European colleagues, who thought we were referring to the résumé or elemental compendium of the European conquests. According to such a facile interpretation, the synthesis would be a terminal point. But that is not the case: here the synthesis is the new point of departure, a structure composed of prior and dispersed elements that—like all structures—transcends them and contains itself in new qualities. H2O is not only a union of hydrogen and oxygen; it is, moreover, water.

This is especially apparent if we consider that the "water" in question is formed not only from European elements, which are those Reyes emphasizes, but also from the indigenous and the African. But even with his limitations, it is still within Reyes's capacity to state at the end of that piece:

I say now before the tribunal of international thinkers within reach of my voice: we recognize the right to universal citizenship which we have won. We have arrived at our majority. Very soon you will become used to reckoning with us.

These words were spoken in 1936. Today that "very soon" has already arrived. If we were asked to indicate the date that separates Reyes's hope from our certainty—considering the usual difficulties in that sort of thing—I would say 1959, the year the Cuban Revolution triumphed. One could also go along marking some of the dates that are milestones in the advent of that culture. The first, relating to the indigenous peoples' resistance and black slave revolts against European oppression, are imprecise. The year 1780 is important: it marks the uprising of Tápac Amaru in Peru. In 1803, the independence of Haiti. In 1810, the beginning of revolutionary movements in various Spanish colonies in America—movements extending well into the century. In 1867, the victory of Juárez over Maximilian. In 1895, the beginning of the final stage of Cuba's war against Spain—a war that Martí foresaw as an action against emerging Yankee imperialism. In 1910, the Mexican Revolution. In the 1920s and 1930s, Sandino's re-
sistance in Nicaragua and the establishment on the continent of the working class as a vanguard force. In 1938, the nationalization of Mexican petroleum by Cárdenas. In 1944, the coming to power of a democratic regime in Guatemala, which was to be radicalized in office. In 1946, the beginning of Juan Domingo Perón’s presidency in Argentina, under which the “shirtless ones” would become an influential force. In 1952, the Bolivian revolution. In 1959, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. In 1961, the Bay of Pigs: the first military defeat of Yankee imperialism in America, and the declaration of our revolution as Marxist-Leninist. In 1967, the fall of Che Guevara while leading a nascent Latin-American army in Bolivia. In 1970, the election of socialist president Salvador Allende in Chile.

These dates, seen superficially, might not appear to have a very direct relationship to our culture. But, in fact, the opposite is true. Our culture is—and can only be—the child of revolution, of our multisectional rejection of all colonialisms. Our culture, like every culture, requires as a primary condition our own existence. I cannot help but cite here, although I have done so before elsewhere, one of the occasions on which Martí spoke to this fact in the most simple and illuminating way. “Letters, which are expression, cannot exist,” he wrote in 1881, “so long as there is no essence to express in them. Nor will there exist a Spanish-American literature until Spanish America exists.” And further: “Let us lament now that we are without a great work of art; not because we do not have that work but because it is a sign that we are still without a great people that would be reflected in it.” Latin-American culture, then, has become a possibility in the first place because of the many who have struggled, the many who still struggle, for the existence of that “great people” that in 1881, Martí still referred to as Spanish America but that some years later he would prefer to name more accurately, “Our America.”

But this is not, of course, the only culture forged here. There is also the culture of anti-America, that of the oppressors, of those who tried (or are trying) to impose on these lands metropolitan schemes, or simply, tamely to reproduce in a provincial fashion what might have authenticity in other countries. In the best of cases, to repeat, it is a question of the influence of those who have worked, in some cases patriotically, to shape social life in accordance with models of other highly developed countries, whose practices are the result of an organic process over the course of centuries [and thus] have betrayed the cause of the true emancipation of Latin America. 76

This anti-America culture is still very visible. It is still proclaimed and perpetuated in structures, works, ephemera. But without a doubt, it is suffering the pangs of death, just like the system upon which it is based. We can and must contribute to a true assessment of the history of the oppressors and that of the oppressed. But of course, the triumph of the latter will be the work, above all, of those for whom history is a function not of erudition but of deeds. It is they who will achieve the definitive triumph of the true America, reestablishing—this time in a different light—the unity of our immense continent. “Spanish America, Latin America—call it what you wish,” wrote Maritón. 77

will not find its unity in the bourgeois order. That order divides us, perforce, into petty nationalisms. It is for Anglo-Saxon North America to consummate and draw to a close capitalist civilization. The future of Latin America is socialist. 77

Such a future, which has already begun, will end by rendering incomprehensible the idle question about our existence.

And Ariel Now?

The Ariel of Shakespeare’s great myth, which we have been following in these notes, is, as has been said, the intellectual from the same island as Caliban. 78 He can choose between serving Prospero—the case with intellectuals of the anti-American persuasion—at which he is apparently unusually adept for whom he is nothing more than a timorous slave, or allying himself with Caliban in his struggle for true freedom. It could be said that I am thinking, in Gramscian terms, above all of the “traditional” intellectuals: those whom the proletariat, even during the period of transition, must assimilate in the greatest possible number while it generates its own “organic” intellectuals.

It is common knowledge, of course, that a more or less important segment of intellectuals at the service of the exploited classes usually comes from the exploiting classes, with which they have broken radically. This is the classic, to say the least, case of such supreme figures as Marx, Engels, and Lenin. The fact had been observed already in The Communist Manifesto (1848) itself, where Marx and Engels wrote:

In times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact, within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands . . . [S]o now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat and, in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. 79

If this is obviously valid with regard to the most highly developed capitalist nations—the ones Marx and Engels had in mind in the Manifesto—something
more must be added in the case of our countries. Here that “portion of the bourgeois ideologists” to which Marx and Engels refer experiences a second form of rupture: except for that sector proceeding organically from the exploited classes, the intelligentsia that considers itself revolutionary must break all ties with its class of origin (frequently the petite bourgeoisie) and must besides sever the nexus of dependence upon the metropolitan culture from which it has learned, nonetheless, a language as well as a conceptual and technical apparatus. That language will be of profit, to use Shakespearean terminology, in cursing Prospero. Such was the case with José María Heredia, who exclaimed in the finest Spanish of the first third of the nineteenth century, “The vilest of traitors might serve him./ But the tyrant’s passion is all in vain./ For the sea’s immense and rolling waves/ Span the distance from Cuba to Spain.” It was also the case of José Martí. After spending fifteen years in the United States—which would allow him to become completely familiar with modernity and to detect within that country the emergence of North American imperialism—he wrote: “I have lived in the monster, and I know its entrails; and my sling is the sling of David.” While I can foresee that my suggestion that Heredia and Martí went about cursing will have an unpleasant ring in the ears of some, I wish to remind them that “vile traitors” and “monster” do have something to do with curses. Both Shakespeare and reality would appear to argue well against their objection. And Heredia and Martí are only archetypal examples. More recently we have not been lacking either in individuals who attribute the volcanic violence in some of Fidel’s recent speeches to deformations—Caliban, let us not forget, is always seen as deformed by the hostile eye—in our revolution. Response to his address at the first National Congress on Education and Culture is one example of this. That some of those shocked should have praised Fanon (others, perhaps had never heard of him, since they have as much to do with politics, in the words of Rodolfo Walsh, as with astrophysics), and now attribute an attitude that is at the very root of our historical being to a deformation or to foreign influence, might be a sign of any number of things—among them, total ignorance. It might also be a question of total ignorance, if not disdain, regarding our concrete realities, past and present. This, most assuredly, does not qualify them to have very much to do with our future.

The situation and tasks of the intellectual in the service of the exploited classes differ, of course, depending upon whether it is a question of a country where the revolution has yet to triumph or one where the revolution is already underway. And, as we have recalled above, the term “intellectual” is broad enough to counter any attempts at simplification. The intellectual can be a theoretician and leader like Mariátegui or Mella; a scholar, like Fernando Ortiz; or a writer like César Vallejo. In all these cases their concrete example is more instructive than any vague generalization.

The situation, as I said, is different in countries where the Latin-American masses have at last achieved power and set in motion a socialist revolution. The encouraging case of Chile is too immediate to allow for any conclusions to be drawn. But the socialist revolution in Cuba is more than twelve years old, and by this time it is possible to point out certain facts—although, owing to the nature of this essay, I propose to mention here only a few salient characteristics.

This revolution—in both practice and theory absolutely faithful to the most exacting popular Latin-American tradition—has satisfied in full the aspiration of Mariátegui. “We certainly do not wish for socialism in Latin America to be a carbon copy,” he said. “It must be a heroic creation. With our own reality, in our own language, we must give life to Indo-American socialism.”

That is why our revolution cannot be understood without a knowledge of “our own reality,” “our own language,” and to these I have referred extensively. But the unavoidable pride in having inherited the best of Latin-American history, in struggling in the front ranks of a family numbering 200 million brothers and sisters, must not cause us to forget that as a consequence we form part of another even larger vanguard, a planetary vanguard—that of the socialist countries emerging on every continent. This means that our inheritance is also the worldwide inheritance of socialism and that we commit ourselves to it as the most beautiful, the most lofty, the most combative chapter in the history of humanity. We feel as unequivocally our own socialism’s past: from the dreams of the utopian socialists to the impassioned scientific rigor of Marx (“That German of tender spirit and iron hand,” as Martí said) and Engels, from the heroic endeavor of the Paris Commune of a century ago to the startling triumph of the October Revolution and the abiding example of Lenin, from the establishment of new socialist governments in Europe as a result of the defeat of fascism in World War II to the success of socialist revolutions in such “underdeveloped” Asian countries as China, Korea, and Vietnam. When we affirm our commitment to such a magnificent inheritance—one that we aspire besides to enrich with our own contributions—we are well aware that this quite naturally entails shining moments as well as difficult ones, achievements as well as errors. How could we not be aware of this when on making our own history (an operation that has nothing to do with reading the history of others), we find ourselves also subject to achievements and errors, just as all real historical movements have been and will continue to be?

This elemental fact is constantly being recalled, not only by our declared enemies but even by some supposed friends, whose only apparent objection to socialism is, at bottom, that it exists—in all its grandeur and with its difficulties, in spite of the flawlessness with which this written word appears in books. We cannot but ask ourselves why we should go on offering explanations to those supposed friends about the problems we face in real-life socialist construction, especially when their consciences allow them to remain integrated into exploiting societies or, in some cases, even to abandon our neocolonial countries and request, hat in hand, a place in those very societies. No, there is no reason to give any explanation to that sort of people, who, were they honest, should be con-
cerned about having so much in common with our enemies. The frivolous way in which some intellectuals who call themselves leftists (and who, nonetheless, don't seem to give a damn about the masses) rush forth shamelessly to repeat word for word the same critiques of the socialist world proposed and promulgated by capitalism only demonstrates that they have not broken with capitalism as radically as they might perhaps think. The natural consequence of this attitude is that under the guise of rejecting error (something upon which any opposing factions can come to an agreement), socialism as a whole, reduced arbitrarily to such errors, is rejected in passing; or there is the deformation and generalization of a concrete historical moment and, extracting it from its context, the attempt to apply it to other historical moments that have their own characteristics, their own virtues, and their own defects. This is one of the many things that, in Cuba, we have learned in the flesh.

During these years, in search of original and above all genuine solutions to our problems, an extensive dialogue on cultural questions has taken place in Cuba. Casa de las Américas, in particular, has published a number of contributions to the dialogue. I am thinking particularly of the round table in which I participated, with a group of colleagues, in 1969.3

And, of course, the leaders of the revolution themselves have not been remiss in expressing opinions on these matters. Even though, as Fidel has said, "we did not have our Yenan Conference" before the triumph of the revolution,4 since that time discussions, meetings, and congresses designed to grapple with these questions have taken place. I shall limit myself to recalling a few of the many texts by Fidel and Che. Regarding the former, there is his speech at the National Library of 30 June 1961, published that year and known since then as Words to the Intellectuals; his speech of 13 March 1969 in which he dealt with the democratization of the university and to which we referred a number of times in the above-mentioned round table; and finally, his contribution to the recent Congress on Education and Culture, which we published, together with the declaration of the congress, in number 65–66 of Casa de las Américas. Of course, these are not by any means the only occasions on which Fidel has taken up cultural problems, but I think they offer a sufficiently clear picture of the revolution's pertinent criteria.

Although a decade has passed between the first of these speeches—which I am convinced has scarcely been read by many of its commentators, who limit themselves to quoting the odd sentence or two out of context—and the most recent one, what an authentic reading of both demonstrates above all is a consistency over the ten-year period. In 1971, Fidel has this to say about literary and other artistic works:

We, a revolutionary people, value cultural and artistic creations in proportion to what they offer mankind, in proportion to their

contribution to the re vindication of man, the liberation of man, the happiness of man . . . . Our evaluation is political. There can be no aesthetic value in opposition to man. Aesthetic value cannot exist in opposition to justice, in opposition to the welfare or in opposition to the happiness of man. It cannot exist!

In 1961, he had declared:

It is man himself, his fellow man, the redemption of his fellow man that constitutes the objective of the revolutionary. If they ask us revolutionaries what matters most to us, we say the people, and we will always say the people. The people in the truest sense, that is, the majority of the people, those who have had to live in exploitation and in the cruelest neglect. Our basic concern will always be the great majority of the people, that is, the oppressed and exploited classes. The prism through which we see everything is this: whatever is good for them will be good for us; whatever is noble, useful, and beautiful for them will be noble, useful, and beautiful for us.

And those words of 1961, so often cited out of context, must be returned to that context for a full understanding of their meaning:

Within the revolution, everything; outside the revolution, nothing.
Outside the revolution, nothing, because the revolution also has its rights; and the first right of the revolution is to be, to exist. No one, to the extent that the revolution understands the interests of the people, to the extent that the revolution expresses the interest of the nation as a whole, can maintain any right in opposition to it.

But consistency is not repetition. The correspondence between the two speeches does not mean that the past ten years have gone by in vain. At the beginning of his Words to the Intellectuals Fidel had recalled that the economic and social revolution taking place in Cuba was bound inevitably to produce in its turn a revolution in the culture of our country. The decisions proclaimed in the 1969 speech on the democratization of the university along with those of the 1971 speech at the National Congress on Education and Culture correspond, among other things, to the very transformation mentioned already in 1961 as an outcome of the economic and social revolution. During those ten years there has been taking place an uninterrupted radicalization of the revolution, which implies a growing participation of the masses in the country's destiny. If the agrarian reform of 1959 will be followed by an agrarian revolution, the literacy campaign will inspire a campaign for follow-up courses, and the later announcement of the democratization of the university already supposes that the masses have conquered the domains of so-called high culture. Meanwhile, in a parallel way, the process of syn-
dical democratization brings about an inexorable growth in the role played by the working class in the life of the country.

In 1961 this could not yet have been the case. In that year the literacy campaign was only just being carried out. The foundations of a truly new culture were barely being laid. By now, 1971, a great step forward has been taken in the development of that culture; a step already foreseen in 1961, one involving tasks that must inevitably be accomplished by any revolution that calls itself socialist: the extension of education to all of the people, its firm grounding in revolutionary principles, and the construction and safeguarding of a new, socialist culture.

To better understand the goals as well as the specific characteristics of our developing cultural transformation, it is useful to compare it to similar processes in other socialist countries. The creation of conditions by which an entire people who have lived in exploitation and illiteracy gains access to the highest levels of knowledge and creativity is one of the most beautiful achievements of a revolution.

Cultural questions also engaged a good part of Ernesto Che Guevara’s attention. His study, *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* [Man and Socialism in Cuba], is sufficiently well known to make comment on it unnecessary here. But the reader should be warned, above all, against following the example of those who take him a la carte, selecting, for example, his censure of a certain conception of a socialist realism but not his censure of decadent art under modern capitalism and its continuation in our society—or vice versa. Or who forget with what astonishing clarity he foresaw certain problems of our artistic life, expressing himself in terms that on being taken up again by pens less prestigious than his own, would raise objections no one dared make to Che himself.

Because it is less known than *Man and Socialism in Cuba*, I would like to close by citing at some length the end of a speech delivered by Che at the University of Las Villas on 28 December 1959, that is, at the very beginning of our revolution. The university had made him professor *honoris causa* in the School of Pedagogy, and Che’s speech was to express his gratitude for the distinction. He did so, but what he did above all was to propose to the university, to its professors and students, a transformation that all of them—and us—would have to undergo in order to be considered truly revolutionary, truly useful:

I would never think of demanding that the distinguished professors or the students presently associated with the University of Las Villas perform the miracle of admitting to the university the masses of workers and peasants. The road here is long; it is a process all of you have lived through, one entailing many years of preparatory study. What I do ask, based on my own limited experience as a revolutionary and rebel commandante, is that the present students of the University of Las Villas understand that study is the patrimony of no one and that the place of study where you carry out your work is the patrimony of no one—it belongs to all the people of Cuba, and it must be extended to the people or the people will seize it. And I would hope—because I began the whole series of ups and downs in my career as a university student, as a member of the middle class, as a doctor with middle-class perspectives and the same youthful aspirations that you must have, and because I have changed in the course of the struggle, because I am convinced of the overwhelming necessity of the revolution and the infinite justice of the people’s cause—I would hope for those reasons that you, today proprietors of the university, will extend it to the people. I do not say this as a threat, so as to avoid its being taken over by them tomorrow. I say it simply because it would be one more among so many beautiful examples in Cuba today: that the proprietors of the Central University of Las Villas, the students, offer it to the people through their revolutionary government. And to the distinguished professors, my colleagues, I have to say something similar: become black, mulatto, a worker, a peasant; go down among the people. respond to the people, that is, to all the necessities of all of Cuba. When this is accomplished, no one will be the loser; we all will have gained, and Cuba can then continue its march toward the future with a more vigorous step, and you will not need to include in your cloister this doctor, commandante, bank president, and today professor of pedagogy who now takes leave of you.  

That is to say, Che proposed that the “European university,” as Martí would have said, yield before the “American university.” He proposed to Ariel, through his own most luminous and sublime example if ever there was one, that he seek from Caliban the honor of a place in his rebellious and glorious ranks.

—Havana, 7–20 June 1971
—Translated by Lynn Garafola,
David Arthur McMurray, and Roberto Márquez
Nineteen eighty-five was the 240th anniversary of Jonathan Swift's death. There are those who have said that he died an idiot or, at very least, afflicted with a severe psychic disorder. I don't know if this is so; reading biographies and histories of people and things familiar to me has made me suspect what some people have said about them. In any event, it was surely prior to that supposed disorder that he wrote his superb and well-known epitaph, which begins, "It ubi saeva indignatio ulteriori cor lacerari nequit," and concludes, "Abi, viator, et imitare, si poteris, strenuum pro virili libertatis vindicatorem." Thus, in 1745, he departed to a place where savage indignation could no longer wound the heart of a man who justly considered himself worthy of daring the traveler to emulate, if at all possible, his labors in the cause of human liberty. Swift performed this task in a variegated and modest literary oeuvre that is read today far less than it deserves—with a single exception, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). This book is also a tremendous lesson to writers, for the ardent pamphleteer who earned the praise of men whom I admire—such as George Bernard Shaw and Bertolt Brecht—who tirelessly flayed humanity’s foibles, has gone down in history as a harmless teller of children’s tales. His tiger, not unworthy of Blake’s, has been turned into a meek tabby for the delight of tiny readers. And yet that book was born of the author’s savage indignation, as was nearly everything he wrote. Unexpectedly, he teaches us an important lesson with this metamorphosis. It isn’t a new lesson, much less a unique one, but in his case it takes on a shattering dimension: a text, beyond not merely the author’s intent (which often is unknowable) but his context as well, can turn into something quite different from what it was, from what it is.
pressed "races" and communities, of women, of marginal peoples, develop before their very eyes. There was, naturally, no lack of absurdity, like the hippies and flower power. In our America, the certainty of victory of guerrilla movements of broadly socialist orientation took root in many hearts and became incarnate in innumerable acts of heroism. Many figures remained as milestones along the road of these hopes, the most heraldic of which, no doubt, is Che. In our America, too, literature, lead but not overwhelmed by the novel, stood at the foreground of the world stage, followed in close proximity by the new cinema and music. At the dawn of the next decade, in 1970, the socialist Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile.

Of course imperialism was not (and never is) an idle spectator. While politically it undertook a variety of operations—ranging from aggression against Cuba to the occupation of the Dominican Republic, from the organization of counter-insurgency and the establishment of new tyrannies to the Alliance for Progress—intellectually it plotted an academic version of its demagogic policy. (At the time of the Second World War, this version was graphically exemplified by a well-known Walt Disney movie, in homage to that movie, this version might have been called Saludos, amigos escritores y artistas latinoamericanos [Greetings, Latin-American Writer and Artist Friends].) Grants proliferated, colloquia flourished, chairs to study and dissect us sprouted like toadstools after a rainstorm. There was even talk, in the most wretched stock-market taste, of the "boom" of the Latin-American novel. It would be unjust to attribute all this to malevolence; many Western intellectuals and institutions evinced a serious attitude toward the emerging realities of what until then had been relegated to the outskirts of history. This new seriousness grew within the framework of real attention to what the French demographer Alfred Sauvy had already, in 1952, baptized "the Third World". The manifest disdain toward 'Third World-ism' being voiced these days in so many openly reactionary quarters (and in others that echo them, as the spectrum slides to the Right) cannot make us forget that concern for colonial and formerly colonial countries implied, and in many instances still implies, a genuine interest without which it is not possible to understand the world we live in today.

At the very outset of the cold war, before the Third World had not entered the ring with such intensity, the United States organized, among other operations, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, in which the crude anti-Communism of practical politicians was adored with intellectual sighs and breast-beating. In Spanish, the Congress's journal was called Cuadernos; its form was so sclerotic that it was unable to ride the rising tide of the sixties, and thus, it capsized ingloriously on its one hundredth issue. Shortly thereafter, the substitution of Mundo Nuevo for Cuadernos was planned and accomplished.

The debate that raged around this review permeated the atmosphere in which "Caliban" was conceived. In the mid-sixties, when the imminent publication in Paris of the new review became known, a group of writers, myself included, called attention to the fact that Mundo Nuevo could do nothing more than put a better face on its predecessor and that, in essence, it would have a similar purpose. Mundo Nuevo was undoubtedly superior to Cuadernos, and it brought in a substantially new team. The project was clear: to challenge, from Europe and with a modern look, the hegemony of the revolutionary outlook in Latin-American intellectual work. It would be mistaken to contend, and we never suggested, that everyone who published in Mundo Nuevo was necessarily hostile to the revolution. On the contrary, the editors' purpose was to create an atmosphere of confusion that would make it difficult to detect the real functions that the review had been assigned. The accusations reached new heights on 27 April 1966, when the New York Times published a lengthy article on the CIA's financing of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its publications. Despite the pharisaeic denials issued by the Congress's leadership and some of its contributors, on 15 May 1967, two London newspapers, the Sunday Times and the Observer, ran detailed reports that definitively clarified the question: the congress's executive secretary, Michael Josselson, admitted everything in Paris. For the Sunday Times, it was a "Story of a Literary Bay of Pigs." Among the Spanish-language commentators on these events, "Epitapho para un imperio cultural" [Epitaph for a Cultural Empire], an article published in the Uruguayan weekly Marcha on 27 May of that year by the noted Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa was particularly significant. A few years ago, in 1983, Vargas Llosa (who is now quite far from the Left) published a selection of his articles, entitled Contra viento y marea (1962–1982) [Against wind and tide (1962–1982)]. Unfortunately, in that thick book (to which we shall return) Vargas Llosa did not find space for so important an article, which concluded:

The "cultural empire" built with such painstaking cleverness, at such expense, has collapsed like a house of cards, and the pity is that, among its smoking ruins lie, broken, dirtied, guilty and innocent, those who acted in good faith and those who did so in bad faith, those who believed that they were there to fight for freedom and those who solely were interested in picking up their pay.

In its next issue (2 June 1967), Marcha published the succinct history, in the form of a chronological tables, of the polemics of the affair, beginning with an exchange of correspondence between the editor of Mundo Nuevo and myself (which was given space in a number of periodicals) and following up with further details. But to assume that the "cultural empire" had been overthrown simply because one of its maneuvers had been unmasked is to engage in wishful thinking. Mundo Nuevo disappeared after those revelations, but among all sorts of people it sowed seeds of possible distrust toward the Latin-American revolution, which at that time could offer only the victorious example of Cuba, itself virtu-
ally overwhelmed by the diverse (and even contradictory) expectations that many people had of it but limited in actuality by its meager strength and inevitable errors. In 1968 the argument over a literary prize awarded to a book written by the poet Heberto Padilla by the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba [Association of Cuban Writers and Artists] (which published the book with a prologue expressing its disagreements) gave “those who acted in good faith and those who did so in bad faith” renewed vigor. For three years, the book’s author continued to work and write in Cuba. But in 1971 his month-long detention on charges of counterrevolutionary activities (not for the writing or publication of any poem) unleashed a broadly based argument into which were dragged, far more than ever before, men and women of good and bad faith. In addition, the move toward the Right was beginning. On the side of the Cuban Revolution’s critics, the most significant event was the appearance of two open letters addressed to Fidel from Europe. The first one stated that the undersigned, despite their “solidarity with the principles and goals of the Cuban Revolution,” addressed him “in order to express their concern arising from the arrest of the well-known [sic] poet and writer Heberto Padilla.” Further down, it added:

Given that so far the Cuban government has not provided any information on the matter, this fact makes us fear the reappearance of a process of sectarianism even stronger and more dangerous than the one denounced by you in March 1962. . . . At a time when a socialist government has taken office in Chile and a new situation created in Peru and Bolivia facilitates the breaking down of American imperialism’s criminal blockade of Cuba, the use of repressive methods against intellectuals and writers who have availed themselves of their right to criticism within the revolution cannot but have profoundly negative repercussions on anti-imperialist forces throughout the world, and most especially in Latin America, where the Cuban Revolution is a symbol and banner.

This letter was copiously circulated by the world’s capitalist media, becoming—whatever the intentions of at least some of its signers might have been—an open accusation against the Cuban Revolution, given the letter’s assumption of the “use of repressive methods,” and so forth, in Cuba. But its hue paled in comparison to the second letter. Contrary to what has been said even with the best of goodwill, this second letter was not the necessary consequence of the lack of response (since response would have been nearly impossible) to the first one. Between the first letter and the second stood a fiery speech by Fidel, the freeing of Padilla, and at his request, the publication of a document of self-criticism that, as became evident later on, was nothing more than a malicious caricature of the self-accusations prompted by the sadly famous Moscow trials in the mid-thirties. In other words, it was material written to be decoded by those already predis-

posed to seeing Cuba as undergoing a period similar to the so-called cult of personality in the USSR of the thirties.

The second letter did not have the backing of many of those who had lent their names to the first one. Among those who refused to sign the second letter, Julio Cortázar, by virtue of his conduct and his unimpeachable honesty, occupies a prominent place. In his letter dated 4 February 1972, in which he responds to one sent him by Haydée Santamaría, Cortázar said:

as to the writing of the first letter, the one I signed, I can simply tell you this: the original text that [Juan] Goytisolo submitted to me was very similar to the text of the second letter, that is, paternalistic, insolent, unacceptable in every regard. I refused to sign it, and I proposed an alternate text that, respectfully, went no further than a request for information about what had happened; you’d probably reply that, in addition, it expressed concern that a kind of “sectarian squeeze” was taking place in Cuba, and that’s so; we feared this might be happening, but that fear was neither betrayal nor indignation nor protest. Please, re-read the text and compare it to that of the second letter, which I naturally didn’t sign. I can tell you (the “Polícritica” [Polycritique] says so as well, of course) that I’m sorry that the comrade-to-comrade request for information was accompanied by that expression of concern; but I insist that insolent interference or paternalism of the kind displayed in the second, unspeakable letter can by no means be attributed to those who signed the first one.9

That second letter, deserving of Cortázar’s description, stated:

We deem it our duty to communicate to you our shame and anger. The pitiful text of the confession that Heberto Padilla signed can only have been obtained by methods that are the negation of revolutionary legality and justice. The content and form of said confession, with its absurd accusations and delirious statements, as well as the meeting that took place at UNEAC in which Padilla himself and comrades—Belkis Cuza, Díaz Martínez, César López and Pablo Arantón Fernández submitted to a pitiful charade of self-criticism, recalls the most sordid moments of the Stalinist period, its prefabricated practices and witch-hunts.10 With the same vehemence with which we have defended the Cuban Revolution from the outset, because we deemed it exemplary in its respect for human beings and in its struggle for liberation, we exhort it to avoid for Cuba the dogmatic obscurantism, the cultural xenophobia and the repressive system that Stalinism imposed in the socialist countries, in which events similar to those taking place in Cuba were flagrant examples. The disregard for human dignity entailed in forcing a man ridiculously to accuse himself of the worst betrayals and the vilest acts does not alarm us because it involves a writer but because any Cuban comrade—a peasant, worker, technician or intellectual—might
also be a victim of a similar act of violence or humiliation. We would like the Cuban Revolution once more to become what at one time led us to consider it a model within socialism.\footnote{11}

Cortázar died faithful to the ideas he expounded to Haydée in his letter of 4 February 1972. We can gather as much from the text added to a later edition of his valiant book Nicaragua tan violentamente dulce [Nicaragua so Violently Sweet], which, according to the colophon, “was printed on 25 January 1984,” in Barcelona. (The first edition, without that essay, had appeared in Nicaragua in 1983.) The new text is titled “Apuntes al margen de una relectura de 1984” [Marginal Notes to a Rereading of 1984]. Although he states therein that “if the Padilla case finally had any positive outcome, it was that it separated the wheat from the chaff outside Cuba,” he insists on the supposed virtues of the first letter. In contrast, he calls the second one “the well-known letter of the French intellectuals to Fidel Castro . . ., which was paternalistic and unpardonable in its insolence,” and he adds, “but I can state with all necessary proof that that second letter never would have been sent if the first request for information regarding the facts—which I signed along with many others—had been answered within a reasonable period of time.”\footnote{12}

Plainly, when Cortázar wrote those words he had not read Mario Vargas Llosa’s aforementioned book, Contra viento y marea (1962–1982), “printed in the month of November, 1983,” according to its colophon, which makes it virtually simultaneous with Julio’s. In the Peruvian’s book, the second open letter to Fidel appears with the following footnote:

The initiative for this protest was born in Barcelona, when the world press made known the UNEAC meeting in which Heberito Padilla emerged from the Cuban police dungeon to perform his “self-criticism.” Juan and Luis Goytisolo, José María Castellet, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Carlos Barral (who later decided not to sign the letter), and I got together at my house and wrote, each of us separately, a draft. Then we compared them and selected mine by vote. The poet Jaime Gil de Biedma improved the text by the addition of an adverb.\footnote{13}

Vargas Llosa therefore admits a number of things in this passage, the first being his authorship of the letter, which consequently was not the product of “French intellectuals” (proportionately there were no more of them signing this one than the first letter). Furthermore, he adds a list of sixty-one signatures, indifferent to the fact that many of the signers, just as with the previous letter, later expressed their disagreement with that course of action.

In addition to all these documents, many others, both for and against the Cuban position, appeared in numerous publications, fanning the flames of controversy. If I have brought these matters to bear, it is because they are the spark that fired the writing of “Caliban.” Three successive issues of Casa de las Américas were devoted to the dispute. The last of them, which bore the collective title Sobre cultura y revolución en América Latina [On Culture and Revolution in Latin America], included my essay. It is if now disengaged from that polemic, or if that polemic is not taken into account, it is evident that the meaning of “Caliban” is betrayed. I do not demand that readers familiarize themselves with all the material that surfaced in the heat of the polemic, but rather that they recall its bitterness. My piece was not born in a vacuum but rather at a particular time that was marked by passion, and—on our part—indignation at the paternalism, the rash accusation against Cuba, and even the grotesque “shame” and “anger” of those who, comfortably situated in the “West” with their fears, their guilt, and their prejudices, decided to proclaim themselves judges of the revolution.

But I would be simplistic to suppose that it was solely these skirmishes that gave rise to my text. Beginning much earlier, spurred on by the great intellectual challenge that the revolution we were (and are) living buried at us, I had been broaching questions that, in some fashion, prefigured the 1971 essay. It is sufficient to recall a few journalistic pieces from 1959 and the essays “El son de vuelo popular” [The People’s Poetic Voice] (written in 1962, on Nicolas Guillén’s poetry), “Mart en su (tercer) mundo” [1965; Martí in his (Third) World] (1965), and “Introducción al pensamiento de Che” [Introduction to Che’s Thought] (1967), just to point out a few earlier stepping stones.\footnote{14} In general, it was a matter of reinterpreting our world in the demanding light of the revolution.

I will not spend an inordinate amount of time on “Caliban”’s anagrammatic history, which has been dealt with in minute detail by Roger Tomson in his book Trois Calibans [Three Calibans] (1981),\footnote{15} nor on whether I am an imitator of the French, as, after a lengthy silence, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, the Uruguayan critic and former editor of Mundo Nuevo, would have it.\footnote{16} I’m not much given to arguments with the dead, and I don’t wish to deny the value of that writer’s every word, but I do not believe that full immersion in cultural politics under the auspices of imperialism did him any good. When calling me a Gallicizer, supposing as he did that my use of the symbol of Caliban had French roots (a part of my cultural training does, though, of course, it has other roots as well), he coincided, perhaps unwittingly, with a repeated accusation made by the Voice of America’s “Date with Cuba” program, bringing me together with friends such as Carpentier, Pérez de la Riva and Le Riverand in a sort of archaic Spanish insult that goes back centuries. Rodríguez Monegal seemed to forget on the one hand, that Caliban was an English, not a French, character, and on the other, that it was writers from the British West Indies like George Lamming and Edward Brathwaite, both of whom are cited in my text, who first connected the character to our countries—concretely, the Caribbean.\footnote{17} Although I believe I was first to apply the symbol of Caliban to our America as a whole in Spanish, I don’t think it particularly meritorious of me. In any event, Rodríguez Monegal got so interested in
the subject that he didn’t stop until he offered university courses on it, which I always understood as a sort of involuntary homage he rendered me.

While we’re on the subject of living authors, I’d like to mention a couple: one is Jorge Luis Borges; Carlos Fuentes is another. On the first of the two, who is called in the text “a truly important writer, although we so often disagree with him,” I must state that I have never believed, as the English critic J. M. Cohen suspects in his useful book on the Argentine writer, that the prizes and distinctions he has been awarded have anything to do with his political evolution. 18 On the contrary, I always believe, and have had the opportunity to confirm, that with his ironic humor, he was an honest and modest man endowed with exceptional talent, whose political compass, which in his youth led him to praise the October Revolution and later on to defend the Spanish Republic and oppose Nazi anti-Semitism, became disoriented (like that of many other Argentines) when Perón took the reins of government in his country. His pronouncements became delirious and, furthermore, contrary to what he himself thinks, he is a writer with a political drift, which ranges between anarchism and conservatism. 19 But his pronouncements have been toned down, and his literary quality seems to me now, looking at his work as a whole from the perspective of his very great old age, even better than it seemed to me then. Finally, I believe that the Mexican critic Jorge Alberto Manrique is quite right when, in one of the first critical notices of “Caliban,” he points out:

It would be well to remember, as Borges himself has said, that vis-à-vis . . . [the] reading of Europe, he takes the sniping stance of an ironist, “from without.” The best of his work is made of that: and in it can be recognized an attitude of Caliban. For everyone has his own responses, and it’s worth the trouble to try to understand them. 20

It would not be right, on the other hand, to hide the fact that the sharpness of tone and the occasional sarcasm a propos of Fuentes took into account not only his work but, in addition, the fact that the Mexican, one of the most important Latin-American novelists of recent years, after having been politically close to us (which I would like him to continue being), was one of the main contributors to and ideologues of Mundo Nuevo, a signer of the two letters to Fidel in 1971, and the author of some unjust remarks on Cuba. This was the background that lead me to call the views he held back then into question in vivid terms: views that, furthermore, still seem mistaken to me. But since then, although Fuentes has not gone out of his way to insult me (rather than to argue with me), he has shown unequivocal support for the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. I could not revisit my essay without saying these things, whatever the reaction to them may be.

The circumstances in which I had to write “Caliban,” in a few days, practically without sleeping or eating, feeling myself pressured by people for whom I have the highest regard, are responsible for a number of loose ends in the piece that gave rise to misunderstandings. Later on, I tried to tie them up. Thus, for example, the relation between our America and its former collective metropolis lead me to write “Nuestra América y Occidente” [Our America and the West], and I dealt with the relation of Latin America to Spain in “Contra la leyenda Negra” [Against the Black Legend], which someone called my love letter to Spain. And, on a broader scale one that goes beyond regional limitations, I thought it necessary to revise “Algunos usos de civilización y barbarie” [Some Uses of Civilization and Barbarism]. In other instances, I was more concerned with literary than historical considerations. I think that the piece in that group that I least dislike is “Algunos problemas teóricos de la literatura hispanoamericana” [Some Theoretical Problems Concerning Latin-American Literature]. I have also touched (before and since) on problems that are less vast, more limited to particular authors or situations, but from the same viewpoint.

Caliban, then, became a crossroad where my earlier work lead and my later work began. Still, I would not like it to be judged in isolation but rather within the constellation of pieces that took shape around it. My wish is not, and never was, to present Latin America and the Caribbean as a region cut off from the rest of the world but rather to view it precisely as a part of the world—a part that should be looked at with the same attention and respect as the rest, not as a merely paraphrastic expression of the West. Several friends did me the honor of pointing out similarities between my goal, dealing with our reality, and the one the Palestinian Edward W. Said had set for himself in his noteworthy book Orientalism (1978). 21

If there is one thing that troubles me now about the term “Third World,” it is the degradation that it perhaps involuntarily presupposes. There is just one world in which the oppressors and the oppressed struggle, one world in which, rather sooner than later, the oppressed will be victorious. Our America is bringing its own nuances to this struggle, this victory. The tempest has not subsided. But The Tempest’s shipwrecked sailors, Crusoé and Gulliver, can be seen, rising out of the waters, from terra firma. There, not only Prospero, Ariel and Caliban, Don Quijote, Friday and Faust await them, but Sofia and Oliveira, and Colonel Aureliano Buendía as well, and—halfway between history and dream—Marx and Lenin, Bolívar and Martí, Sandino and Che Guevara.

—Havana, 13 March 1986
Against the Black Legend

To my Spanish comrades,
in and outside Spain

The Paleo-Western Heritage

The stimulating discussion, renewed in recent years, on the nature of Latin-American culture has come to emphasize the authenticity of our indigenous Indo-American and African heritage and to point out our distance from—or, if you will, our sympathies with and differences from—the "West," the developed capitalist countries. This shift is essential, for though we may not be Europeans, we are no doubt, as Alejandro Lipschutz has put it, "Europoids."

But we have another important heritage, which I would venture to call intermediate—neither indigenous, nor in the strict sense "Western," but rather, as I have suggested elsewhere, "Paleo-Western": our Iberian heritage. In any attempt, however modest, to specify the roots of our culture, we cannot gloss over our relationship to our Iberian background. My intention here is to present some general ideas on this relationship, emphasizing the evident poles: Spain and Spanish America.

It is obvious that a considerable part of our culture derives from a Spanish source. Although to speak of a "source" implies a metaphor and although the Spanish presence in the subsequent elaboration of our culture should not be exaggerated, neither should it be minimized; nor, indeed, should we attempt to obliterate it with the stroke of a pen. We received much more than a language from Spain; nevertheless, the peculiar form of that reception is revealed even in language. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, discussing the unity of the language, observed:

There are, we might say, two kinds of learned Spanish, just as there are two kinds of English, one European and the other American, which, in essence, are differentiated from one another by certain peculiarities of pronunciation. This visible (or, better still, audible) differentiation, which might also be called 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 in the nineteenth century, because "the nations into which the Spanish Empire was divided are in closer communication today than when they constituted a single state." While permitting variation and enrichment on both sides, the unity of our language has properly been preserved, thus guaranteeing fruitful communication and the survival of a homogeneous link to the rest of the world.

Beyond language, the situation is, of course, much more complex. Spanish Americans like to say about Spaniards that we do not descend from those who stayed but rather from those who came, whose offspring had already ceased to be Spaniards and were becoming first Creoles and, later on, after intermixing with other ethnic groups, Latin Americans. The logic of this distinction is clear: over a century and a half ago, Spanish America began its political break from the battered and decadent Spanish Empire, which was destined to lose its remaining American possessions, including Cuba in 1898. Moreover, the first definition of Spanish America was made in counterpoint to Spain, and it necessarily implied emphasizing our differences. It was, we are aware, a complex differentiation, one in which the urgency of pointing out what distinguished us from the old metropolis, unaccompanied by truly original solutions, contributed to the seduction of many by the lure of new and aggressive metropolises—as if changing masters, as Martí warned, were the same as being free.

The acceptance of proposals to "Westernize," which fascinated certain Spanish-American groups intent on modernization, was facilitated by the Spain's lamentable situation and the iniquitous exploitation it imposed on the territories where new nations were arising. But a contributing factor was that, beginning in the sixteenth century, Spain and its culture had been branded by an unrelenting anti-Spanish campaign that has come to be known as the Black Legend. It is worth pausing to consider this legend, uncritical acceptance of which, as we shall see, has had generally negative consequences, especially for ourselves.

Andrés Bello (1781–1864), the great Venezuelan-Chilean educator, linguist, and grammarian is considered the founder of Latin-American language studies. The Colombian scholar, Rufino José Cuervo (1844–1911), was Bello's successor. A linguist, grammarian, and lexicographer, he was the founder of Latin-American philology. —Trans.
The Rationale of the Black Legend

To all appearances, the Black Legend originated in the justifiably shared rejection of the monstrous crimes committed on this continent by the Spanish conquerors. But a minimal respect for historical veracity indicates that this is simply false. The crimes were committed, and, yes, they were monstrous. But seen from the perspective of later centuries, they were no more monstrous than those committed by the metropoles that enthusiastically took Spain’s place in this fearsome enterprise and sowed death and desolation on every continent. If anything distinguishes the Spanish conquest from the depredations of Holland, France, England, Germany, Belgium, and the United States, to mention a few illustrious Western nations, it is not the magnitude of the crimes, in which they are all worthy rivals, but rather the magnitude of the scruples. The conquests carried out by these countries were not lacking in death and destruction; what they did lack were men like Bartolomé de las Casas and internal debates on the legitimacy of conquest such as the ones inspired by the Dominicans, which shook the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century. This does not mean that such men, always in the minority, succeeded in imposing their views, but they were able to argue their case before the highest authorities, and they were listened too and, to a certain extent, taken seriously. The French scholar Pierre Vilar, who has written on Spanish history with vast knowledge and a correct perspective, can argue:

It is an honour for a colonial power to have had a Las Casas, and not to have exiled or disgraced him. In mid-century the School of Salamanca, with Melchor Cano, Domingo de Soto, and Francisco de Vitoria, lifted the discussion from the humanitarian to the juridical plane of “human rights.” It is imperative to distinguish between practice, no more brutal than any other type of colonization, and theory, with laws of the most noble intent (often absent in more recent colonial enterprise).

It is also useful to note what scholars like Fernando Ortiz, Alejandro Lipschutz, and Laurette Séjourné, who have taken a clear stance against colonialism and in defense of the indigenous communities massacred by the Spanish Empire and those that came later, have had to say about the Black Legend. For Fernando Ortiz, “The conquest of the New World surely was extremely cruel,” but “it was not so black or so legendary” given that:

the blackness of its very human inhumanity was not exclusive to Spain or any darker than the other instances of genocide and subjugation by fire and blood and the most refined techniques when the uncontrolled desire for power and wealth darken peoples’ conscience, even though they hide it with protestations about ideological fatalism, manifest destiny, natural predetermination or service to God.

Alejandro Lipschutz, for his part, maintains that the Black Legend is naïve; even worse, it is malicious propaganda. Naïve, because the conquistadors and the early colonists are no example of the Spanish people’s morals; malicious propaganda, because seigneurial societies have carried out all their conquests in a similarly fearful way and still do.

Moreover, he argues that

[b]y the same logic, we ought to concoct an anti-Portuguese, anti-British, anti-French, anti-German, anti-Russian, and anti-Yankee Black Legend. There is nothing in the terrible events that Las Casas succinctly labeled “the destruction of the Indies,” that was determined by the fact that the conquerors and early colonizers of America were Spaniards, or, if you prefer, that they belonged to the Spanish “race.” Everything is determined by the fact that they were instruments, whether blind or sighted, of a domineering seigneurial regime transported to an alien, tribal world by means of conquest. . . . In the pogrom of the conquest, the inner nature of the seigneurial regime is made manifest. If you like, an anti-Spanish, anti-Portuguese, anti-British, etc., Black Legend is inappropriate; what is appropriate is an anti-seigneurial Black Legend. And there is an even more important historical fact: the truth is that it is not a matter of an anti-seigneurial legend but rather of a genuine, thousand-year-old seigneurial reality.

Finally, Laurette Séjourné admits:

We have also realized that systematic accusations against the Spaniards play a pernicious role in this vast drama, because they locate the occupation of America outside the broad canvas of which it is a part, since colonization is all of Europe’s mortal sin . . . . No other nation would have done any better. . . . On the contrary, Spain distinguished itself by a gesture of capital importance: heretofore, it has been the only country where powerful voices were raised against the war of conquest.

These observations help us understand the real reasons for the rise and dissemination of the anti-Spanish Black Legend, which does indeed “locate the occupation of America outside the broad canvas of which it is a part.” It is essential, therefore, to reject that mislocation and to locate the occupation of our continent within that “broad canvas.” Then we can see plainly that “at bottom, the conquest and colonization of America in the sixteenth century is part of the rise and consolidation of capitalism.” Those crimes can therefore be imputed to the “rise and consolidation of capitalism,” not to this or that nation. And they reveal

the deep hypocrisy and barbarism characteristic of bourgeois civilization as such, standing naked before our eyes when, instead of seeing it at
home, where it is on its best behaviour, we see it in the Colonies, where it removes its mask.9

The Black Legend was created and disseminated precisely to hide this truth, that "capital, [comes into the world] dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt," and to throw the blame on a single nation, Spain, which in the sixteenth century was the most powerful on earth and whose place, therefore, others desired, and plotted to, and finally did, take.10 It was the nascent bourgeoisie of other metropolises who created the Black Legend, not, of course, for the benefit of those peoples martyred by the Spanish conquest but rather to cover up their own incapacity.11 The Black Legend was thus a handy ideological weapon in the interimperial struggle that accompanied the rise of capitalism and lasted for several centuries, although by the end of the seventeenth century that struggle for all practical purposes had been decided in favor of new metropolises like Holland, France, and England, the major propagators of the legend. Naturally, in this struggle there were (and are) contradictions and mutual recriminations among the bourgeoisie of the respective powers, but they took place against a background of common interests similar to that of today's transnationals. This allowed them to praise one another not as the bandits they were (and are) but as the shining representatives of civilization as such. For example, the interimperialist contradictions that 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 ones and, sadly, reflecting crimes just as real. They were forged by the warring contingents, to the detriment of their temporary enemies in the division of the world; they were products not only of the respective bourgeoisie but also, shamefully, of the traitors of the Second International, the pseudosocialists who have left such a lamentable heritage to the present. But such legends did not continue to prosper once the war ended (nor, despite the horrors of nazism, did the anti-German Black Legend prosper after the Second World War), save in 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 to the same crimes, especially not after the rise and ever more powerful development 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 splendor. This White Legend of the "civilized" West is the reverse of the original, and it has no other purpose or value. When it is not used as a murder weapon, it is simply idle chatter.

The Two Spain?

The means by which Spanish reactionaries have endeavored to combat the Black Legend have been, as we might expect, utterly ineffective. Reading their labors texts, one occasionally feels tempted to subscribe to the legend, which would be a serious mistake. Incapacitated by the narrow perspective of their class interests, they are content (in addition to insulting other countries) simply to make lists of sterile glories and worthless instances of national grandeur, while denigrating truly admirable individuals and achievements in Spanish history and culture. A characteristic example is the unanimous and bitter hatred expressed by Spanish reactionaries for the extraordinary Bartolomé de las Casas, to whom, presently, we shall have occasion to return.

The dichotomy shows that these writers, though afflicted with antidialectical mumification, are not entirely unaware of the duality that is at the heart of every national culture, as Lenin explained it.14 The problem is that, claiming for themselves the totality of the Spanish heritage and blinkered by an ultrareactionary and clerical view of that heritage, they attempt to expel from it much of what we would consider vital and alive in Spain, blindly defending, by the same token, all that seems dead, ossified, and negative.

The only valid method is to begin by explicitly calling into question that false totality that would force us to accept or reject "Spanishness" en bloc—an absurd option—and proclaiming the existence not of one but of two cultures: seigneurial culture (as Lipschutz has it), and popular culture, the culture of the oppressors and the culture of the oppressed. The latter is for us the one that is truly alive, and we defend its works. But on this basis we can also proceed to consider the former without rejecting it out of hand (paying attention to Leninist praxis as well as theory), assimilating critically everything in it that is of general value to humanity.15

Indeed, few countries have expressed the consciousness of this duality as vividly as has Spain. Because of its advanced position in the early stages of capitalism and European expansion and its subsequent decline and eventual marginalization from the development of the capitalist system (which it was in some measure responsible for engendering), the question of an external duality (Europe/Spain) as well as an internal one ("the two Spain") becomes a constant of Spanish thought and letters almost from the beginning of the decadence, in the early seventeenth century.16 Suffice it to recall Larra's striking epitaph in "Día de difuntos de 1836" [All Souls Day, 1836]: "Here lies half of Spain: it died of the

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9 Mariano José de Larra (1808–1837), a journalist and playwright, was Spain's most important Romantic writer. Tormented by Spain's political problems, he took his life at the age of twenty-eight. The article "All Souls Day, 1836" was, in effect, his epitaph. — Trans.
other half.” We might also remember that the magnificent poet Antonio Machado, who in works like “El mañana esfímero” [The Ephemeral Future]—written in 1913, the same year Lenin wrote of the existence of two cultures—distinguished between two different Spain:

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 tahír, zaragatera y triste; esa España inferior que ora y embiste cuando se digna usar de la cabeza, 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 alboroa. Con un hacha en la mano vengadora, España de la rabia y de la idea.

[The Spain of cymbals and tambourines, convents and sacristies, devoted to Frascuelo and Mary, cynical in spirit, deal of soul.

That inferior Spain which prays and yawns, an aged gambler, querulous and sad; that inferior Spain which prays and charges when it deigns to use its head, the Spain of chisel and hammer, eternal youth sculpted from the rock-like past of our race. An implacable, redeeming Spain, Spain at dawn armed with an avenger’s ax, Spain armed with fury and an idea.]

Without denying the evident existence of a single Spanish history, which in turn is part of world history, any consideration of Spain that fails to take into account the internal existence of these two cultures and insists on speaking of Spain in the singular, whether to denigrate or praise it, 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 diverse and permanently unacceptable forms of racism. We need only mention the sad case of the United States, where the words “Hispanic” or “Latino” as applied to Latin Americans—to Puerto Ricans and Chicanos in particular—carry a strong connotation of the disdain with which the apparently transparent citizens of that unhappy country habitually deal with persons “of color.” It may be useful, as well, to recall a statement attributed in its classical form to Alexandre Dumas: “Africa begins at the Pyrenees.” The sacrosanct West thus shows its repugnance toward the other, which is not itself, and finds the embodiment par excellence of this other in Africa, whose tortured present was caused by Western capitalism, which “underdeveloped” it in order to make its own growth possible.

By taking offense at Dumas’s statement, 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 fact Spain’s capital sin was the doctrine of “purity of blood.” Reality is always much more lively and instructive than those who are quick to lash out against what they consider an offense to their honor would normally imagine. The real history of Spain, not the one composed of official texts filled with empty rhetoric, shows us the utter 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, and assimilated a Religion that was destined, after 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 unmask the genial fraud implicit in this history appropriated by the developed Western bourgeoisie, it is Spain—a fact that no doubt has contributed in no small measure to the denigration it has suffered at Western hands. I do not pretend to be an expert on the matter, but common knowledge is sufficient 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 peninsula, thus preserving the purity of the Christian faith and keeping the contagion of Muslim barbatism from Europe, a much richer truth can be registered: Christians, Moors, and Jews, all

* Antonio Machado (1875–1939), Spain’s greatest modern poet and a defender of the Second Spanish Republic, died in exile in France at the conclusion of the 1936–1939 Civil War.—Trans.
equally Spanish, lived side by side for more than seven centuries, mutually and fruitfully influencing each other, as América Castro has explained in his controversial book. In that process, "one could never . . . state that what was Spanish was either European or Eastern." Moreover,

Pressed by the charge of Islam and by French ambitions, Castile cultivated the clever, energetic style of a fencer, a master of thrusts and parries. The pressure of living under the threat of the world's highest civilization from the ninth to the twelfth centuries lead Castile to delegate to the Moors and Jews under its rule those tasks involving the world of things, technical prowess and sustained thought.18

Almost at the same time that Castro's book was published, Menéndez Pidal wrote:

Although Southern Spain, Al-Andalus, developed a version of Islam that was highly Hispanicized in its customs, art, and ideology, it remain cut off from Europe and tied to the Afro-Asian cultural orbit. Northern, European Spain, although unyielding in its Christianity, fell under the influence of the south at a time when Arab culture was far superior to Latin culture, and thus it fulfilled the high historical destiny of acting as a link between the two orbits, East and West.19

Spain, in other words, was the conduit through which the influence of Arab civilization—"the world's highest . . . from the ninth to the twelfth centuries"—and Arab culture—"far superior to Latin culture"—entered Europe and brought new life to the still pallid European cultural world. This influence made itself felt in its philosophy, its literature, its science, its technology, its agriculture, its customs, in Aquinas, and in Dante. As the Spanish priest Miguel Asín Palacios pointed out, "Our nation can justly claim for some of its Muslim thinkers no small measure of the glory that criticism the world over has showered on Dante Alighieri's immortal work."20

But Spain was not only the "link between Christendom and Islam," as Menéndez Pidal put it. Because of the breadth of the Islamic world, Spain's function as a bridge was even more important for Europe, which gained access to the achievements of Greece, Persia, and India that the Arabs had assimilated. Think of the short story or of mathematics: remember the zero, an Indian invention that entered Europe through Arab Spain; the arithmetic book written at the caliph's urging by the ninth-century Persian Al-Khuwarizmi, who gave his name to our numbers (algorismo in old Spanish; guarismo in modern). José Luciano Franco notes, in addition:

The primitive Iberians were Negroid . . . From the Capsian peoples of the Moghreb came the immigrants who populated Iberia many millennia prior to our era; and it is the primitive Iberians who, in their traditional contact with the peoples of its own ethnic group who stayed in Africa, gave birth to a phenomenon of transculturation that continued for more than twenty centuries and culminated with the Arabs, the Berbers, and the Sephardic Jews.21

It follows that, of the Spaniards singled out "for their cultural and linguistic traits as Arabs or Muslims" who were expelled with the Sephardic Jews in 1492, many were "in fact, Africans, mainly Berbers and Blacks."22

If we take all this into account, then it is not only Africa that, fortunately, begins at the Pyrenees but Asia as well. 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 the fact 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 egalitarianism took hold among the slaves of the Roman Empire—just as, in Engels's classic analogy, socialism later would take hold among the new slaves of European capitalism,23 then it becomes clear to what extent the West's idea of itself as a new "chosen people" is as false as similar ideas have been throughout history. Alejo Carpentier's likes to evoke the sad fate of the Carib people, a proud and bellicose community that extended from the shores of the Orinoco to the sea to which it gave its name (and its bones, to the cry of "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 swords proved to be just as fragile as the arrows, war cries, and aboriginal canoes of the people they conquered. The implacable march of full capitalist development pushed aside Spain and her history, despite its debts to Spain (including her philosophical, artistic, scientific, technological, and juridical legacy to Europe) and her role as the vanguard of Europe's penetration of the New World (which, through her bloody extraction of gold and silver, generated the "primitive accumulation" destined to pass into the greedy hands of those Genoese and German bankers fond of referring sarcastically to the arrogant Spanish noblemen as "our Indians"). In spite of everything, Pierre Vilar reminds us that

Vélazquez's Spain was still, however, an influential nation; it was the inspiration for France's grand siècle, and Castilian around 1650 was everywhere the language of civilisation. On the Isle of Pheasants (in the tapestry of Versailles) the august distinction of the Castilian court outshines the tasteless display of Louis XIV and his following. It was to be a long time before the nouveaux riches of England, the Low Countries and France herself could bring themselves to pardon Spain.24

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66__ AGAINST THE BLACK LEGEND

*Alejo Carpentier (1904–1989), Cuba's most important novelist, he was, in addition, an excellent essayist and musicologist. His work is amply available in English._—Trans.
They were to "pardon" Spain with the Black Legend.

If it is 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 at first sight that the legend still has currency in sectors considered part of the Western Left, where one would expect a more reasoned judgment of history. That this is so, nevertheless, exemplifies the sort of paternalistic European leftist who, as Jacques Arnault remarks, "denounces colonialism, but his hair stands on end when he finds the same denunciation in the writings of a colonial." 25

As a case in point, consider a classic representative of a certain 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: "When I first went to Cuba, I remember that one of the Cubans' chief concerns was to resuscitate their old culture, which unfortunately is Spanish, to guard against the absorbing influence of the United States." 26 One might think that Sartre is referring to the present situation of Spanish culture, which is lamentable indeed; but no, he speaks explicitly of "their old culture, which unfortunately is Spanish." Why insist on the obvious oversights? The old culture could be the native American, or the African, or the Creole, but not for Sartre it is the old Spanish culture that is "unfortunate." In the countries that have risen out of colonialism, the old culture, if we omit as Sartre does the extra-European component, can only be the culture of the respective colonizers. Why the devil would we be more fortunate if our 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 in such remarks than subscribing to the Black Legend. The most important and definitive thing is that those countries born of colonialism, Cuba among them, have not only our respective old cultures but a new, revolutionary culture that we are creating together as well.

Jean-Jacques Fol offers another minor example of this same phenomenon in his evaluation of Las Casas. "No doubt," he writes, "Bolivar called Las Casas 'the Apostle of America,' and Marti sang his praises. But does this really suffice? Should we not be more farsighted?" Seeing farther than Bolivar and Marti is quite a task. Here is the mouse that the mountain of Monsieur Fol's "long view" brings forth: "After all, Father Las Casas's defense of America was accomplished to the detriment of Africa, and the salvation of the Indians was made possible by the arrival of slaves brought from Africa." 27 If this gentleman's ignorance were not as great as his telescopic fatuity, he would have needed only to have looked at a few maps of America (like the ones in Manuel Gafich's essay "El indio y el negro, ahora y antes" [Indians and Blacks, Then and Now] to learn that where the "salvation of the Indians" occurred (the Mesoamerican plateau, the Andean sierra, etc.) are precisely the regions into which African slaves were not brought. 28 Rather, they were brought to work on the plantations of the coastal lowlands where the Indian had already been exterminated. But above all, Fol should have known that such a calumny against Las Casas, one of the noblest figures in human history, represents a base and reactionary canard. As Fernando Ortiz wrote back in 1938:

Against Las Casas there was a dual desire, first, to erase from living memory the name of the man who criticized the barbarism of the conquest and destruction of the West Indies and, at the same time, when his name inevitably was brought up, to denigrate him, attributing to him the initiative for the slave trade... This was the outrageous calumny that the defenders of Spanish colonialism and slavery hurled at him. 29

Ortiz would return to this question several times (as would such excellent and responsible scholars as Silvio Zavala and Juan Comas), especially in a definitive study, "La 'leyenda negra' contra Fray Bartolomé" [The 'Black Legend' against Father Bartolomé]. 30 It is true that in the course of his dramatic and exemplary evolution, in which there was no lack of self-criticism, Las Casas, as was normal at that time among the Spaniards who had come to America, possessed detachments of commandeered Indian laborers (encomiendas)—before he became an impassioned defender of the Indians. And like everyone else at the time, including Thomas More in his projected Utopia of 1516, he believed slavery (both black and white, with no racial distinction) to be natural—before he committed himself to the impassioned defense of the blacks. But only a malicious, unhappening ignoramus would accuse Las Casas of being an encomendero, or a slaver, or of being anti-Indian or anti-black. Las Casas was not born Las Casas; like everyone else, he became who he was, although very few people achieved as much as he did. With full knowledge of the great Dominican's work and with the authority that his formidable scholarship on Cuba's African heritage confers upon him, Fernando Ortiz concluded his essay on Las Casas with these words:

If Las Casas can be called "the Apostle of the Indians," he was also "the Apostle of the Blacks." History challenges his enemies to show texts in support of black slaves, against their capture in Africa and their transportation across the seas, their exploitation in America and their cruel treatment everywhere, that predate, and are more vivid and conclusive than, the writings of the great Spaniard, Bartolomé de las Casas. 31

To this challenge, of course, Las Casas's detractors have as yet made no reply, which has not prevented them from spreading the nonsense that Monsieur Fol
Spain's future. The survival of an archaic ideology embodied in an obscurantist Catholicism set bourgeois modernization against the straitjacket of the Counter-Reformation, causing the retardation (and even loss) of the scientific knowledge that was indispensable for the bourgeoisie (though not for feudal society). In spite of efforts at reform in the eighteenth century, the outlook was grim at the beginning of the nineteenth, and Latin Americans could not fail to resent it bitterly. Upon returning from his journey to Spain in 1846, Sarmiento would write with his habitual rudeness: "[At present] you [Spaniards] have no authors, no writers, no men of learning, no economists, no politicians, no historians, nor anything of the sort"; and in 1890, writing about the poet Sellés, Martí would state, "The Spanish-speaking peoples get nothing from Spain but rehashes." This is not necessarily a concession to the Black Legend but rather fidelity to the sad facts. The best Spaniards, from Larra to Costa, said exactly the same thing. This is how a modern historian, Tuñón de Lara, describes the Spain from which Spanish America broke away:

Spain was, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a country that lived within the bounds of what has been called the ancien régime, that is, an overwhelmingly agrarian country dominated by large holding and seigneurial ownership, where the nobility and the church held most of the sources of wealth. . . . The vestiges of feudalism were so marked that, in many instances, ownership of land included the power of life and death over the villagers and peasants living on it.

And, according to Roberto Mesa, "Nineteenth-century Spain is one great museum piece, the executor of the empire's last will and testament." What is more, given the annulment of the relative revival experienced between 1898 and the Civil War, Franco's Spain, "beyond all timelessness, fashionable technocracy, and the consumer society, is an immense grotesquerie [esperpento] that ranges from Goya's etchings to Valle-Inclán's [bemedaled military men]."

This awful historical situation, this structural backwardness of a European country that never underwent a bourgeois revolution and remained overwhelmed by feudal remnants, explains the generally low level of its theoretical disputes, a fact that Cajal alluded to. Beginning in the period when decadence is there for

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* Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888), Argentine writer, politician, and historian, author of Facundo o civilización y barbarie (Facundo: civilization or barbarism) (1945). He was president of Argentina from 1868 to 1874. — Trans.

* Joaquín Costa (1844–1911), Spanish scholar, educator, and political reformer, he argued vigorously for the Europeanization of Spain. — Trans.

* Ramón María de Velázquez (1866–1936). A bohemian novelist and playwright and Spain's most inspired modernist, he pitilessly satirized official Spain in his esperpentos, or grotesqueries. — Trans.

* Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934). A Spanish biologist, he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1906 for his research on the human nervous system. — Trans.

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parrots, thus fueling the howling ultrareactionaries and helping to prolong the Black Legend against Father Bartolomé. 32

**Spain's Decadence**

A point that I neither can nor wish to gloss over is the hoary cliché of Spain's decadence. That decadence is an incontrovertible fact but one that has nothing to do with supposed defects immanent to "Spanishness." The decline of an empire, which Spain would be the first modern nation to experience, had happened before and there would be other instances, such as Portugal, Holland, France, and even England—"the Queen of the Seas"—back in our childhood, today a provincial lady more closely resembling Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. As each old empire declined, the new imperial power, the Yankee Empire, rushed helpfully and, by hook or by crook, tried to inherit the former colonies. It wrested Puerto Rico and the Philippines from Spain; from France and Portugal it tried to inherit Indochina and Angola. As we know, the people of those countries have something else in mind.

The reasons for Spain's decline are well known, although some of them are still debated. 33 A series of disasters, such as the expulsion of the Jews and Moriscos and the crushing of the comuneros at Villalar by Charles V, stifled the growth of the bourgeoisie and led to the recrudescence of feudalism that Ferdinand and Isabella had endeavored to check. The arrival of fabulous amounts of American treasure, in the absence of groups able to turn it into capital, sealed this regression. Pierre Vilar explains:

> The triumph of the cristiano viejo implied a certain contempt for money-making, even for the production of goods, and a certain attraction to the caste system. In mid-sixteenth century, the gilds began to oblige their members to prove their limpieza de sangre—a poor apprenticeship for entry into the capitalist age. . . . For some, the 'Indian gold' served in itself to ensure Spanish hegemony—for others it is the root cause of Spanish decadence. . . . The profits were not 'invested' in the capitalist sense of the term, and the fortunate emigrants dreamed of buying land, of building 'castles' and of amassing treasure. The drama and the Quixote record this attitude in the peasant and the noble. . . . Recent pronouncements make a virtue out of Spain's incompatibility with capitalism, but this has condemned the country to inefficiency. 34

This defeat of the bourgeoisie, this persistence of feudal structures, marked

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* Charles V (1500–1558) was the first Spanish Hapsburg. Shortly after assuming the Spanish throne in 1517, he provoked an armed rebellion of the Castilian cities, the comunidades. The rebels, or comuneros, were crushed by the royal armies at Villalar in 1521. — Trans.
all to see, many of her best thinkers became entangled in endless squabbles over the need to Europeanize Spain.\textsuperscript{38} This, naturally, meant different things in different circumstances and generally lead to confused propositions, even in men as energetic and clear-minded as Costa. Consider, for example, the contradictory Unamuno,\textsuperscript{39} who in En torno al casticismo [Regarding Spanishness] (1895) subscribed to Costa's quite reasonable thesis only to go to the other extreme, seeing some things clearly but irrationally closing himself off to others; or think of the Westernized Ortega,\textsuperscript{40} a classic case of what Machado called "the tragic frivolity of our reactionaries"; or consider those who, at present, believe that a Spain yoked to the interests of the transnationals will be modernized. Plainly, Spain is in urgent need of modernization, but it will not be achieved through "Europeanization" or "Westernization." The latter, as Spanish America showed, can lead only to neocolonialism. Real modernization will come from profound structural change, with the revolution for which Costa cried out in anguish. But it will not be the bourgeois democratic revolution that he championed. It will move forward toward the socialist revolution prefigured in the Republic of 1936–39, which will turn Spain not into a Western but rather a post-Western country, just as in Russia in 1917 and Cuba in 1959. There is no Western (that is, developed capitalist) future for Spain. Today it is a paleo-Western country; in the future—soon, we hope—it will be a post-Western one.

Our Spain

This economically underdeveloped and, until recently, politically shackled Spain is a country that we Spanish Americans can only consider it: is a country like ours. Its tormented past is also, in a way, ours; its sad present is similar to that of many of our countries (especially now that fascism is attempting to expand on our continent). Its future is very much our concern. With great pain, we see the descendants of harmonious Indo-American and African societies doing the hardest jobs in today's capitalist world. The destiny of the poor descendants of Spain's ruinous grandeur is scarcely different: those who do not languish in their own country are servants in France, miners in Belgium, unskilled workers in West Germany. This too gives us pain.

Fortunately, our hope of eventually seeing a revolutionary and victorious Spain is not based on mere sentimental illusions. Marx pointed out at the middle

of the nineteenth century that "Napoleon, who, like all his contemporaries, considered Spain a lifeless corpse, was given a deadly surprise on discovering that, although the Spanish state was dead, Spanish society was everywhere full of life and bursting with the force of resistance."\textsuperscript{41} Forty years ago this fact was proven again: the glow of that example, which illuminated my childhood, has not been extinguished. Savage attack by the Fascist blitzkrieg that was later to cut through Europe like a knife through butter only to come to ruin against the magnificent Soviet people, Spain showed for three unforgettable years, from 1936 to 1939, how much it was still "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 some of their finest poems in homage to the Spanish people's resistance: "Children of the world: / mother Spain is shouldering its womb," wrote impassioned César Vallejo. And there too, a symbol of our common destiny, rests the generous Pablo de la Torriente Brau, "the sun of Spain in his face / and Cuba's in his bones," as his brother, Miguel Hernández would write.

Is it really necessary to insist on the intimacy we now feel and always will feel for this other Spain, the Spain where Las Casas and the great Dominicans of the sixteenth century, "the most brilliant moment of hispanic anticolonialist thought,"\textsuperscript{42} nobly defended the first Americans; the Spain of thinkers (even though many of them were forced to work outside Spain) like Vives and the Erasmists,\textsuperscript{43} of Servet, Huarie, Suárez, Sánchez, Férjon, Cadalso, Jovellanos, Blanco-White—and, for that matter, after the Independence of nearly all of Spanish America, Larra, Pi y Margall, the Krausists,\textsuperscript{44} Costa, Pablo Iglesias, Cajal, some of the Generation of 1898\textsuperscript{45} and above all Antonio Machado; the Spain whose people, in a dramatic undertaking, engendered the rebellious descendants of our America; the Spain of the comuneros, the guerrillas who fought Napoleon, the corts of Cadiz, Riego and the Institución Libre de Enseñanza; the Spain of workers, peasants, and thinkers; the Spain that fought magnificently for all of humankind from 1936 to 1939 and lost once again? With the eyes of this Spain we can look upon the members of an extraordinary and complex family: the art of Arab Spain, the Poem of the Cid, Don Juan Manuel, the Archpriest of Hita, the Celestina, the medieval ballads and the picaroesque novel, Garcielo, Fray Luis, Ercilla, Saint Theresa, Saint John of the Cross, Góngora, Cervantes, Balbuena, Quevedo, Lepe, Tirso, Ruiz de Alarcón, Calderón, Saavedra Fajardo, Gracián, El Greco, Velázquez, Moratin, Goya, Quintana, Espronceda, Bécquer.

\textsuperscript{38} Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936). A Spanish writer, poet, philosopher, and educator, he was considered the moral voice of early twentieth-century Spain. Many of his more important essays have been translated into English. —Tran.

\textsuperscript{39} José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955). The most influential Spanish philosopher of the twentieth century, he was a Nietzschean elitist who, in 1923, founded a monthly journal, the Revista de Occidente [Occidental Review]. —Tran.

\textsuperscript{40} César Vallejo (1892–1938), the Peruvian poet, wrote the finest poetry to come out of the Spanish Civil War, his posthumous España, aparta de mi este círculo (1939) Spain, Take This Cup from Me, trans. Clayton Eshleman and José Rubis Baeza (New York, 1974). The Cuban poet, Pablo de la Torriente Brau, gave his life in 1936 fighting for the Spanish Republic. He was memorialized by a great Spanish poet, Miguel Hernández (1910–1942), who, in turn, was imprisoned by Franco at the conclusion of the Civil War in 1939 and died in jail three years later. —Tran.

Is there any earthly reason why those infected with the Black Legend should presume to tell us that the error and horrors of Spanish reaction require us to forget what—in a parallel line—is also our heritage, should presume to make us ashamed of it? What sense does it make to proclaim the whole of a country’s culture worthless because of the atrocities that certain sectors of that country once committed? Do we not admire Shakespeare, Shaw and Virginia Woolf in spite of the British Empire? Whitman, Twain, and Hemingway in spite of Yankee imperialism? Rebechis, Rimbaud, and Malraux in spite of French colonialism? Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky in spite of the Czars? Goethe, Heine, and Brecht in spite of nazism? Dante, Leopardi or Pavese in spite of Fascism. And even Kipling, Claudel, and Pound in spite of Kipling, Claudel, and Pound? The truth of the matter is that we are proud that what is Spanish is also ours: to do without it would not enrich us, it would leave us lamentably impoverished.

The exceptional case of José Martí suffices to demonstrate how the best of Spain’s cultural heritage, mixed in with others, was transfigured in an American oeuvre. As Noël Salomon has pointed out, it is evident no one else in our America could create a vision of our culture’s authenticity as encompassing and coherent; no one else could create an oeuvre as true to our aboriginal roots, as respectful of them and as loving, and as universally valid. No one was less likely to be blinded by the false and blinding light of an empire whose last chains he helped decisively to remove from our America. And yet, could a well-read reader fail to see that his modern, stylistically advanced, original, forward-looking work has its only artistic equivalent in the greatest writers of the Spanish Golden Age, writers whose work he knew and assimilated like no one else. Thus, Juan Marínelo could speak of “José Martí’s literary Spanisness.” Martí himself, referring to Quevedo, noted that “he plunged so far into the depths of the future that today we speak his language.”

It was Martí who in La edad de oro [The Golden Age] taught the children of his America to love and respect Las Casas, who was Spanish (“as were his father and his mother”), to not confuse him with “those murdering conquistadors who must have come from hell—rather than Spain,” who in his later years confessed:

Para Aragón, En España,
Tengo yo en mi corazón
Un lugar todo Aragón:

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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.

[For Spain’s Aragon
There’s a place in my heart
That’s all Aragon:
Frank, fierce, faithful, free of hate
I respect a man who
Slaps a tyrant to the ground:
I respect him if he’s Cuban;
I respect him if he’s Aragonese].

It was he who, while making ready for Cuba’s War of Independence, was able to distinguish between “the Spaniard who stores his treasure, which is his only country, back in Santander or Barcelona,” and “the simple, open Spaniard who loves liberty just as we do, whose country is justise,” the “good, liberal Spaniard . . . my Valencian friend, my montañés bondsman,” and exclaimed, “Let someone else attack these Spaniards: I will defend them all my life.” This man gave us a lasting lesson on the nature of the relation between Spain and America. Following in Martí’s footsteps and adding some of their own are Nicolás Guillén, author of the “The Surname,” the extraordinary and exemplary poem in which he evokes his “two grandfathers” (one African, the other Spanish); and Mirta Aguirre, who brought a superb Marxist perspective to the study of Cervantes, showing how our revolutionary scholars should study our enormous Spanish cultural heritage.  

And need we recall that when the legendary but utterly real hero of our America, Che Guevara, left Cuba to fight “in other lands,” he wrote that he felt “Rocinante’s ribs” under his heels? Frankly, and finally, I think Federico de Onís was right when he wrote: We may assume that, someday, everything Spain established in America will disappear, just like the political structure of its colonial organization and other things belonging to the past—which are gone from Spain, as well—but the seed that those Spaniards who had the will to be Americans planted, which doubtless was the deepest expressions of the Spanish people, which possessed the greatest strength of unity, universality, and liberty, which was best suited to changing and adapting to a new reality, that seed will survive whatever changes may take place on a continent whose destiny is forever to search for something greater.  

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1976
Notes

Preface


Caliban


2. José Vasconcelos, La raza cósmica [The Cosmic Race] (1925). A Swedish summary of what is known on this subject can be found in Magnus Mörner's study, La mezcla de razas en la historia de América Latina, [The Mixture of Races in the History of Latin America], Jorge Patiogorsky (Buenos Aires, 1969). Here it is recognized that "no part of the world has witnessed such a gigantic mixing of races as the one that has been taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean [Why this division?] since 1492." (15). Of course, what interests me in these notes is not the irrelevant biological fact of the "races" but the historical fact of the "cultures"; see Claude Lévi-Strauss, Race et histoire [Race and History] (Paris, 1968).


4. La carta de Colón anunciando el descubrimiento del nuevo mundo, 15 de febrero—14 de marzo 1493 [Columbus's Letter Announcing the Discovery of the New World, 15 February—14 March 1493] (Madrid, 1956), 20.

5. Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, "El Nuevo Mundo, la Isla de Utopía y la Isla de Cuba" [The New
World, the Island of Utopia, and the Island of Cuba, Casa de las Américas 33 (November–December 1965); this issue is entitled Homenaje a Ezquiel Martínez Estrada.

7. Ibid.
9. For example, Jan Kott notes that “there have been learned shakespearean scholars who tried to interpret The Tempest as a direct autobiography, or as an allegorical political drama” (Shakespeare, Our Contemporary, trans. Boleslaw Taborski, 2d ed. [London, 1967], 240).
12. Lidón, Paul, Les écrivains contre la Commune, 82.
13. Cited by Aimé Césaire in Discours sur le colonialisme [An Address on Colonialism], 3d ed. (Paris 1955), 13. This is a remarkable work, and I have made extensive use of its main ideas in this essay (A part of it has been translated into Spanish in Casa de las Américas 36–37 [May–August 1966] an issue dedicated to Africa en América [Africa in Latin America]).
15. See Roberto Fernández Retamar, “Modernismo, noventiocio, subdesarrollo” [Modernism, the Generation of 1898, Underdevelopment], paper read at the Third Congress of the International Association of Hispanics, Mexico City, August 1968; collected in Ensayos de otro mundo [Essays on a Different World], 2d ed. (Santiago, 1969).
16. Quoted in José Enrique Rodó, Obras completas [Complete Works], ed. Finir Rodríguez Moregal (Madrid, 1957), 193; this volume will hereafter be cited by page number in the text.
18. José Vasconcelos, Índolo [Indology], 2d ed. (Barcelona, n.d.), XXIII.
20. The penetrating but negative vision of Jan Kott causes him to be irritated by this fact. “Rezan saw Demon in Caliban; in his continuation of The Tempest he took him to Milan and made him attempt another, victorious coup against Prospero. Guéhènos wrote an apology for Caliban-People. Both these interpretations are flat and do not do justice to Shakespeare’s Caliban” (Shakespeare, Our Contemporary, 273).
29. The new reading of The Tempest has become a common one throughout the colonial world of today, I want only, therefore, to mention a few examples. On concluding these notes, I find a new one in the essay by James Ngugi (of Kenya), “Africa et la decolonization culturel” [Africa and Cultural Decolonization], in El correo (January 1971).
30. “It is improper,” Benedetti has said, “to confront Rodó with present-day structures, statements, and ideologies. His time was different from ours... his true place, his true temporal homeland was the nineteenth century” (Genio y figura de José Enrique Rodó, 128).
31. Ibid., 109. Even greater emphasis on the current validity of Rodó will be found in Arturo Ardoino’s book Rodó: Su americansmo [Rodó: His Americanism] (Montevideo, 1970), which includes an excellent anthology of the author of Ariel. On the other hand, as early as 1928, José Carlos Maríaategui, after rightly recalling that “only a socialist Latin or Ibero-America can effectively oppose a capitalist, plutocratic, and imperialist North America,” adds, “The myth of Rodó has not yet acted—nor has it ever acted—usefully and fruitfully upon our souls” (“Universario y un balance” [An Anniversary and a Balance] in Ideología y razón [Ideology and Politics] [Lima, 1969], 248).
33. Ibid., 15.
34. See Erasmo Dumplie, Mella (Havana, c. 1965), 145; see also José Antonio Portuondo, “Mella y los intelectuales” [Mella and the Intellectuals] [1963], which is reproduced in Casa de las Américas, no. 68 (1971).
38. See Kott, Shakespeare, Our Contemporary, 269.
41. Ivan Schulman (Martí, Casal y el modernismo [Martí, Casal, and Modernism] [Havana, 1969]92) has discovered that it had been previously published on 10 January 1891, in La Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York.
43. Noetades, this should not be understood to mean that I am suggesting that those authors who have not been born in the colonies should not be read. Such a stipidity is untenable. How could we propose to ignore Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Whitman, to say nothing of Marx, Engels, or Lenin? How can we forget that even in our own day there are Latin American thinkers who have not been born here? Lastly, how can we defend intellectual Robinson Crusoe at all without falling into the greatest absurdity?
44. José Martí, "Autores aborígenes americanos" [1884], in Obras completas, 8:236-37; hereafter cited as "AAA." in the text.
46. José Martí, "Fragmentos" [Fragmentos] [1885-95], in Obras completas, 22:27.
47. Ibid., 28-29.
48. See, for example, José Martí, "Mi raza" [My Race] in Obras completas, 2:298-300, where we read:

An individual has no special right because he belongs to one race or another: to speak of a human being is to speak of all rights. . . . If one says that in the black there is no aboriginal fault or virus that incapacitates him from leading his human life to the full, one is speaking the truth, and if this defense of nature is called racism, the name does not matter; for it is nothing but natural decency and the voice crying from the breast of the human being for the peace and life of the country. If it be alleged that the condition of slavery does not suggest any inferiority of the enslaved race, since white Gauls with blue eyes and golden hair were sold as slaves with iron rings around their necks in the markets of Rome, that is good because it is a just punishment and helps to remove the prejudices of the ignorant white man. But there righteous racism ends.

And further on, "A human being is more than white, more than mulatto, more than black. Cuban is more than white, more than mulatto, more than black." Some of these questions are stated in H. J. Chisholm's paper, "A discriminación racial en los Estados Unidos visto por José Martí," [Racial Discrimination in the United States as seen by José Martí], Anuario martiano (Havana, 1971), which I was unable to use, since it appeared after these notes were completed.
49. See Casa de las Américas 36-37 (May-August, 1966), a special issue entitled Africa en América [Africa in Latin America].
50. I refer to the dialogue within Latin America itself: the despicable opinion that America earned in Europe's eyes can be followed in some detail in Antonio Gómez's work, La disputa del Nuevo Mundo: Historia de una polémica, 1750-1900 [The Dispute over the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900], trans. Antonio Alatorre (Mexico City, 1960).
51. José Martí, "Una Distribución de diplomos en un colegio de los Estados Unidos" [Graduation Day at a School in the United States] [1884], in Obras completas, 7:442.
52. Retamar, Ensayo de un otro mundo (see n. 15 above), 15.
53. "Sarmiento, the real founder of the Republic of Argentina," Martí says of him, for example, in a letter dated 7 April 1887 to Fermin Valdés Domínguez, shortly after a warn literary eulogy that the Argentinians had publicly made to him (Obras completas, 20:325). Nevertheless, it is significant that Martí, always so mindful of Latin American values, did not publish a single work on Sarmiento, not even on the occasion of his death in 1888. It is difficult not to relate this silence to Martí's oft-reiterated criterion that silence was his way of censoring.
54. Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, "El colonialismo como realidad" [Colonialism as a Reality], Casa de las Américas 33 (November-December 1965): 85. These pages originally appeared in his book Diferencias y semejanzas entre los pueblos de la América Latina [Differences and Similarities Among Countries of Latin America] (Mexico City, 1962) and were written in that country in 1966; that is to say, after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, that led Martínez Estrada to make considerable restatements of his ideas. See, for example, his "Retrato de Sarmiento" [A Portrait of Sar-
Caliban Revisited

1. That he is little-read in English can be gathered from Edward W. Said's article, "Swift as Intellectual," The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge, Mass. 1983). I can attest to the fact that in Spanish it is even more the case. I am, however, pleased to point out Beatriz Maggi's article on Swift, "Pamphlet and Literature," in Pamflet y literatura [Pamphlet and Literature] (Havana, 1982), from which I took the great Irish writer's epigraph.

2. Naturally, this does not imply the slightest disdain toward children's literature; I simply wish to point out the transmutation of a work's meaning.


9. Julio Cortázar to Hydée Santamaría, 2 February 1972, Casa de las Américas 143–146 (July–October, 1984): 143, my emphasis. (The issue was in honor of our beloved Julio Cortázar on the occasion of his death.)

10. As is well known, Padilla and his wife, Belkis Curé, are involved in an active and clownish counterrevolutionary campaign outside of Cuba. It is less well known that comrades Díaz Martínez, César López and Pablo Armando Fernández—who were accused by Padilla—live and work under normal conditions in Cuba and frequently represent the country abroad.


13. Vargas Llosa: Contra viento y marea, 166.

14. The latter two pieces were lengthened and published with the respective titles "Introducción a José Martí" [Introduction to José Martí] and "Para leer al Che" [For a Reading of Che].

15. See Roger Tomson, "Caliban/Cannibale ou les avatars d'un cannibalicisme anarquistique," in Praxis Calibana, (Havana, 1981), 201–99. Although I do not deny the value that Tomson's research and speculations might have for other purposes, the use that Louis-Jean Calvet makes of my text in Linguistique et colonialisme. Petit traité de giotopagie. [Linguistics and Colonialism: A Short Treatise on Giotopagie] (Paris, 1974), 59, 223–24, is much closer to its original intent.

16. Emí Rodríguez Monreal, "Las metamorfosis de Caliban" [The Metamorphoses of Caliban], which appeared in English in the American academic journal Diacritics (no. 7 [1977]), and in Spanish in the Mexican political review Vuela.

17. Lamming's book The Pleasures of Exile, a second edition of which was published in London in 1984, merits far more attention than I could give it in 'Caliban.'


19. The best piece I've read on the political presuppositions of Borges's work is Julio Rodríguez-Luis's "La intención política en la obra de Borges: Hacia una visión de conjunto" [The Political Intention of Borges's Work: Toward an Overview], Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, no. 361–362 (July–August 1983).

21. These friends were, individually, John Beverley, Ambrosio Forner, and Desiderio Navarro; my thanks to them for the information. And see Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York, 1978).

Against the Black Legend

1. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "La unidad del idioma" [The Unity of the Language] [1944], in Castilla, la tradición, el idioma [Castile, the Tradition, the Language], 3d ed. (Madrid, 1955), 205–206.

2. Ibid., 192. On this question of the language, which has engendered so much nonsense on both sides of the Atlantic, see, in addition, Armando Alarcón, El problema de la lengua en América [The Problem of Language in America] (Madrid, 1935), and Cossettini, español, idioma nacional: Historia espiritual de tres nombres [Castilian, Spanish, National Language: The Spiritual History of Three Names] (Buenos Aires, 1943); and Angel Rosenthal, El castellano de España y el castellano de América: Unidad y diferenciación [Spanish's Castilian and America's Castilian: Unity and Differentiation] (Caracas, 1962). Rosenthal notes in his enjoyable essay that "as against the inevitable diversity of popular and familiar speech, learned speech in Spanish America is strikingly similar to that of Spain. The similarity seems far greater than that of United States English or Brazilian Portuguese to the language of the former metropolitan" (46).


4. Fernando Ortiz, 'La leyenda negra contra Fray Bartolomé' [The Black Legend Against Father Bartolomé], Cuadernos Americanos (September–October 1952): 146.


11. Quevedo, who was born in 1580, eight years before the defeat of the Invincible Armada, sensed the beginning of this process and reflected on it in his numerous, bitter, and genial work. In one of his best-known sonnets he wrote: "And it is far easier, oh Spain, in many ways, 'that what you alone seized from all, all in turn will seize from you alone.'" [Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas (1580–1645) was one of the greatest poets of the Siglo de Oro, the golden age of Spanish letters. — Translators' note.]

12. "In general, the concealed slavery of wage workers in Europe required, as a prop, slavery sans phrase—in the New World." (Marx, 'The So-called Primitive Accumulation,' in Capital, 1, 876.)

13. See Julián Juderías, La leyenda negra: Estudios acerca del concepto de España en el extranjero [The Black Legend. Studies on Foreign Countries' Idea of Spain] (Madrid, 1914), and Historia de la leyenda negra hispanoamericana [History of the Spanish-American Black Legend] (Madrid, 1944), for the Argentinian Rómulo D. Carbia. It is not by chance that right-wing extremists in Spain and many foreign reactionaries have yielded to this "defense" of Spain with the same zeal they usually employ to justify more "modern" depredations.

14. Lenin wrote in his Critical Remarks on the National Question (1913):
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28. Manuel Galich, “El indio y el negro, ahora y antes” [Indians and blacks, Then and Now], *Casa de las Américas* 35–37 (May–August 1966), a special issue on Africa in America.
29. Fernando Ortiz, prólogo a José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el Nuevo Mundo y en especial en los pueblos amerindio-hispánicos* [History of Black Slavery in the New World and especially in the Countries of Spanish America] (Havana, 1953), 13x.
30. See Ortiz, “La ‘leyenda negra’” (n. 4 above); see also Silvio Zavala, “Las Casas, esclavista?” [Las Casas, a Slaveholder?], *Cuadernos Americanos* (March–April 1944) and Joan Comas, “Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, el esclavista y el racismo” [Fray Bartolomé, Slavery and Racism], *Cuadernos Americanos* (March–April 1946).
32. Unfortunately, Menéndez Pidal has also repeatedly contributed to this anti-Las Casas legend in “¿Codicia insaciable? ¿Ilustrar la historia?” [Is Scalping Desirable? Illustrious Deeds?] (1940), in *La lengua de Cristóbal Colón: El estilo de Santa Teresa y otro estudio del siglo XVII* [The Language of Christopher Columbus. Saint Theresa’s Style and Other Studies on the Sixteenth Century] (Buenos Aires, 1982); “Vitoria y Las Casas” [Vitoria and Las Casas], (1956), and “¿Una norma normal del Padre Las Casas?” [An Abnormal Norm of Father Las Casas] in *El Padre Las Casas y la leyenda negra* [Father Las Casas and the Black Legend] (Madrid, 1958); and *El padre Las Casas: su doble personalidad* [Father Las Casas: His Dual Personality] (Madrid 1963); Menéndez Pidal compares Las Casas negatively to Hernán Díaz and Vitoria, and wildly accuses him of slander and of having “established, intensified and perpetuated the Black Legend” (El padre Las Casas y la leyenda negra, p. 11), and states that he was an anti-black, a slaver, and, finally, . . . paranoid. Lipschitz responded to the latter charge in “La paranoía y el historiador de los profetas” [Paranoia and the Historian of the Prophets], *Mars y Lenin en la América Latina* (see n. 6). On this and other historical points, the eminent philologist, otherwise the very soul of objectivity, proves to be the heir of that great Spanish humanist and polymath, Marcialino Menéndez y Pelayo. The latter’s sadly reactionary criteria do not, however, invalidate his enormous work which, despite its author’s ideology, should not be left in the hands of Spanish reactionaries. It is still an arsenal of the most varied thoughts. An attempt to distinguish between what is alive and what is dead in that great oeuvre was made by Guillermo de Torres in *Menéndez y Pelayo y las dos Españas* (Buenos Aires, 1943) (unfortunately, a rather poor attempt, due to the habitual superficiality of its author). After reading this little book, one is convinced of the importance of doing a more serious job on this matter.
33. See for example, J. Vicente Vives, ed., *Historia de España y América* [History of Spain and Latin America] (Buenos Aires, 1961), especially 3:250–386; and Le Riverend, “Problemas históricos de la conquista de América” [Historical Problems of the Conquest of America] (see n. 8 above).
34. Vilar, Spain, 27, 39, 46, 47.
35. In his spiritedly bookish youth, Menéndez Pelayo tried to deny this fact (see *La ciencia españo/a* [Spanish Science] [1876]). But in 1894 he already recognized the decadent state of Spanish science of his time (“Explotador y decadencia de la cultura científica española” [The Splendor and Decadence of Spanish Scientific Culture], in *Autobiografía del pensamiento de lengua española en la Edad Contemporánea* [An Autobiography of Contemporary Thought in the Spanish-Speaking World], ed. José Góes [Mexico City, 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, “has been poor and discontinuous, visibly backward in comparison to the rest of Europe, and, especially, of a deplorable theoretical wretchedness” (“Nuestro atraso cultural y sus causas pretendidas” [Our Cultural Backwardness and its Supposed Causes], in *El concepto contemporáneo de España* [The Concept of Spain] [1895–1931] [The Concept of Spain: An Anthology of Essays (1985–1931)], ed. Ángel del Río and M. J. Benardete [Buenos Aires, 1946], 46).

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38. In the Gaceta Antológica (see n. 35 above) there is a good overview of thought on Spain’s decadence and the independence movement in America.
40. Roberto Mesa, “Prólogo a la edición española” [Prologue to the Spanish Edition], in *El anticolonialismo europeo desde Las Casas a Marx* [European Anticolonialism from Las Casas to Marx], ed. Marcel Merle and Roberto Mesa (Madrid, 1972), 8. As high representatives of that “moment,” we must also mention the chroniclers of Indian cultures like Sahugán (*Crónicas de las culturas pre-colombinas* [Chronicles of Pre-Columbian Cultures], comp. and ed. Luis Nicolau d’Oliveira [Mexico City, 1963]).
43. Carlos Blanco Aguíniga has studied in a useful book, *Inventario del 98* [The Youth of the Generation of 1898] (Madrid, 1970), how the writers grouped under the label “the Generation of ’98” approached “the problem of Spain” between 1890 and 1905 from radical sociopolitical prospects that went from intramural federalism to Marxism (xii) and how in their capacity as petty-bourgeois intellectuals “acabarían volviendo, cada uno en su modo, a recogerse en el seno de la sociedad establecida” (“ended up returning, each in his own way, to take refuge in the bosom of established society”) (xii).
44. We do not mention Portugal here, despite its known contributions to world art and literature, because that country has suffered the lashing of the anti-Spanish Black Legend, a legend with a definite anti-Iberian form. Of course, we must not forget that “Portugal is not a Spanish problem, and it is as alien and as close to greater Spain as Poland is to Russia, Belgium to France . . . It is not part of either of the two Spain’s” (Fidelino de Figueiredo, *Las dos Españas* [see n. 16 above], 271, 276). The Black Legend has affected other peoples of the Iberian Peninsula, the Basque, Galician, Catalan, even more strongly. They were oppressed by a reactionary Casilian Spain, against which they have never tired of fighting in search of a just federal solution.
45. Juan Marínello, “Sobre Martí escritor: La españolidad literaria de José Martí” [On Martí the writer: The Literary Spanishness of José Martí], in *Vida y pensamiento de Martí: Homenaje a la ciudad de La Habana en el cincuentenario de la fundación del Partido Revolutionario Cubano, 1892–1942* [The Life and Thought of Martí: Homage to the City of Havana on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, 1892–1942] (Havana, 1942). Guillermo Díaz-Plaja could affirm of Martí, that he is a “gigante phenomenon of the Hispanic language, strong root of Rubén Darío’s prose, and, without doubt, the first ‘creator’ of prose in the Hispanic world” (Modernismo frente a novena y ochenta: Una introducción a la literatura española del siglo XIX [Modernism versus the Generation of 1898: An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Spanish Literature] [Madrid, 1951], 305).
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2. Ibid., 163.

3. Mario Benedetti, "La palabra, esa nueva cartuja" [Language, the New Carthusian] in Crítica cómplice [Compilicious Criticism] (Havana, 1971), 36, 37. These concepts can be found in other works by Benedetti.

4. See, for example, Roberto Fernández Retamar, Essay in Other World [Essay on Another World] (Havana, 1967); 2d rev. ed., Santiago, 1969; "Diez años de revolución: el intelectual y la sociedad" [Ten years of Revolution: The Intellectual and Society], Casa de las Américas 56 (September-October 1969), and separately in México, 1969; and "Colibrí" [Hummingbird] Casa de las Américas 68 (September-October 1971), and separately in several editions.

See, especially, Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Para una teoría de la literatura hispanoamericana" [Notes Toward a Theory of Spanish-American Literature], in "Para una teoría de la literatura hispanoamericana y otras aproximaciones" [For a theory of Spanish-American Literature and Other Essays] (Havana, 1975); and see David Maldavsky, Teoría literaria y problemas de América Latina [The History and Problems of Latin-American Literature] (Madrid, 1972), 46; hereafter cited by page number in the text.

9. See, for example, José Carlos Mariátegui, "El proceso de la literatura" [The Process of Literature], in Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana [Seven Interpretive essays on Peruvian Reality] (Havana, 1963), 213–18.

10. The founders of scientific socialism cautioned energetically against the error of ignoring concrete specificities. A Soviet scholar recently has recalled:

[It could be said that Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Illich Lenin spoke out repeatedly against the attempts to disfigure dogmatically certain postulates of scientific socialism regarding the general laws of historical development. For example, when criticizing the distinguished ideology of Russian populism N. Mikhailovsky for his false interpretation of Capital, Karl Marx wrote in a letter to the editor of the Russian journal Otechestvenniye Zapiski [Fatherland notes]: "He [Mikhailovsky] feels he absolutely must metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is forced to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself, in order that it may ultimately arrive at the form of economy which ensures, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social labor, the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. He is both honoring and shaming me too much."

[Marc to the Editorial Board of the Otechestvenniye Zapiski, November 1877, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, Lewis S. Feuer (Garden City, N.Y., 1959), 440–41]

Vladimir Illich Lenin pointed out later that the peculiarity of the historical situation on the eve of the October Revolution "offered us the opportunity to create the fundamental requisites of civilisation in a different way from that of the West-European countries." [V. I. Lenin, "Our Revolution (Apropos of N. Sukhanov's Notes)," in The Lenin Anthology, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1975), 705; Quo. in Nodari Simonian, "Proceso histórico del 'despertar de Oriente'" (The historical process of the 'awakening of the Orient') in the journal Ciencias Sociales (Social sciences) 3, no. 9 (1972): 207].

11. António Cláudio, "Literatura y subdesarrollo" [Literature and Underdevelopment], in América Latina en su literatura [Latin America in its Literature], ed. César Fernández Moreno (Mexico City, 1972), 340–342, 347. I do not think, however, that Cláudio is entirely correct in stating that "our literatures (like those of North America) are, basically, branches of metropolitan literatures" (344), unless he clarifies that always equivalo arboREAL metaphor "branch." It is evident that we are closely linked to those literatures, with their great creative moments: those moments are our tradition as well. But if Cláudio's statement was true for centuries, it can no longer be held that present-day North American literature is a 'branch' of present-day English literature or that present-day Spanish-American literature is a "branch" of present-day Spanish literature. I understand the acute Cláudio's words as a polemical challenge to insurgenst secessionists.

12. Ibid., 347.


14. More recent concepts of culture from a semiotic point of view can be found in Yuri Lotman, "El problema de una tipología de la cultura" [The Problem of a Typology of Culture], and Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, "Programación social y comunicación" [Social programming and communication], both in Casa de las Américas 71 (March–April 1972). A vivid idea of our culture and its relations will be found in Alejandro Carpenter, "De lo real maravillosamente americano" [On the Latin American Magically Real], in Tiempos y diferencias [Themes and Variations] (Mexico City, 1964); this piece appears under the title "De lo real maravillosamente americano" [On Latin American Magic Realism] in later editions (Havana, 1974, for example). See also Alejandro Lipschitz, Perfil de Indioamérica de nuestro tiempo: Antología, 1937–1962 [A Profile of Indo-America in Our Time. An Anthology, 1937–1962] (Havana, 1972), 92. In that capital book, Lipschitz combats the "disdain for non-European cultural facts which is the firm basis of Europe's cultural politics in Asia, Africa, Australia, and even Latin America" (93). For Lipschitz's idea of culture, see 40.


16. In our case powerful ironsculations, which have been studied by, among others, Fernando Ortiz (with regard to our African heritage) and Lipschitz (on native Americas).

17. Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Marx en su (tercer) mundo" [Marx in his (Third) World], Caba socialista 41 (January 1965): 55. This essay has been republished several times; see also the companion piece, "Notas sobre Marx, Lenin y la revolución anticolonial" [Notes on Marx, Lenin, and the Anticolonial Revolution], Casa de las Américas 59 (March–April 1970), where I sketch a parallel between our countries and the European periphery.


19. We would need a historical study of stadial regions of the kind posed by the Soviet historian Alexander Chistozvonov in "Estudio de las revoluciones burguesas europeas de los siglos XVI–XVII por estadías y regiones" [The Study of European Bourgeois Revolutions of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries by Stadia and Regions], Ciencias Sociales 4, no. 14 (1973). In his study "the stadial-regional form of capitalist development in Central and Eastern Europe," in whose revolutions "there also arose tasks of national liberation and apotitical tasks," he further contends that "more complex, mistaleted (and, for the present, little-known) connections are typical of the 'ibcompress cycle' of nineteenth-century revolutions and the revolutionary wars of liberation in the countries of

Latin America. We believe it is possible to relate the latter to the stadial type during the period of manufactures” (112–13).

21. See Alejandro Lipschutz, Marx y Lenin en la América Latina y los problemas indígenas [Marx and Lenin in Latin America and the Problems of Indigenous Peoples] (Havana, 1974), especially “Lenin y nuestros problemas latinoamericanos” [Lenin and our Latin American Problems]. In the early nineteenth century Alexander von Humboldt had already pointed out in passing that the “political and moral state” of “the Russian empire” had “many notable points in common” with New Spain [Entorno político sobre el reino de la Nueva España [A Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain].


23. Roberto Schwartz has done a good study of the functions of influences; see “DEPENDENCIA NACIONAL. Desplazamiento de ideologías — Sobre la cultura brasileña en el siglo XIX” [National Dependency: The Displacement of Ideologies — On Brazilian National Culture in the Nineteenth Century], Casa de las América (111–112, November–December 1973).

24. Vera Kuteishchikova, La novela mexicana: La formación, la originalidad, la etapa contemporánea [The Mexican novel: The Formation, the Originality, the Contemporary Period] (Moscow, 1971); and in “Valoración múltiple de la novela de la revolución Mexicana” [A Many-sided Evaluation of the Novel of the Mexican Revolution], forthcoming in Casa de las Américas.


26. Alfonso Reyes: El deslindar. Prolegómenos a una teoría literaria [The Line of Demarcation. Prolegomena to a Literary Theory] (Mexico City, 1944); all quotations are from this edition; hereafter cited as D. A new edition has been published in vol. 15 of Reyes’s Obras completas [Complete Works] (Mexico City, 1963), painstakingly compiled by Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, to which was appended Reyes’s “Apuntes para la teoría literaria” [Notes for Literary Theory]. As Mejía Sánchez states, Reyes’s “literary thought” is also to be found in, at very least, vol. 14 of his Obras completas [Complete works] (Mexico City, 1962), and in Al yume, 1944–1958 [At the Forge 1944–1958], (Mexico City, 1960).

27. Reyes was a precursor in more ways than one. For example, certain distinctions that at the time seemed excessively technical may now be compared with those proposed by Galvano della Volpe in his Crítica del gusto [Critique of Taste], 2d ed. (Milan, 1964); for instance, what Reyes called “colloquium” and “paraoccoquium” (D, 194) and what Della Volpe calls “univocality,” “equivocation,” “polysemic or polyseme,” (Critica, 121–22).

28. See an allusion to this point in Mejía Sánchez’s preface to the edition of El deslindar in the Obras completas, 15:9. José Antonio Portuondo’s review of the first edition of the book had already observed: “It would be proper to point out that this kind of phenomenological analysis bears no similarity to the procedures followed by the puritans of styletics” (“Alfonso Reyes y la teoría literaria” [Alfonso Reyes and the Literary Theory], in Concepto de la poesía [The Concept of Poetry], 3d ed. [Havana, 1972], 173).


31. Regarding this refusal, this defect, Kristyna Pomorska writes: “But the Opúsculo members never introduced the problem of evaluation into their system; to put it more categorically, they did not think that scholarly procedure should be an evaluative one at all. Indeed, they seem to accept silently the principle enunciated by Croce: that our evaluation of art is always and necessarily intuitive.” (Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalism and Structuralist Views, ed. Ladislav Matyka and Kristyna Pomorska [Cambridge, Mass., 1972], 275).


34. As András Gisselbrecht has pointed out. See “Masxismus und die literatur,” in Littratur und ideologie, special issue of La Nouvelle Critique no. 39 (1970): 33.

35. See Roberto Fernández Retamar, “A propósito de la Crítica de Martí” [With regard to the Criticism of Martí], in “Para una teoría de la literatura hispanoamericana” and otras aproximaciones, see n. 5 above, 29–49.


38. One of the finest of these “novels,” Adalberto Dessau, confesses that “such works [by Azuela, Guzmán, Vasconcelos, even Romero] are more like memoir than real novels” (La novela de la revolución Mexicana [The Novel of the Mexican Revolution] [Mexico City, 1972], 18).


40. Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Literary Currents in Hispanic America (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), 147.

41. José Martí, “Julian del Casal” in Essays sobre arte y literatura [Essays on Art and Literature], ed. Roberto Fernández Retamar (Havana, 1972), 234. In this brief text, Martí traces what would be the hallmark of “modernismo” (a term he does not use): “This literary generation, so like a [Latin] American family, began with decorative imitation and has gone on to free, concise elegance, and to the sincere, brief, finely wrought artistic expression of personal feeling and direct, truly native understanding.”

42. Tomás Navarro Tomás Mérica española: Reseña histórica y descriptiva [Spanish Prosody: A Historical and Descriptive Survey] (New York, 1956), 250–51. See also the worthwhile “Panorama histórico del género [the décima] en Espana e Hispanoamerica” [A Historical Overview of the Genre (the décima) in Spain and Spanish America], in the notable study by Ivette Jiménez de Bézé, La décima popular en Puerto Rico, [The Popular décima in Puerto Rico] (Xalapa, Veracruz [Mexico], 1964). Unfortunately, the author was unaware of Samuel Feijóo’s research on the popular Cuban décima, see, for example, Los trovadores del pueblo [The People’s Troubadours] (Santa Clara [Cuba], 1960).

43. Carlos H. Magis, La lírica popular contemporánea: España, México, Argentina [Contemporary Popular Lyric Poetry: Spain, Mexico, Argentina] (Mexico City, 1969), 526. Nevertheless, Carolina Pouchet (El romance en Cuba [The Spanish Medieval Ballad Form in Cuba] [1914; Havana, 1972]), takes the view that in the eighteenth century, Spanish popular poetry also made use of the décima, (20–21), and she cites in support of her argument a curious and incontroversial passage from the French traveler J. P. Bourgoing (21 n. 20).


45. Ponce, El romance en Cuba, 13, 15, 20, 26, and see 21 n. 20.
NOTE S TO PROBLEMS OF SPANISH-AMERICAN LITERATURE

46. In El "Martín Fierro" [On "Martín Fierro"] (Buenos Aires, 1953), Jorge Luis Borges cites Đànnaro's view of "Martín Fierro's monotonous déclina". Borges comments: "It may not be fruitless to point out that the 'monotonous déclina' ... are actually sextinas" (71-72). It is well known that sextinas belong to arte mayor [i.e., lines of verse longer than eight syllables].—Trans. note., so Borges is equally in error. The stanza in question is a sextina (see Eleuterio F. Tiscornia, La lengua de "Martín Fierro" [The Language of "Martín Fierro"] [Buenos Aires, 1930], 284), but of a kind so "original" ("there is no precedent for them in gauchy poetry"), that it is nothing other than a décima (a common enough stanza in gauchy poetry) with the first four lines removed, which leaves the fifth line (the first of the sextina) unshyzed. Đànnaro, then, was not quite as lost on this point as the always clever (and erroneous) Borges.


48. Of course our countries had novels before then, and even Arturo Torres Ríosco, reworking two previous books, brought out a work entitled Grandes novelistas de la América hispana [Great Novelists of Hispanic America] (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949). But Adalberto Dassu seems right in seeing our novels as "historical consciousness," when referring to the Spanish-American novel prior to the developments of recent years, he writes.

[The representative Latin American novels are rather lacking in the human dimension because, in a barely modified atmosphere of colonialism and feudalism, the authors themselves had not reached the stage in the process of individualization proper to the rise of bourgeois society ...] Many nineteenth- and even twentieth-century novels ... are actually essays in the sense that, given the lack of other forms and the immaturity of the genre, something that could better have been published as a pamphlet or an essay was given a novelistic 'film' form. "La novela latinoamericana como conciencia histórica" ("The Latin-American Novel as Historical Consciousness") in Actas del Tercer Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas (Proceedings of the Third International Congress of Hispanists) (Mexico City, 1970), 259.

49. See Caperon, Tientos y diferencias (see n. 14 above), especially "Problemática de la actual novela latinoamericana" ["Problems of the Present-Day Latin American Novel"].

50. Hays, "La poesía latinoamericana," 16 n. 36.

51. Schnelle, "Acera del problema de la novela latinoamericana" (see n. 1 above), 165-66 n. 1.

52. Dassu, La novela de la Revolución Mexicana, 266 n. 45.


57. For example, Raimundo Liéb's essay, "Periodos y generaciones en historia literaria" [Periods and Generations in Literary History] (L!letas hispánicas [Hispanic Letters], [Mexico City, 1958]) comments on the phenomenon of periodization—limited to European literatures—held in Amsterdam in 1935. José Luis Martínez touches on these and other problems in a more "general" way in...
class) which "tends to impose its corpus upon the dominated classes" (Une science du littérature est-elle possible? [Is a Literary Science Possible?] [Paris, 1972], 4–5. The development of metropolitan bourgeoisies explains the internal coherence of the respective literary corporuses; the meager development of our own bourgeoisies, the chaos of our literary corporuses. In Latin America we shall never achieve that form of literary organization from a bourgeois perspective.

71. Pedro Henríquez Ureña, "Caminos de nuestra historia literaria" [Paths of our Literary History] in Seis ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión [Six Essays in Search of Our Own Forms of Expression], also in Obras critiques [Critical Works], (Mexico City, 1960), 255. 

72. Camila Henríquez Ureña, (who was an adviser to the project from the outset) has given us an excellent overview of this collection in "Sobre la Colección Literatura Latinoamericana" [On the Colección Literatura Latinoamericana], Casa de las Américas 45 (November–December 1967); for a comparison with the Biblioteca Americana (in the planning of which Camila Henríquez Ureña, also participated), see 160.

73. On this matter, see, for example, Jaime Mejía Ducea, "El 'boom' de la narrativa latinoamericana" [The 'Boom' of Latin-American Narrative] in Narrativa y neocolonialismo en América Latina [Narrative and Neocolonialism in Latin America], (Bogota, 1972); and Mario Bevedetti, El escritor latinoamericano y la revolución posible [The Latin-American Writer and the Possible Revolution] (Buenos Aires, 1974), especially 157–155.

74. Alfonso Reyes, "Fragmento sobre la interpretación social de las letras iberoamericanas" [A Fragment on the Social Interpretation of Ibero-American Letters], in Marginalia, primera serie (Marginalia, first series) (Mexico, 1952), 154.


76. A correct way toward accomplishing that task can be found in the work of two young Cuban critics, Sergio Chaple (Rafael María de Mendive: Definición de un poeta [Rafael María de Mendive: Definition of a Poet] [Havana, 1973]), and Salvador Arías (Búsqueda y analítica [Search and Analysis] [Havana, 1974]).

77. An example of the integral criticism our literature needs is Antonio Cornejo Polar’s book Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas [The Narrative Universes of José María Arguedas] (Buenos Aires, 1973).


79. Vernier, Une science du littérature est-elle possible?, l. n. 67 (editorial note in La Nouvelle Critique, which published the essay).

80. See, for example, André Gisselbrecht, "Marxisme et théorie de la littérature" (see n. 34 above).

Prologue to Ernesto Cardenal


2. See Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Situación actual de la poesía hispanoamericana" [The present state of Spanish-American Poetry], Revista Hispánica Moderna 24, no. 4 (October 1958); Para el perfil definitivo del hombre [Towards a Definitive Profile of Man] (Havana, 1981).

3. The best of Cardenal’s collections would seem to be Poemas reunidos, 1949–1969 [Collected Poems 1949–1969], ed. António Cabral (Valencia, Venezuela), 1972). At the beginning of this book we find those words from Cardenal: "I have copied a great number of poems. I have corrected many of them. I have finished poems that had been in rough draft for years; I have dissipated a good deal of unpolished material." More up-to-date is Poesía [Poetry], ed. Cintio Vitier (Havana, 1979); unless expressly indicated, my citations of Cardenal are from this edition.

4. Ernesto Cardenal; "Ansios y lengua de la poesía nicaragüense" [Longings and Language in Nicaraguan Poetry], introduction to Nueva poesía nicaragüense, 67.


6. Merton states in his prologue that those poems are "a series of utterly simple poetic sketches with all the purity and sophistication that we find in the Chinese masters of the T'ang Dynasty." And he adds, "Never has the experience of novitate life in a Cistercian monastery been rendered with such fidelity, and yet with such reserve." Ernesto Cardenal," in The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton, ed. Patrick Hart (New York, 1981), 323.

7. This is José Coronel Urtecho’s expression for Rubén Darío in the former’s "Oda a Rubén Darío" (1925). In Nueva poesía nicaragüense, 249. Mejía Sánchez also uses it in his introduction.

8. Introduction to Epigramas (Epigrams), by Ernesto Cardenal (Mexico City, 1961).

9. Ernesto Cardenal, "La experiencia más importante" [The Most Important Experience], Casa de las Américas 70 (January–February, 1972), 182. Other interviews that are of interest for this subject can be found in the Cardenal miscellany La santidad de la revolución (The Sanctity of the Revolution) (Salamanca, 1976).


17. José Emilio Pacheco, "Nota sobre la otra guardería" [A Note on the Other Avant-Garde], Casa de las Américas 118 (January–February 1980).


20. The compiler of this anthology is among those who believe that literature alone, literature for literature’s sake, is useless. Literature must be of service. This is why literature must be political.
However, not political propaganda, rather, political poetry." (Ernesto Cardenal, Introduction to \textit{Poética Nicaragüense}, vii).

21. Ibid., viii; and see 67.

