

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 suggests 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 crudeness with respect to what Martí called “our *mestizo* America.” Although the thesis that every man and even 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 readjustments have been made. The white population of the United States (diverse, but of common European origin) exterminated 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 conglomerates—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 Tarzan 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 complex¹ 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 dire 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 aborigines, 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 *rioplatenses* appear to be less ethnically, 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 *linguas francas* 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."³ 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 *caniba* 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 [Quarives], the second upon entering the Indies, which is populated with people held by everyone on the islands to be very ferocious, and who eat human flesh."⁴

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—whom 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 *Taino* will be transformed into the paradisaical 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.⁵ 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 bourgeoisie 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 unflinchingly propose to countries emerging from colonialism magic formulas from the metropolis to solve the grave problems colonialism has left 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 whose fruits 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 aborigine 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' irremediable bestiality, there was no alternative to their extermination. What it does not explain is why even before the Caribs, the peaceful and kindly Araucos were also exterminated. Simply speaking, the two groups suffered jointly one of the greatest ethnocides 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 caníbales" [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."⁶

Giovanni Floro's English translation of the *Essays* was published in 1603. Not only was Floro 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 Floro'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,"⁷ 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 Marín, 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.⁸ 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,⁹ 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 1878.¹⁰ 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 ineptitude 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."¹¹ Beginning with this event, his antidemocratic feeling stiffened even further. "In his *Philosophical Dialogues*," Lidzky tells us, "he believes that the solution would lie in the creation of an *élite* of intelligent beings who alone would govern and possess the secrets of science."¹² Characteristically, Renan's aristocratic and prefascist 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.¹³

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 *declassé* nobleman, his heavy hand is better suited to handling the sword than the menial 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.*¹⁴

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, but it is also, and perhaps most importantly, a Latin-American date 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*.¹⁵ 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 contemplated 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 Calibanesque 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 Andrade, or Sousândrade, in whose strange poem, *O Guesa Errante*, stanza 10 is dedicated to “O inferno Wall Street,” “a *Walpurgisnacht* 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—whose 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* of 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 Romania, 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 parle* [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 burgués y humanismo proletario*. The book—which a student of Che’s thinking conjectures must have exercised influence on the latter²²—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.”²³ Ponce points up 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*.²⁴

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 "Prospero complex," defined as "the sum of those unconscious neurotic tendencies that delineate at the same time the 'picture' of the paternalist colonial and the portrait of 'the racist whose daughter has been the object of an [imaginary] attempted rape at the hands of an inferior being.'" ²⁵ In this book, probably for the first time, Caliban is identified with the colonial. But the odd theory that the latter suffers from a "Prospero 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:

Prospero [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 Prospero's enterprise, which makes Caliban aware of possibilities. Therefore, all of Caliban's future—for future is the very name of possibilities—must derive from Prospero's experiment, which is also his risk. Provided there is no extraordinary departure which explodes all of Prospero's premises, then Caliban and his future now belong to Prospero . . . Prospero 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.²⁶

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 impertinently says, with a kind of slaving 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.²⁷

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 Antillean 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.²⁸ 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, Eshzú, "a black god-devil" appears. Prospero's remark when Ariel returns, full of scruples, after having unleashed—following Prospero's orders but against his won 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, Simón 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 *Aleijadinho*, 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 Arguedas, Violeta Parra, and Frantz 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.³⁰ 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 ingenuousness [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 ingenuous, 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 ingenuous, 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-

tuales y tartufos” [Intellectuals and Tartuffes] (1924), a vehement work written at the age of twenty-one, Mella violently attacks the false intellectual values of the time—opposing them with such names as Unamuno, José Vasconcelos, Ingenieros, and Varona. He writes, “The intellectual is the worker of the mind. The worker! That is, the only man who in Rodó’s judgment is worthy of life. . . . he who takes up his pen against iniquity just as others take up the plow to fecundate the earth, or the sword to liberate peoples, or a dagger to execute tyrants.”³²

Mella would again quote Rodó with devotion during that year³³ and in the following year he was to help found the Ariel Polytechnic Institute in Havana.³⁴ It is opportune to recall that in this same year, 1925, Mella was also among the founders of Cuba’s first Communist party. Without a doubt, Rodó’s *Ariel* served as a “launching pad” for the meteoric revolutionary career of this first organic Marxist-Leninist in Cuba (who was also one of the first on the continent.)

As further examples of the relative validity that Rodó’s anti-Yankee argument retains even in our own day, we can point to enemy attempts to disarm such an argument. A strange case is that of Emir Rodríguez Monegal, for whom *Ariel*, in addition to “material for philosophic or sociological meditation, also contains pages of a polemic nature on political problems of the moment. And it was precisely this *secondary* but undeniable condition that determined its immediate popularity and dissemination.” Rodó’s essential position against North American penetration would thus appear to be an afterthought, a *secondary* fact in the work. It is known, however, that Rodó conceived it immediately after American intervention in Cuba in 1898, as a response to the deed. Rodríguez Monegal says:

The work thus projected was *Ariel*. In the final version *only two direct allusions* are found to the historical fact that was its primary motive force; . . . both allusions enable us to appreciate how Rodó has transcended the initial historical circumstance to arrive fully at the essential problem: the proclaimed decadence of the Latin race.³⁵

The fact that a servant of imperialism such as Rodríguez Monegal, afflicted with the same “Nordomania” that Rodó denounced in 1900, tries so coarsely to emasculate Rodó’s work, only proves that it does indeed retain a certain virulence in its formulation—something that we would approach today from other perspectives and with other means. An analysis of *Ariel*—and this is absolutely not the occasion to make one—would lead us also to stress how, despite his background and his antiJacobinism, Rodó combats in it the antidemocratic spirit of Renan and Nietzsche (in whom he finds “an abominable, reactionary spirit” [224]) and exalts democracy, moral values, and emulation. But undoubtedly the rest of the work has lost the immediacy that its gallant confrontation of the United States and the defense of our values still retains.

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."³⁶

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—*mambí*—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 *mambí*, they call us *black*; but we reclaim as a mark of glory the honor of considering ourselves descendants of the *mambí*, 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.³⁷

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.³⁸ There is no real Ariel-Caliban polarity: both are slaves in the hands of Prospero, the foreign magician. But Caliban is the rude and unconquerable 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 Césaire 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 1359, 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 no 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,⁴¹ 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 Ghirardo 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.”⁴² 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 Moncade 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 anticolonialist 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.⁴³ 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 infernal 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 gonzalos in their iron-plated armor.”⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵ Again making use of such heroes, he was to repeat sometime later: “We must stand with Guaicaipuro, 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.”⁴⁶ 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 "Ayachucho on the solitary plateau," on "Bolívar, like the rivers."⁴⁷

Martí, 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]

Martí'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 Calibanesque 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 em-

braces 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 congealed blood of the Indian race with a sentence of Sieyès"; 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 Incas 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 Incas 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-

fessions 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 "pretext that 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."⁵¹ 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"⁵² (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 aspects⁵³—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.⁵⁴

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 anti-indigenismo de Sarmiento" [The indigenism of Martí and the anti-indigenism of Sarmiento].⁵⁵ 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, Texcuco, 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 "bands 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 loathesome 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 armonías 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 coats. 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 seqoyism 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 purebred 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 Ultraism." 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 innumerable 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 out 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, "so 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 bourgeoisie could develop. Latin America was a late arrival to that fiesta, for as Mariátegui 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."⁶³

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 bourgeoisie, 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 diabolical 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 Péguy, 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 assem-

bled. 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 restoring 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!"⁶⁴ 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 economics—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."⁶⁵

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 obstreperously 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 manifesto its desire that Cuba be defeated by mercenaries in the service of imperialism was a group of Argentines centered around Borges.⁶⁶ 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 1959.⁶⁷

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 and 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 simplism to dialectical complexity" (13). "Epic simplism" was the nineteenth-century struggle in which, according to Fuentes, "the writer [he means writers *like him*] invariably stands on the side of civilization and 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 se 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 dissi-

pates 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 afoul 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 *uchronics*. 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 ideolization 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 concretion. 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

complicities. *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,⁷¹ whose ideological foundations are summed up by Fuentes's short book in a manner that the professorial weightiness of Emir Rodríguez 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."⁷² 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 conquistadores, 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 in itself new qualities. H₂O is not only a union of hydrogen and oxygen; it is, moreover, water.⁷³

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.⁷⁴

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 Túpac 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 multiseular 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."⁷⁵ 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, ephemerides. 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 Mariátegui,

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 but 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.⁸⁰ 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 incoherence. 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.⁸¹

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."⁸²

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 swan 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 1969.⁸³

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,⁸⁴ 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 revindication 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.⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶

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.

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—Translated by Lynn Garafola,

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