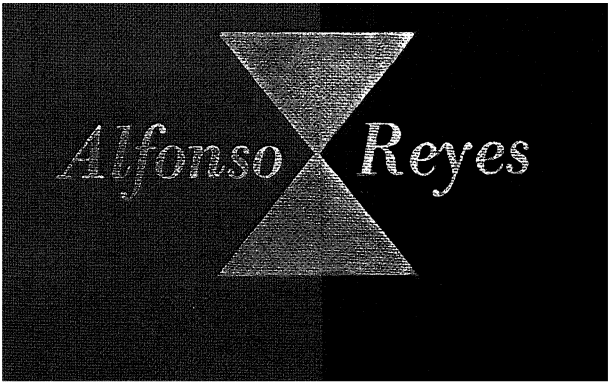
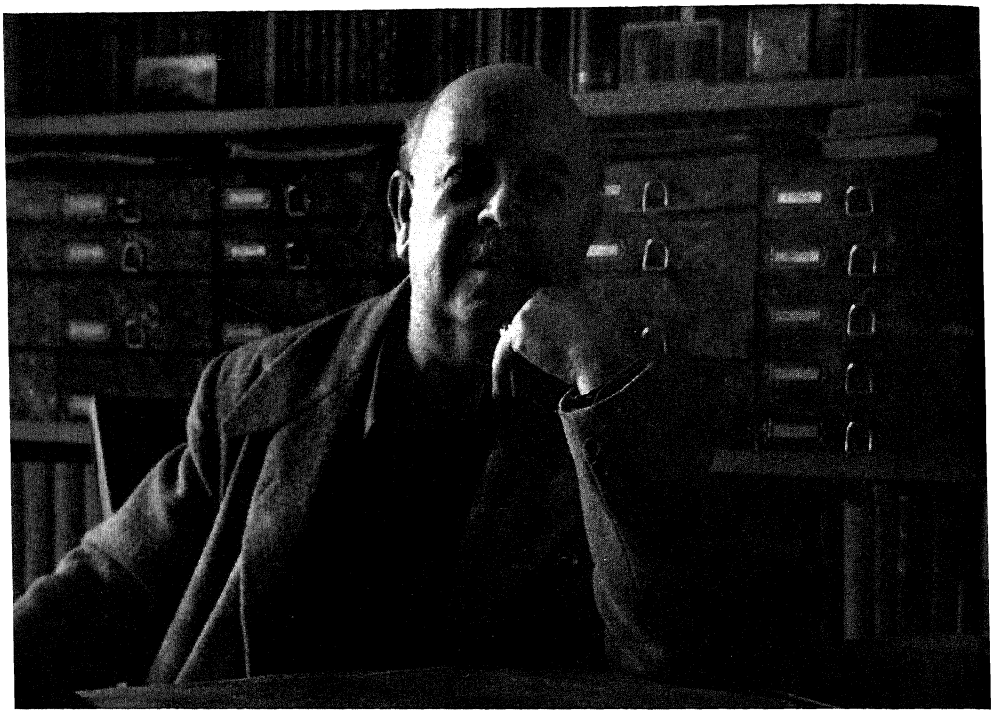

Alfonso
Reyes

the Position of America



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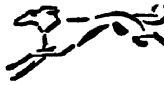

1950

the Position of America

and other essays by

Alfonso Reyes

selected & translated from the Spanish by Harriet de Onís

foreword by Federico de Onís

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Foreword

ALFONSO REYES

by Federico de Onís

When, in 1911, Alfonso Reyes published his first book, his formation was already determined. He was twenty-one years old—he was born in the northern part of Mexico, in Monterrey, on May 17, 1889—and had never been outside Mexico. This book, entitled *Cuestiones Estéticas*, introduced to the Spanish-speaking world a young Mexican writer who from that moment was regarded as a master, as had happened with José Enrique Rodó, the young Uruguayan of the preceding generation. The precocity of Alfonso Reyes, the breadth and depth of his culture, the self-security of his diaphanous and complex style were all the result of his Mexican molding. It is important to point this out in order to understand the originality and significance of this writer, who to-

day, after forty years of constant and copious literary activity, stands as the most universal of writers in the Spanish language, perhaps as the most achieved example in any literature of the international citizen of the world of classic and modern letters.

Mexico is often regarded, superficially, as a closed, impervious, strange land, whose attraction lies in its aloofness from the civilization of the West. How, then, is it possible that a thoroughgoing Mexican like Reyes can have lived the better part of his life in Spain and France and in the most cosmopolitan cities of South America, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, and be regarded and admired everywhere as the incarnation of the most admirable and exacting qualities of European civilization?

In view of the esteem enjoyed by Reyes and his work in other latitudes, many refractory and short-sighted Mexicans asked themselves this question, and their answer was to brand him an expatriate and unnatural citizen. The truth of the matter is that the roots of Reyes's cosmopolitanism lie in Mexico, and that his essential, basic Mexicanism accompanied him wherever he went and lent him and his work that superiority which foreigners prized.

When Reyes was developing in the Mexico of the final years of Porfirio Díaz's regime, there was at work among the upper classes a ferment of new ideas and trends fostered by the educational institutions created by the liberal positivist Gabino Barreda, by the best interpreter of Mexico's past, Justo Sierra, and by the literary revival, headed by Gutiérrez Nájera and the other poets of the *Revista Azul*, which was the beginning of *modernismo* in America. Reyes has described in one of his books, *Pasado Inmediato* (1941), the emergence of his generation, known as the generation of the Centenary of Independence, which from 1906 to 1910 crystallized around new organs of expression and the Ateneo de la Juventud,[1] while the Revolution of 1910, to which their literary, philosophical, and artistic innovations contributed directly or indirectly, was gathering. Members of that group, besides Reyes, were Antonio

[1] Society of Younger Mexican Intellectuals and Artists.

Caso, José Vasconcelos, and a Santo Domingan, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, all figures of outstanding importance in Mexico and in America. With them was the young painter Diego Rivera, who, like Reyes, was to go to Spain and France; and Martín Luis Guzmán, the novelist of the Revolution, would soon be one of them.

Reyes, therefore, is not a deviation, but the product of a great moment of intellectual and literary activity, another in the long tradition of high culture that has always existed in Mexico since the days of the Conquest. Antecedents of this Mexican culture in its different epochs—to which Reyes will refer continually in his writings—were, in the sixteenth century, the Erasmianism of Zumárraga and of Vasco de Quiroga, who organized his diocese of Michoacán along the lines of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia;* in the seventeenth century, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, like Reyes a product of Mexico, who was to create for Spain and France the modern moral comedy; a writer like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who harmonizes and synthesizes, as does Reyes, the classic and the baroque, the cultured and the folk elements; a scientist and historian like Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, who attempted to reconstruct the entire civilization of Indo-Hispanic Mexico; and, in the eighteenth century, a man like the Jesuit Father Clavijero, capable of challenging, as did Jefferson in this country, the anti-American prejudices then dominant in Europe as a result of the writings of Buffon, DePauw, Robertson, and Raynal.

Heir and continuator of this rich tradition of four centuries is Alfonso Reyes in the twentieth. Against the background of the shifting, complex, and contradictory reality of Mexico, he, like his illustrious forerunners, has been able to maintain the thread of unity and light that radiates from his imperturbable Mexicanism to all points of the horizon in both time and space. He, with his special wit, has discovered the essential unity of Mexico in the *x* of its name, which the Mexicans persist in writing, although they pronounce it like the Spanish *j*, as do the other Spanish-speaking peoples. This *x*, this unknown quantity which is Mexico, is resolved

when Reyes says of it affectionately: "Oh, *x* of mine, tiny in yourself, but immense in the cardinal directions you indicate: you were a point of intersection of destiny!"

So it is not to be wondered at that Reyes, the Mexican, in his wanderings outside his native land, should feel at home wherever he happened to be, yet always remain himself. He, like the *x* of Mexico, is a point of intersection of all the cultures that unite and at the same time diverge in his spirit, taking on new light and meaning. The themes developed in the course of his diverse writings were already contained in his first book and in the poems and essays he wrote before leaving Mexico.

In that book we already find the classical background, a heritage of the humanism of Mexico, enriched with modern philological and æsthetic concepts, in his study on the Electras of the Greek theater, which was to culminate in his dramatic poem *Ifigenia cruel* and in various expository and critical studies complementary to his university duties in later years after his return to Mexico. The manner in which the eternal values of Greece acquire new meaning throughout Alfonso Reyes's work as they are beveled by his Mexican spirit may best be appreciated in the title of one of his minor works, a series of sonnets entitled *Homero en Cuernavaca.*

Spain is there, too, in a critical essay on a short novel written in 1492, *Cárcel de amor*, known today only to scholars, but which Reyes considers the prototype of the modern novel; and in his first study on the æsthetics of Góngora, the poet who was to become the subject of other more exhaustive studies, and an enduring influence in Reyes's poetry, as in much of modern poetry. His investigation and interpretation of classic and modern Spanish literature took on, both during his stay in Spain and afterwards, vast proportions, and established him as one of its best historians and critics in the twofold aspect of scholar and discoverer of æsthetic values. In the course of his work one finds a multitude of studies, original, penetrating, and scholarly, on the outstanding figures of Spanish literature throughout its long history, such as the

Cid, the Archpriest of Hita, Lope de Vega, Calderón, Gracián, and modern writers like Azorín, Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, and Ortega.

And in this first work there is present, too, his early and decisive interest in foreign literatures. An essay on Goethe is the first of several he was to write. Two studies, one on George Bernard Shaw and another on Oscar Wilde, already indicate his never flagging interest in that literature of England and North America which had such an important influence on the essay form that was to be the vehicle of the greater part of his writing. And a study on Mallarmé's literary art reveals the close, direct contact he was always to have with French literature, especially the modern, which begins with Mallarmé. Later on he wrote a delightful little work, *Mallarmé entre Nosotros*, and Mallarmé has left a deep impress on his style.

There also appears in this first book his interest in Mexican folklore and literature. Many of his studies have dealt with those authors, outstanding or minor figures, to whom he has been drawn, and one of his best works of criticism, *Letras de la Nueva España*, is a clear, penetrating, and accurate evaluation of Mexico's culture during the colonial period. Mexico is the subject of one of his early works, *Visión de Anáhuac*, a beautiful example of Reyes's ability to fuse historic reality and poetry as he reconstructs the dawn of modern Mexico, the encounter between Europe and the Aztec civilization, which appears before our bemused eyes—as before those of the Spanish conquerors—in a pure, limpid, idealized vision in which one feels the loftiness of the plateau of Mexico and sees things in the unique transparence of its atmosphere. It is not a historical reconstruction, but the vision that emerges from the subtle impingement of the pre-Cortesian world on the gaze of the foreigner, the visitor of yesterday or today to "the most transparent region of the air."

Even more significant than the fact that Reyes has written on Mexican subjects is that through all his work, much of which deals with subjects far removed from Mexico, Mexico is always

present as a point of reference and comparison; even when it does not appear, one can feel it in his approach to other cultures and in the temper and tone of his personality and his style. His work possesses great unity notwithstanding the diversity of themes and forms he has employed. He has written poetry since early youth, and continues to do so, and, in my opinion, it is in his poetry that the essence of his work and the most perfect expression of his style are to be found. In it are indivisibly blended the classic and the modern, the cultured and the popular, the personal and the universal, and it reveals the amazingly varied grain of his simple and complex soul, receptive to every emotion. The most personal and Mexican feature of it is that mingle of wit, elegance, and serene melancholy which underlies the richness of language and the literary evocations. In the field of the essay his work varies from the lengthy treatise, like *El Deslinde*, an extensive study in which he attempts to establish the limits of literature, to the brief notes, letters, dedications, and other material which escapes classification that have come from his pen over his lifetime, and which, happily, he has collected in books in recent years. Even before, he had brought out miscellaneous publications, such as the little magazine *Monterrey*—whose title recalls his natal city—which he himself wrote during his stay in Brazil to keep in touch with his friends all over the world. We also received by way of greeting, from Spain, from France, from Buenos Aires or Mexico, beautifully printed brochures, of varied format and content which kept his memory and his friendship green among us. The delicate, steadfast cult of friendship is another Mexican trait, and was a constant lesson those of us who were not Mexicans received from Reyes. In my association with him and other Mexicans I have come to understand what another great American, the Cuban José Martí, meant when he said: "I have a friend in Mexico." Much of the best that Reyes has written is in this intimate literature intended for his friends and not for the public.

His friends are to be found wherever he has lived or traveled.

In Spain, where he lived from 1914 to 1924, he was from the first looked upon as a Spaniard, though he took great care at all times not to let us forget that he was a Mexican, thereby finally convincing us that there was another and a better way of being Spanish. There he came to form an integral part of the Centro de Estudios Históricos, the Ateneo, the newspaper, literary, and publishing world. There he wrote many of his best works: the short stories contained in *El Plano Oblicuo* (*The Oblique Plane*), the series of essays that make up *Simpatías y Diferencias*, (*Sympathies and Differences*), *El Cazador* (*The Hunter*), and others whose titles in themselves indicate the nature of his originality, which limitations of space prevent my analyzing, and the sketches of Spanish life entitled *Cartones de Madrid*. That decade in Spain in the best years of his life undoubtedly was valuable for him, and I think the greatest good his discovery of Spain did him was the awareness it brought him of America, an awareness that grew until it came full circle with the end of his *Wanderjahre* and his definitive return to Mexico in 1939. The Mexican of Spain was transformed into the Spaniard of Mexico, and with loyal friendship he made room in the College of Spain—later the College of Mexico—which he directed for many of his old friends and other Spaniards who had been forced to leave their country at the close of the civil war.

That period of his life from the time he left Spain in 1924 until his return to Mexico reveals the subtle, unerring hand of destiny that guides the life of exemplary men, for the trajectory he followed, seemingly by chance, in his successive residences in Paris from 1924 to 1927, in Buenos Aires from 1927 to 1930, in Rio de Janeiro from 1930 to 1935—with occasional interruptions, among them several visits to the United States—is the path that led to his knowledge and experience of America. It is the path of Rubén Darío, another man with many countries and *civis maximus* of America. Each of these phases, the French, the Argentine, and the Brazilian, has left a deep impress on Reyes's work, and without them it would be impossible to explain his American universality,

which makes him one of the peaks of Spanish-American literature today.

It is not easy to grasp and appreciate Reyes's value in a selection of his work, felicitous though this be. His chief value is of an æsthetic order and resides in each detail of the totality. His æsthetic approach shuns the explicit affirmation and seeks the half tones, the subtler shadings, the multiplicity of facets every idea and every thing, great or small, offers. He approaches ideas and facts with a sinuous, exploring regard, with a tolerant understanding I can define only by a term that would seem unrelated to either philosophy or æsthetics, but which has a special Mexican connotation: courtesy. Courtesy toward things and ideas, scrupulous care in his dealings with them, restraint in his praise, wit in his negations, and always kindness, an æsthetic kindness that consists in understanding everything. It is thus that Reyes has converted into the material of poetry all that his eyes and spirit have beheld.

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Vision of Anáhuac (1519)

1.

Traveler, you have come to the most

transparent region of the air.

In the era of the discoveries, there appeared books rich in amazing information and entertaining geographical narrative. History, confronted with new worlds to discover, emerged from its classic channels, and the political reality gave way to ethnographic treatises and the description of civilizations. The historians of the sixteenth century determined the character of the newly discovered lands for the eyes of Europe, emphasizing, at times exaggerating its novelty. Giovanni Battista Ramusio began to publish his curious collection *Delle Navigazioni e Viaggi* in Venice in 1550. The work is in three folio volumes, which later were printed separately, and it is profusely and delightfully illustrated. Its usefulness cannot be disputed; the sixteenth-century

3

VISION OF ANÁHUAC

historians of the Indies (Solís, at any rate) came upon certain letters of Cortés in Italian translation in the book.

The illustrations, delicate and ingenuous in keeping with the fashion of the time, reveal the progressive conquest of the coastline; tiny boats skim along a line drawn across the sea; in mid-ocean a marine monster, convoluted like a hunter's horn, writhes and twists, and in the corner some fabulous mariner's star bristles rays. Out of the bosom of a conventionalized cloud a puff-cheeked Æolus indicates the quarter from which the wind is blowing—the ever present concern of the sons of Ulysses. There are scenes of African life under the traditional palm tree and beside the cone-shaped straw hut, always with smoke coming out of the top; men and beasts of other climates, detailed panoramas, exotic plants, and dream islands. And on the coast of New France groups of natives engaged in hunting or fishing, dancing or constructing their cities. An imagination like that of Stevenson, capable of calling *Treasure Island* into being from a child's geography book, could have conjured up a thousand and one delights for our clouded days from the illustrations of Ramusio.

The illustrations also portray the vegetation of Anáhuac. We shall let our eyes linger over them; here is a new kind of nature.

The ear of corn dear to Ceres and the banana worthy of paradise, the juicy fruits that distill an unfamiliar honey, but, above all, the typical plants: the cactus, image of the fretful porpentine; the maguey, which we are told draws its moisture from the rocks, opening out at ground level to send its flower plume high into the air; the organ cactus, its branches joined like the reeds of a syrinx, used for boundary hedges; the disks of the prickly pear, recalling a candelabrum, superimposed one upon another in a manner pleasing to the eye, all conceived like an emblematic flower designed to ornament a coat of arms. In the delicate outlines of the illustrations, fruit and leaf, stem and root are abstract designs, their purity undisturbed by color.

These plants, set about with thorns, give evidence that

nature here, unlike that of the south or the coast, does not abound in sap or nourishing vapors. The land of Anáhuac reveals fertility only in the vicinity of the lakes. But in the course of the centuries man, working like the beaver, will contrive to drain away their waters, the settlers will level the forests around their dwelling-place, thus restoring to the valley its typical hostile character: from the barren, alkaline earth the plants raise the thorns of their vegetable claws, defending themselves against drought.

The drying up of the valley has been going on from 1449 to 1900. Three races have had their part in it, and almost three civilizations—there is little in common between the viceregal organization and the fantastic political fiction that gave us thirty years of Augustan peace. Three systems of monarchy, divided by a parenthesis of anarchy, afford an example of how the work of the state grows and corrects its errors when confronted by the threats of nature and the land itself. From Netzahualcóyotl to the second Luis de Velasco, and from him to Porfirio Díaz the slogan would seem to have been "Drain the land." This century found us still spading up the last shovelful and digging the last ditch.

With its heroes and its stage setting the draining of the lakes partakes of the nature of a drama. Ruiz de Alarcón vaguely sensed it in his play *El Semejante a si mismo*. Before a great assembly headed by the Viceroy and the archbishop the sluices were opened and the mass of water rushed in through the cuts. This was the stage. And the plot, the intrigues of Alonso Arias and the adverse decisions of Adrian Boot, the self-sufficient Dutchman; until the prison bars closed behind Enrico Martín, who holds his level aloft with a steady hand.

Like the spirit of disaster, the vengeful waters hovered over the city, troubling the sleep of that charming and cruel people, washing away its flower-covered stones, lying in wait, blue eye alert, for its brave bastions.

When the builders of the desert had finished their labors, the social catastrophe made its appearance.

There is one question Europeans invariably ask the American traveler: are there many trees in America? We would surprise them if we were to tell them of an American Castile higher than that of Spain, more harmonious, certainly less dour (in spite of the fact that it is broken by towering mountains instead of hills), where the air glitters like a mirror and it is like autumn the year round. The Castilian plain is conducive to ascetic ideas; the valley of Mexico, to a simple, sober state of mind. What the former gains in tragic sense of life the latter makes up for in plastic emphasis.

Our nature has two opposing facets. One, the virgin jungle of America, theme of so many poets it is hardly worth describing. It was a prescribed source of admiration for the Old World, the inspiration for Chateaubriand's verbal effusions. It is a hothouse where energy is generated with reckless abandon, where the senses swoon amidst overpowering scents; it is the exaltation of the life force and the image of living anarchy: the fountains of verdure flowing down the mountainside, the Gordian knots of creepers and lianas, the tents of the banana trees, the treacherous shade of trees that lull the traveler to sleep and deprive him of the power of thought, overpowering vegetation, a slow, voluptuous torpescence, to the stupefying hum of insects. The screech of the parrots, the thunder of the cascades, the yellow eyes of the wild beasts, *le dard empoisonné du sauvage*! In these displays of fire and somnolence—poetry of hammock and of fan—other regions of the tropics far outdo us.

Ours, Anáhuac's, is something better and more stimulating. At least for those who prefer clear-headedness and alertness of will at all times. The more fitting representation of our nature is to be found in the regions of the central highlands. There the sparse and stylized vegetation, the harmonious landscape, the atmosphere so intensely clear that color is drowned in it, the general harmony of design making up for it, the transparence of the air, which brings everything out in singular relief; in short, to put it all in the words of modest, sensitive Fray Manuel de Navarrete:

A resplendent light
Which gives luster to the face of heaven.

This was observed by a distinguished traveler whose name justifies the pride of New Spain, one of those classic and universal men like those the Renaissance suckled, and who in his century revived the ancient method of acquiring wisdom through travel, and the habit of writing only concerning his own recollections and meditations. In his *Political Essay* Baron von Humboldt remarked the strange reverberation of the sun's rays on the mountainous mass of our central highlands, where the air is purified.

In that landscape, not without a certain aristocratic sterility, where the eye roves discerningly, the mind deciphers every line and dwells pleasurably on every curve; under the brilliance of that air and in its prevading cool and well-being those unknown inhabitants let their broad, thoughtful, spiritual gaze wander. Ecastatic before the cactus with its eagle and its serpent—a felicitous epitome of our countryside—they listened to the prophetic voice of the bird that promised them refuge among those hospitable lakes. Later, out of those lacustrine dwellings a city arose, repopulated through the invasions of the mythological warriors who came from the Seven Caves—the cradle of the seven tribes inhabiting our land. The city became an empire and the clangor of a Cyclopean civilization, similar to that of Babylon and Egypt, endured, though faltering, to the ill-omened days of Moctezuma, the Weak. And it was then, in an hour of amazement one might envy, that Cortés and his men ("dust, sweat, and iron"), having scaled the snow-crested volcanoes, appeared against that orb of resonance and glory—the sweeping cirque of mountains.

At their feet, in a crystal mirage, the picturesque city lay extended, the whole emanating from its center, the temple, so that its radiant streets were prolongations of the corners of the pyramid.

To their ears came the wail of the fife from some dark, bloody rite, and, multiplied by the echo, the throb of the savage drum.

2.

"It resembled the enchanted houses

the book of Amadis describes . . .

I know not how to relate it." BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO

Two lakes cover almost the entire valley: one of salt water, the other sweet. Their waters mingle to the rhythm of a rising and falling tide in the strait formed by the surrounding sierras and a mountain spur that rises inland. In the center of the salt lake the city has sprung up like an immense stone flower, linked to the land by four gates and three highways the width of two lances. At each of the four gates an official taxes the incoming merchandise. The buildings are arranged in cubic masses; the stone is carved in designs and friezes. The homes of the aristocracy have flower gardens on the upper and lower stories and a playing-field on which as many as thirty men can tilt on horseback. The streets are broken at intervals by canals. The canals are spanned by bridges

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VISION OF ANÁHUAC

of carved wooden beams, broad enough for ten riders. Under the bridges glide the canoes of hollowed tree-trunks, loaded with fruit. The people come and go along the canals, buying fresh water for drinking; the red water-jars pass back and forth from buyer to seller. In the public places the artisans and master workmen stroll about, waiting for someone to engage their services. The conversations grow animated but never noisy. The race has sensitive ears, and, at times, the talk is in whispers. One hears melodious sibilants, flowing vowels, and consonants that tend to become liquid. The chatter sounds like music. Those *x's*, those *tl's*, those *ch's*, so terrifying when we see them written, fall from the Indians' lips with the sweetness of maguey syrup.

The people deck themselves out gaily, for they are under the eyes of a great Emperor. Tunics of red cotton, trimmed with gold, embroidered in black and white, with feather appliqué or painted designs, come and go. The dark faces have a smiling serenity, all manifesting a desire to please. In ear or nose heavy rings swing, and about the throat, eight-strand necklaces, strings of colored stones, bells and pendants of gold. Over their straight black hair the feathers sway back and forth as they move. Their muscular legs are clasped by metal anklets, and they wear eye-shades of silver foil trimmed with fawn and white deer hide. Their flexible sandals make a soft clatter. Some wear boots of mink hide, with a white sole whipped on with gold thread. In their hands bright fly whisks flutter, or they carry a cane shaped like a snake, with teeth and eyes of mother-of-pearl, handle of embossed leather, and a knob of feathers. The skins, the stones and metals, feathers and cotton fabrics mingle their colors in one continual iridescence and, lending the people their quality and refinement, give them an air of delicate toys.

The life of the city is concentrated in three spots, as happens in every city. One is the house of the gods, another the market-place, and the third, the Emperor's palace. In all the districts and sectors of the city there are temples, market-places, and palaces

of lesser importance. This municipal trinity repeats itself, giving a stamp of unity to the whole city.

The main temple is a pæan of stone. From the hills of basalt and porphyry that hem the valley gigantic slabs have been rolled down. Few peoples—wrote Humboldt—have moved greater masses. From corner to corner of the square base of the pyramid there is a bow-shot's distance. From the summit the whole Chinese-like panorama opens out. Forty towers rise from the temple, embossed on the outside and bedecked inside with images, vaulted roofs, and wood-carvings of humans and monsters. The gigantic idols—says Cortés—were made from a mixture containing all the grains and vegetables that entered into the Aztec's diet. Beside them, the snakeskin drum whose ominous echo could be heard two leagues off; beside them, conch-shells, trumpets, and great knives. Inside the temple a village of five hundred inhabitants could have been set. The wall that surrounded it was formed by figures of intertwined serpents, which later were to become the pedestals of the Cathedral's columns. The priests lived inside the close or near the temple; they wore black habits, their hair hung long and disheveled, they shunned certain foods and practiced severe fasts. Near the temple was the cloister where the daughters of certain of the nobles led a nun's existence, employing their days in feather-weaving.

But the exposed skulls and other sinister indications of the sacrificial rites quickly eloigned the Spanish soldier, who, on the other hand, reveled with delight in his description of the market-place.

In the market, he says, "there are to be found all the products of the land." To which he adds, and other produce besides, victuals, and articles of silver. This central square was surrounded by covered walks and was twice the size of that of Salamanca. He would have us believe that there pass through it daily at least sixty thousand people. Each product or type of merchandise has its own street, and this rule is strictly adhered to. Everything is sold by

number and measure, but not by weight. No fraud is tolerated; intermingled with the crowd move secret, vigilant agents on the watch for false measures, which they destroy. Ten or twelve judges, in their canopied chairs, pass final judgment on all questions that arise in the market-place, equitably and in public view. To this great square were also brought the slaves for sale, each fastened to a long pole by a collar.

There, says Cortés, are sold jewels of gold and silver, of lead, of brass, of copper, of tin; bones, sea-shells, and feathers; carved and uncarved stones; adobes, bricks, carved and smooth wood. Gold in grain and in powder is also sold there in quill containers that, with the grains most commonly used, serve as money. There are streets for game, where all the birds that inhabit the variety of climates of Mexico may be found, partridge and quail, prairie chicken, wild duck, flycatchers, the wood duck, doves, pigeons, and little birds tied to twigs; owls and macaws, falcons, eagles, nightjars, hawks. The feathered skins of birds of prey, complete with head, beak, and claws, are also on sale here. Also to be found are rabbits, hares, varieties of deer, muskrats, moles, opossum, and little dogs that are gelded and eaten. There is the street of the herbalists, where roots and healing plants are sold, on the empirical knowledge of which medicine rested. The Indians acquainted Dr. Francisco Hernández, royal physician to Philip II, and the Pliny of New Spain, with over twelve hundred varieties. Alongside them there are apothecaries who sell lotions, salves, and medicinal balms. There are barbershops for cutting and washing hair. There are eating-houses. Piles of wood, splinters of fat pine, charcoal and clay braziers. Sleeping-mats, and others of finer quality to sit upon or as floor coverings for the house. Vegetables in abundance, especially onion, leek, garlic, boragewort, nasturtium leaves, sorrel, cardoons, and golden thistle. Cherries and plums are the fruits most in demand. Honey and beeswax; corn syrup as smooth and sweet as that of sugar; maguey syrup, used also to make sweets

and wines. Cortés, describing these syrups to the Emperor Charles V, says with outspoken enthusiasm: "better than *arrope.*" [1]

The cotton cloth for curtains, head-coverings, tablecloths, and scarves remind him of the street of the silk-weavers in Granada. Also the blankets, bridles, sandals, and other articles made of hemp fiber. They have leaves from which they make their paper. Little tubes perfumed with sweet gum and filled with tobacco are on sale. Dyes of every color and shade. Oil of chia, which some compare to mustard and others to fleawort, which makes paint impervious to water. The Indian still guards the secret of that enamel luster which he gives to his pottery and wooden vessels. There are deer hides, sheared or with fur, gray and white, and ingeniously painted; nutria, weasel, and wildcat, tanned or raw. Bowls, pitchers, jugs, in every shape and form, painted, glazed, of finest clay and quality. Shelled corn and corn bread, superior to that of the islands and the Main. Fresh and salt fish, raw and cooked. Chicken and duck eggs, omelets of the eggs of other birds.

The human activity of the market-place—says Bernal Díaz —astounds even those who have been in Constantinople and Rome. It turns the senses giddy, like a scene from Brueghel, where the material representations acquire a spiritual warmth. Bemused by the picturesque sights, the Conqueror wanders through the streets of the fair, and his memories preserve the emotion of a strange, vibrating chaos: the outlines melt into one another; the colors are like the explosion of a Roman candle; the appetite is aroused by the pungent odor of the plants and spices. The trays overflow with a paradise of fruit: balls of color, transparent ampoules, clusters of lances, scaly pineapples, and hearts of leaves. The round wooden trays of sardines are a glitter of silver and saffron, bordered with fins and brush-fine tails. From a barrel emerges the bewhiskered, astounded head of a huge fish. In the streets given over to falconry sit the birds with thirsty beak, blue and red wings drooping like a

[1] Preserves of mixed fruits cooked in grape juice. (Translator's note.)

half-opened fan, clenched claws crooked like gnarled roots; hard, round eye unwinking. Farther along the heaps of legumes, black, red, yellow, and white, all bright and oily. Then the venison stand, where, from among the heaps of haunches and hoofs, emerge a horn, a muzzle, a flaccid tongue, while along the ground runs a dribble of blood that the sidling dogs lick up. At the other end the artificial garden of rugs and fabrics, the curious, monstrous toys of metal and stone, comprehensible only to the people who make and play with them, as is always the case. The auctioneers, the jewelers, the leather merchants, the potters, all grouped by calling, as in the processions of Alsloot. The breasts of the pottery vender are one with her dark wares. Her arms move about in the clay as though it were their native element, shaping handles for the jugs and molding the red necks. About the belly of the jar run touches of black and gold which copy the collar that clasps her throat. The wide-bottomed pots seem to be seated, like the Indian woman, knees together and upturned feet parallel. The water, oozing through the pores of the fragrant vases, sings to itself.

"The most beautiful thing in the market-place," says Gómara, "is the work in gold and feathers, which imitates anything and any color. The Indians are so skilled at this that they can reproduce in feathers a butterfly, an animal, a tree, a rose, flowers, grass, and rocks, so cunningly that they seem alive or natural. It sometimes happens that they forget to eat for a whole day, adding a feather here, taking one away there, fastening it down, and looking at it from every angle, in the sunlight, in the shade, half-closing their eyes to see better, to decide whether it looks best pointing up or down or crosswise or on the right or wrong side; in a word, they keep at it until it is perfect. There are few peoples with their patience, particularly ours, which is so prone to anger. . . .

"The most highly esteemed and skilled office is that of silversmith. They offer for sale objects worked with stone instruments and molded by fire: an octagonal plate, with alternating sections of silver and gold, not soldered, but fused together; a little pot

with its handle like a bell clapper, but loose; a fish, with one scale of silver and the other of gold, no matter how many it has. They cast a parrot, whose tongue moves, and its head and wings. They model a monkey that can move feet and head, and holds in its front paws a spindle with which it seems to be spinning or an apple it seems to be eating. Our Spaniards held these things in high esteem, and our silversmiths do not achieve such perfection. They understand the art of enameling, and cut and set emeralds, turquoises, and other stones, and drill pearls. . . ."

Bernal Díaz, though not an authority in matters of art, nevertheless reveals the enthusiasm the Indians' ingenuity aroused in the conquerors. "There are three Indians in the city of Mexico," he writes, "so skilled at wood-carving and painting, who go by the name of Marcos de Aquino and Juan de la Cruz and El Crespillo, that if they had lived in the times of the ancient and renowned Apelles, or Michelangelo or Berruguete, who are of our days, they would have belonged in their company."

The Emperor had reproductions in gold, silver, stone, and feathers of everything under the sun to be found in his realm. In the old chronicles he appears like a fabulous Midas whose throne glittered like the sun. If there is poetry in America, a poet has said, it is in the Great Moctezuma of the golden throne. His kingdom of gold, his palace of gold, his raiment of gold, his flesh of gold. . . . Did he not have to lift up his garments to convince Cortés that he was not made of gold? His dominions stretch beyond the limits of knowledge; with the speed of the wind his messengers travel in all directions to carry out his orders. An astounded chieftain whom Cortés asked whether he was a vassal of Moctezuma's answered: "And who is not his vassal?"

The lords of all these far-flung lands live a part of the year at the court and send their first-born to serve Moctezuma. Each day as many as six hundred knights come to the palace, whose servants and courtiers fill two or three spacious courtyards and overflow into the streets in the environs of the royal possessions.

All day long a numerous retinue hovers about the King, but without ever touching his person. They all eat at one time, and the cellars and provision rooms are open to all who are hungry or thirsty. "Three or four hundred youths brought in the dishes, which are innumerable, because each time [the Emperor] lunched or dined they served him every variety of food, meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables, to be found in the whole land. And as the climate is cold, under each dish and platter there was a little brazier with live coals to keep it warm." The King sat upon a leather cushion in the middle of a great room, which gradually filled up with his servitors; and as he ate, he served food to five or six aged lords, who kept at a distance from him. At the beginning and end of the meals maidservants handed him a basin of water, and neither the towel, the dishes, the bowls or braziers employed by him were ever used again. It seems that while he dined he took pleasure in the jests of his troubadours and dwarfs, or listened to the music of Panpipes, fifes, conch-shells, bone flutes, drums, and other similar instruments. Beside him a basin of perfumed coals burned, and a wooden screen shielded him from view. He gave the remains of his meals to his buffoons, and regaled them with pitchers of chocolate. "From time to time," recalls Bernal Díaz, "they brought in cups of fine gold containing a certain beverage made of chocolate, which they said maintained his virility."

When the table was cleared and the people had left, certain lords appeared, and then the buffoons and the acrobats. Sometimes the Emperor smoked and rested; at others a carpet was spread in the courtyard, and the dances began to the accompaniment of the drums. At the sound of a shrill whistle the drums began to beat, and the dancers came on, decked out in rich shawls, fans, garlands of roses, and feathered caps in the shape of eagle, tiger, or alligator heads. The dance was accompanied by singing; all joined hands and began with gentle movements and in a low voice. Little by little the tempo increased, and, so that the animation would not flag, the wine-bearers moved in and out between the rows of dancers,

pouring out deep pitcherfuls of wine. Moctezuma "put on four different kinds of clothing every day, all new, and he never wore a garment a second time. The lords who entered his presence always came in unshod," and when they appeared before him they wore an attitude of humility, their heads low, and never looked him in the face. "Certain of the nobles," adds Cortés, "reproved the Spaniards, saying that when they talked with me they were too forward, and looked me in the face, which seemed disrespectful and insolent." The nobles removed their shoes, changed their rich robes for others of poor quality, and advanced with three salutations: "Lord—My Lord—Great Lord." "When Moctezuma went into the city, which was on rare occasions, all those who accompanied him and those he met on the streets turned their faces from him, and the others prostrated themselves until he had passed," observes Cortés. A kind of lictor preceded him, bearing three slender wands, one of which the Emperor took in his hands when he descended from his litter. It was a memorable day when he came forward to receive Cortés, resting on the arm of two lords, on foot, down the middle of a broad street. His retinue, in double file, followed behind him, hugging the walls. His servants walked ahead of him, spreading carpets before his feet.

The Emperor is fond of the chase; it was said his falconers could bring down any bird they raised; in noisy crowds his hunters beat up the wild beasts. But falconry is his favorite pastime. While some set snares, Moctezuma employs bow and blow-gun. The tube and darts of his blow-guns are a handspan long, and decorated with designs of animals and flowers.

Within and outside the city he has his palaces and houses of recreation, and each has its own manner of entertainment. The doors open on to streets and squares, with a vista of patios where fountains play, inlaid with marble like a chessboard, walls of marble and jasper, porphyry, basalt; red-striped walls, transparent walls; roofs of cedar, pine, palm, cypress, all richly carved. The rooms are painted and carpeted, some with cotton fabrics, others with rabbit-

skin, others with feathers. The prayer room is lined with gold and silver, with settings of precious stones. All about the Babylonian gardens—where no vegetable or edible fruit is cultivated—there are gazebos and porticoes where Moctezuma and his wives take their pleasure, great groves laid out in designs of plants and flowers, rabbit warrens, fish ponds, rocks, hills, among which wander deer and stags; ten pools of fresh and salt water for every kind of aquatic bird, each variety supplied with its accustomed diet, some with fish, others with worms and insects, others with corn, and some with special kinds of seeds. Three hundred men look after them, and there are others who care for the sick birds. Some clean the pools, others fish, others feed the birds. There are those whose duty it is to delouse them, others to gather the eggs, others to set them when they become broody, others to pluck them for their feathers. In another section the birds of prey are kept, from the hawks and falcons to the golden eagle, all under shelter and provided with perches. There are also caged mountain lions, jaguars, wolves, foxes, snakes, wildcats, who keep up an infernal din, and to whose care three hundred more men are assigned. And that nothing may be lacking in this museum of natural history, there are houses where families of albinos, dwarfs, humpbacks, and others suffering a variety of deformities live.

There were the granaries and counting-rooms, their doors surmounted by shields bearing the figure of a rabbit, where the treasurers, the bookkeepers, and the revenue officials lived; armories, whose shield bore two quivers, containing darts, slings, lances, war-clubs, bucklers of various classes, helmets, greaves, wristbands, bludgeons with blades of razor-sharp stone, single-pronged and forked wooden spears, rolling stones rounded by hand, and a kind of padded shield that when unrolled covered the warrior's whole body.

Four times the Anonymous Conquistador attempted to visit all Moctezuma's palaces; four times he gave up in weariness.

3.

"*The flower, mother of the smile.*" IGNACIO RAMÍREZ
(*El Nigromante*)

IF IN all the aspects of native life nature played so pre-eminent a role as is clear from the accounts of the conquistadors; if the flowers of the gardens were for the adornment of gods and men, as well as the stylized motif of the plastic arts and picture writing, it would not be absent from their poetry.

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The historic epoch that saw the arrival of the conquistadors in Mexico followed directly on the rain of flowers that descended upon the heads of men at the close of the fourth sun cycle of creation. The earth atoned for its previous niggardliness, and men hoisted banners of rejoicing. In the drawings of the Vatican Codex this is represented by a triangular figure adorned with wreaths of plants. The goddess of wedlock descends to earth by a swing of

plants, while seeds burst in the air, showering down leaves and flowers.

The basic material for the study of the artistic representation of the plant in America is to be found in the cultural monuments that came into being in the valley of Mexico just before the Conquest. The picture writing offers the most varied and abundant material. *Flower* was one of the signs of the twenty days of the month; flower also stood for the noble, the exquisite, and represents as well perfumes and liquors. It rises from the blood of the sacrifice and crowns the hieroglyph that stands for oratory. Garlands, trees, magueys, and corn alternate in the signs for place names. The flower is painted in schematic fashion, reduced to its bare symmetric outlines, seen either in profile or from the mouth of the corolla. For the representation of the tree a set scheme is likewise employed: either a trunk opening out in three equal branches terminating in clusters of leaves, or two diverging trunks that branch symmetrically.

In the sculptures of stone and clay there are single flowers without leaves, and luxuriant fruit trees, sometimes as attributes of the divinity, others as adornments of the person or the external decoration of a utensil.

In the pottery of Cholula the bottom of the pots is adorned with a floral star, and around the sides run intertwined calyxes. The wooden bowls used by weavers had black flowers upon a yellow background, and sometimes the flower is merely suggested by a few lines.

The flowers, nature, and landscape of the valley are to be found in the native poetry also.

The loss of the native poetry of Mexico must be mourned as irreparable. Scholars may unearth certain isolated fragments of it or weigh the relative fidelity with which others were turned into Spanish by the missionary fathers. But none of this, important though it be, can ever make up for the loss of this native poetry as a group and social expression. Our knowledge of it boils down to

conjectures, to the ingenuous narrations preserved by friars who may not always have understood the poetic rites they were describing, as in the case of what we imagine of the fabulous early years of Netzahualcóyotl, the prince whose kingdom was seized by usurpers, and who dwelt for a time in the company of the forest, nourishing himself on its fruits, the while he composed songs to solace his exile.

Nevertheless, certain curious proofs remain of what may have been the reflection of nature in that poetry, which, despite probable confusion and adulteration, would seem to be based on certain authentic, unmistakable primitive elements. Of these are the old poems written in Nahuatl, the kind the Indians sang on their festive occasions, and to which Cabrera y Quintero alludes in his *Escudo de Armas de México* (1746). Memorized, they handed on from one generation to another the most minutely detailed legends of their origins, as well as precepts of conduct. Those who first discovered them passed them over in silence, regarding them as compositions designed to honor the powers of darkness. The existing text of the few we possess could not be an exact translation of the original, inasmuch as the church declared punishable, though tolerated because unable to root it out, the genteel custom of reciting these poems at banquets and dances. In 1555 the Provincial Council ordered them submitted to the ministers of the gospel for examination, and three years later the Indians were once more forbidden to sing them without the permission of their parish priests and bishops. Of the few at present extant—for of those Fray Bernardino de Sahagún is reported to have published only their mention has remained—author and origin are alike unknown, as well as their date of composition, although it is believed that they are genuinely native, and not, as some have believed, versions transmogrified by the missionary friars. Scholars are agreed that they were collected by some friar to be submitted to his superior; and that, though composed prior to the Conquest, they were set down shortly after the old tongue had been put into its equivalent

Spanish characters. Changed and remote as they have reached us, these songs reveal a tone of sensual awareness which, in truth, hardly befits the missionary fathers, simple, apostolic souls engaged in the spreading of the faith, whose piety exceeded their imagination. When treading such uncertain ground, however, we must be on guard against the surprises typical of the times. It is to be hoped that the striking similarity between these poems and certain passages of the Song of Songs is purely coincidental. We have been made extremely wary by that collection of *Aztecas* containing Pesado's paraphrases of native poems, and in which the critics claim to have discovered the influence of Horace on Netzahualcóyotl!

In the old Nahua songs the metaphors preserve a certain boldness of imagery, a certain apparent incongruity; they evince a trend of thought that is non-European. Brinton, who translated them into English and published them in Philadelphia in 1887, claims to have discovered a certain allegorical sense in one of them. The poet asks where inspiration is to be sought, and answers himself, like Wordsworth, in the great lap of Nature. The whole world seems to him a responsive garden. The song is entitled *Ninoyolnonotza;* it is a close-knit meditation, a melancholy delectation, a long, voluptuous play of fancy in which the reactions of the senses are transmuted into a search for the ideal.

NINOYOLNONOTZA [1]

I. Song at the Beginning

1. I am wondering where I may gather some pretty, sweet flowers. Whom shall I ask? Suppose that I ask the brilliant hummingbird, the emerald trembler; suppose that I ask the yellow butterfly; they will tell me, they know, where bloom the pretty, sweet flowers, whether I may gather them here in the laurel woods where dwell the tzinitzcan birds, or whether

[1] Translation by D. G. Brinton (q. v. Glossary).

I may gather them in the flowery forests where the tlauquechol lives. There they may be plucked sparkling with dew, there they come forth in perfection. Perhaps there I shall see them if they have appeared; I shall place them in the folds of my garment, and with them I shall greet the children, I shall make glad the nobles.

2. Truly as I walk along I hear the rocks as it were replying to the sweet songs of the flowers; truly the glittering, chattering water answers, the bird-green fountain, there it sings, it dashes forth, it sings again; the mockingbird answers; perhaps the coyol bird answers, and many sweet singing birds scatter their songs around like music. They bless the earth pouring out their sweet voices.

3. I said, I cried aloud, may I not cause you pain, ye beloved ones, who are seated to listen; may the brilliant hummingbirds come soon. Whom do we seek, O noble poet? I ask, I say: Where are the pretty, fragrant flowers with which I may make glad you, my noble compeers? Soon they will sing to me: "Here we will make thee to see, thou singer, truly wherewith thou shalt make glad the nobles, thy companions."

4. They led me within a valley to a fertile spot, a flowery spot, where the dew spread out in glittering splendor, where I saw various lovely fragrant flowers, lovely odorous flowers, clothed with the dew, scattered around in rainbow glory, there they said to me: "Pluck the flowers, whichever thou wishest, mayest thou the singer be glad, and give them to thy friends, to the nobles, that they may rejoice on the earth."

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5. So I gathered in the folds of my garment the various fragrant flowers, delicate scented, delicious, and I said, may some of our people enter here, may very many of us be here; and I thought I should go forth to announce to our friends that here all of us should rejoice in the different lovely, odorous

flowers, and that we should cull the various sweet songs with which we might rejoice our friends here on earth, and the nobles in their grandeur and dignity.

6. So I the singer gathered all the flowers to place them upon the nobles, to clothe them and put them in their hands; and soon I lifted my voice in a worthy song glorifying the nobles before the face of the Cause of All, where there is no servitude.

Thus the poet, in search of nature's secrets, reaches the very substratum of the valley. "I am in a bed of roses," he would seem to say to us, "and I wrap my soul in a rainbow of flowers." They sing around him and, truly, the rocks answer the songs of the corollas. He longs to drown himself in pleasure, but there is no pleasure unless it is shared, and so he goes out into the countryside, calling to his people, to his noble friends, to all the children that pass by. As he does so, he weeps for joy. (The ancient race was lachrymose and solemn.) Thus the flower is the source of his tears and his rejoicing.

At the end it falls off noticeably, and this is perhaps the part in which the Spanish friar had a greater share.

We can imagine that the singer, in a rudimentary dramatic representation, distributed flowers among his fellow diners, acting out the words. It was probably one of those simple, symbolic stagings of the sort primitive societies like so much, and of which examples are still to be found in the church ceremonies. They are already foreshadowed by the Dionysian rites, the rites of nature and the plant world, and still persist in the sacrifice of the Mass.

The wandering of the poet in search of flowers, and his questioning of the bird and the butterfly evoke in the reader the figure of the Shulamite in search of the Beloved. The image of the flowers is like an obsession. There is another song that says: "Let us take, let us untwine the jewels. The blue flowers are woven upon

the yellow, we can give them to the children. Let my soul be enveloped in flowers, let it become drunk with them, for soon I must absent myself." To the poet the flower seems the embodiment of earthly good. But all of them are as nothing in comparison with the glories of the Godhead: "Even though they be jewels and precious ointments of speeches, no one can speak fittingly here of the giver of life."

In another poem belonging to the cycle of Quetzalcoatl (the most important cycle of that confused mythology, symbolizing the civilizer and prophet, as well as one of the vague sun myths) there are descriptive touches of admirable conciseness which bring before our eyes "the house of the rays of light, the house of the plumed serpents, the house of the turquoises." From that house, which, in the words of the poet, gleams like a varicolored mosaic, the nobles emerged who "went out weeping for the water"—a phrase vibrant with the evocation of the city of lakes. The poem is like an elegy for the disappearance of the hero. It has to do with a mourning rite, like that of Persephone, Adonis, Tammuz, or certain others that became popular in Europe. Except that in contrast with those originating along the coasts of the Mediterranean, here the resurrection of the hero is long deferred; perhaps he will never return. Otherwise he would have triumphed over the bloodthirsty, sinister god of the human sacrifices and, thwarting the domination of the barbarous Aztecs, would have changed the history of Mexico. The quetzal, the rainbow bird that will announce the return of this new Arthur, has now migrated to the region of the isthmus, perhaps foretelling a change of destiny. "I wept with the humiliation of the mountains; I grieved with the exaltation of the sands, for my Lord had departed." The hero shows his warrior side: "In our battles my Lord was adorned with feathers." And a few lines farther on come these words of swift, disconcerting transition: "After he had become drunken, the chieftain wept; we rejoiced that we were in his room." ("The king hath brought me into his

chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee." The Song of Solomon.) The poet has airy fancies: "I come from Nonohualco, as though I were bringing birds to the dwelling-place of the nobles." And again the haunting obsession of the flower: "I am pining, pining like the last flower."

4.

"But glorious it was to see,

how the open region was filled with

horses and chariots. . . ." BUNYAN: *Pilgrim's Progress*

WHATEVER the historical faith to which one subscribes (and I am not of those who dream of an absurd perpetuation of the native tradition, nor do I even put too much faith in the survival of the Spanish), we are linked to the race of yesterday, without entering into the question of blood, by a common effort to master our wild, hostile natural setting, an effort that lies at the very root of history. We are also linked by the far deeper community of the daily emotions aroused by the same natural objects. The impact of the same world on the sensibility engenders a common soul. But even if one refused to accept as valid either the one or the other, either the fruits of a common effort or the results of a common outlook, it must be allowed that the historic emotion

forms a part of our modern life, and that without its glow our valleys and our mountains would be like an unlighted theater. The poet sees, as the moonlight shimmers on the snow of the volcanoes, the shade of Doña Marina outlined against the sky, pursued by the shadow of the Archer of Stars; or dreams of the copper ax on whose sharp edge the heavens rest; or thinks to hear, in the lonely desert, the tragic weeping of the twins the white-robed goddess bears upon her back. We must not ignore the evocation or turn our backs upon the legend. Even if this tradition were not ours, it is, at any rate, in our hands, and we are its sole repository. We must never renounce, O Keats, a thing of beauty, the creator of eternal joys.

(*1915*)

THE POSITION OF AMERICA

Thoughts on the American Mind

My observations are limited to what is known as Latin America. The need for brevity obliges me to be sketchy, imprecise, and exaggerated to the point of caricature. My function is merely to stimulate or arouse discussion without attempting to touch upon all the problems involved and much less to suggest their solution. I have the feeling that, using America as a pretext, I am merely skimming over the surface of certain universal themes.

To speak of American civilization here would be out of place. It would lead us into the field of archæology, which lies outside the scope of our topic. To speak of American culture would be misleading. It would lead us to consider only one branch of the

tree of Europe, that which has been transplanted to the soil of America. But we can speak of the American mind, its vision of life and its reaction to life. This will allow us to define, even though only provisionally, the particular tonality of America.

Our drama has a stage, a chorus, and a leading character. By stage here I do not mean space, but time, time almost in the musical sense of the word, a beat, a rhythm. America reached the feast of European civilization late. It has had to bridge epochs, rushing and hurrying from one form to another, without allowing sufficient time for the preceding one to mature thoroughly. At times the gap to be bridged has been so great that the new product resembles a dish that has been removed from the fire before it was done. Tradition has weighed less oppressively here, hence our audacity. But we have yet to learn whether the rhythm of Europe —which we are trying to overtake by forced marches because we cannot catch up with it at a normal pace—is the only possible historical tempo. Nobody has yet proved that there is anything unnatural about a certain speeding-up of the process. This is the secret of our history, our politics, and our lives, of which the watchword is improvisation.

The chorus—the inhabitants of America—has been recruited principally from the old indigenous populations, the mass of Iberian conquerors, missionaries, and settlers, and later the influx of immigrants from all parts of Europe. There are clashes of races, problems of miscegenation, attempts at adaptation and absorption. Depending on the region, the predominating hue is that of the Indian, the Iberian, the lightened tint of the *mestizo*, the white of the European immigrant, and the broad shading lent by the Africans brought to our shores in other centuries by the old colonial administrations. Every tone of the scale is present. In the everboiling melting-pot of America these heterogeneous elements are little by little becoming fused, and today there is already a distinctive American mankind, an American spirit.

The leading character or actor in our plot is the mind.

The American mind has been faced with a series of dilemmas. Fifty years after the Spanish Conquest—that is to say, during the first generation—we already find in Mexico an American psychology. Under the influence of new surroundings, a new economic organization, contact with the sensibility of the Indians, the sense of possession that comes from having arrived earlier, the Spaniards of Mexico had developed a sense of colonial aristocracy which clashed sharply with the *nouveau riche* impulses of Spaniards arriving later. Abundant literary testimony bears this out, in the satirical folk poetry of the day as well as in the shrewd observations of thoughtful Spaniards like Juan de Cárdenas. Literary criticism has focused this phenomenon, as though it were its center of light, on the figure of the Mexican playwright Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, who through Corneille—and on Molière by way of Corneille—exercised a great influence on the modern French theater. And what I say of Mexico because I am more familiar with it and know it better, could be said to a greater or less degree of the rest of our America. This early incompatibility already held the first seeds of America's long aspiration to independence.

The second dilemma: no sooner had independence been achieved than the inevitable conflict began between Americanists and Hispanists, between those who put the emphasis on the new reality and those who stressed the hallowed tradition. Sarmiento is, first of all, an Americanist; Bello, a Hispanist. In Mexico there still exists the memory of a controversy between the Indian Ignacio Ramírez and the Spaniard Emilio Castelar, which hinged upon similar discrepancies. This polemic often turned into a duel between liberals and conservatives. Independence was still so recent that neither father nor son knew how to adopt a sensible attitude toward it.

The third dilemma: one of our poles lies in Europe, the other in the United States. We receive inspiration from both. Our utopian constitutions combine the political philosophy of France with the Federalism under a president of the United States. The sirens of

Europe and the sirens of the United States woo us at the same time. By and large, the mind of our America (without denying the affinities between it and the more select spirits of the other America) seems to find in Europe a more universal vision of human problems, more basic, more in keeping with its own feelings. Aside from historic misgivings, fortunately ever less justified and needing no mention here, we are not in sympathy with the tendency toward race distinctions. To speak only of the Anglo-Saxon world, we like the natural way in which a man like Chesterton or George Bernard Shaw regards the people of all climates, ascribing to them equal standing as human beings. It displeases us to regard any human type as a mere curiosity or an interesting exotic case, for this is not the basis of real moral sympathy. The first preceptors of our America, the missionaries, lambs with the heart of lions, terrible in their independence, embraced the Indians with love, promising them the same heaven which had been promised themselves. The first conquerors established the principle of equality in the delights of miscegenation. Thus, in the Antilles, Miguel Díaz and his Cacica, whom we meet in the pages of Juan de Castellanos; thus that soldier, one Guerrero, who but for this would have been unknown, who refused to follow Cortés's Spaniards because he liked it among the Indians and, in the words of the old Spanish ballad, "had a beautiful wife and children like flowers." And in Brazil the famous João Ramalho and El Caramuru, who fascinated the Indian women of San Vicente and Bahía. Cortés himself grasps the secret of his conquest as he rests upon the breast of Doña Marina. Perhaps it is there that he comes to love his prey as other colder-hearted captains never learned to do (Cæsar of Gaul), and in his soul certain dreams of autonomy began to spring up which, behind closed doors and in the bosom of his family, he was to communicate to his sons, who later suffered punishment for plotting against the mother country. Imperial Iberia did far more than govern us; she continually poured out her blood over America. For that reason

here, in our lands, we still consider life a generous transfusion of blood.

These are the stage, the chorus, the leading character. I have spoken of the principal dilemmas in our behavior. I spoke of our watchword as being improvisation, and now I must try to make myself clear. The American mind is of necessity less highly specialized than the European. Our social structure has brought this about. Our writers here have greater connections with society. It is rare for a writer to be only a writer; he is almost always a writer and something else, or several things else. A situation of this sort has its advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages: when called to action, the mind discovers that the norms of action are the norms of compromise, and this is not pleasant. Hampered by constant interruptions, the intellectual output is sporadic, the mind tends to wander. The advantages come from the special state the world is in today. In this crisis, in this overturning of values which has affected us all and which demands the efforts of all and particularly of the intelligence (unless we are willing that ignorance and despair chart mankind's future), the American mind is more accustomed to the open air; we do not have, there is no place among us for, ivory towers. This new hard choice between advantages and disadvantages does, however, admit of a synthesis, an equilibrium that resolves itself into a special manner of understanding intellectual work as a public service and a duty to civilization. Naturally, and fortunately, this does not eliminate the possibility of a pause, the luxury of a purely literary diversion, which is a spring in which it is good to immerse oneself whenever possible. Whereas in Europe the pause was the normal state of affairs. The European writer is born, as it were, on the top platform of the Eiffel Tower. With but a slight effort more he frisks about on the intellectual peaks. The American writer is born in the inner region of perpetual fire. By a titanic effort, in which he is often helped by a feverish vitality that almost seems genius, he barely manages to emerge to

the surface of the earth. My colleagues of Europe: concealed under this or that mediocre American there often lies a storehouse of qualities that really warrant your interest and attention. Consider him, if it so please you, from the angle of the profession that, in the words of Guyau and our own José Enrique Rodó, is superior to all others: the profession of being a man. Viewed thus, there is no danger of science losing touch with its surroundings in its isolated conquests of a millimeter to this side or to that, dangers whose consequences Jules Romains has so lucidly set forth. Nor is there, in this peculiarly American aspect, any threat of losing touch with Europe. On the contrary, it is my feeling that the American mind is called upon to fulfill the highest complementary function: that of establishing syntheses, even though they be of necessity provisional; that of applying the results quickly, testing the truth of the theory on the living tissue of action. In this way, just as European economy now has need of us, so will the mind of Europe need us, too.

For this beautiful harmony which I envisage, the American mind is peculiarly suited, for our mentality, at the same time that it is deeply rooted in our soil, is, as I have said, by nature international. The explanation of this lies not merely in the fact that America is fitted to be the crucible of that "cosmic race" of the future which Vasconcelos has dreamed of, but also in the fact that we have had to go to the great centers of Europe for our cultural equipment, and in this way have become accustomed to handle ideas of foreign origin as though they were our own. While the European has never had to approach America to construct the system of his world, the American studies, knows, follows Europe from the time he starts to school. Out of this comes a curious consequence, which I cite without vanity or rancor: in the computation of errors or partial misunderstanding in the European books dealing with America and the American books that deal with Europe, the balance is in our favor. It is a professional secret among Ameri-

can writers that European literature frequently misquotes us, spells our names and those of our geography wrong, and so on. Our innate internationalism, based, fortunately, on the historic brotherhood that links our numerous republics together, gives the American mind an indisputably peace-loving inclination. With an ever more skillful hand this intervenes and overrules the threat of armed conflict, and in the international field it makes itself felt among those groups which are more contaminated by the political pugnaciousness now in fashion. This will facilitate a gracious junction with the pacifistic idealism of the greatest North American minds.

Our America should live as though it were always making ready to realize the dream to which its discovery gave rise among the thinkers of Europe: the dream of Utopia, of the happy republic, which lent peculiar warmth to the pages of Montaigne as he reflected on the surprises and marvels of the New World.

In the new literature of America there is a clearly marked trend toward autochthony, which is deserving of the deepest respect, especially when it does not stop with the facile achievement of local color, but attempts to plumb the depths of our psychological realities. This warmth of youth comes to rectify that hereditary sadness, that uneasy conscience, with which our forebears regarded the world, feeling themselves the offspring of the great original sin of the *capitis deminutio* of being American.

The generation that immediately preceded us still believed it had been born within the prison walls of several concentric fatalities. The most pessimistic felt that the first great fatality was that of living: the maxim of Silenus, repeated by Calderón:

Because man's greatest crime
Is to have been born.

Inside this came the second circle, which consisted in having arrived too late in a world that was old. The echoes had not yet

died away of that romanticism which the Cuban Juan Clemente summed up in two verses:

My days are those of ancient Rome
And my brothers died with Greece.

In our world of letters a sentimental anachronism held sway over the majority of our writers.

This was the third circle: in addition to that of being a human being and being modern, the very specific one of being American, born and rooted in a soil that was not the real center of civilization, but a branch office. To use the phrase of Victoria Ocampo, our grandfathers felt themselves the "owners of souls that had no passport." And besides being an American, another handicap in life's race was being a Latin or of Latin spiritual formation. It was the epoch of "*A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?*" It was the epoch of submission to the existing state of things, without hope of a definite change or faith in redemption. Only the noble, frank exhortations of Rodó carried a word of hope. And not only did we belong to the Latin world; within it, it was again our fatality to belong to the Hispanic world. For a long time the old lion had been on the downgrade. Spain, disillusioned and destitute, seemed to have abjured its former greatness. The sun had set on its domain. And, to cap the climax, the Spanish Americans did not get along well with Spain. This was the case until a little before Spain's recent suffering, which has wounded us all. And even within the Hispanic world we were a dialect, a derivation, a second-rate thing, a branch once more: Spanish-American, a name that is joined by a little hyphen like a chain. Within Spanish America the ones to whom I am near-bred complained of having been born in a region full of Indians. The Indian, then, was a burden, not yet a proud duty and a strong hope. Within this region others even closer to me had reason to lament the fact that they had been born in dangerous proximity to a strong, powerful neighbor, a sentiment that has now been trans-

formed into the supreme honor of representing the race on one front. Of all these specters that the wind has been sweeping away or the light of day has transfigured into, at the very least, realities that can be accepted, there are still a few left in corners of America, and they must be hunted down by opening the windows wide and calling superstition by its name, which is the way to exorcise it. But, on the whole, this has all been rectified.

Having made the foregoing claims, and after this presentation of the case, I venture to assume the style of a legal summing-up. For a time now between Spain and us there has existed a feeling of similarity and equality. And now I say to this jury of international thinkers before me: recognize the right to world citizenship that we have achieved. We have come of age. Very soon you will get into the habit of including us in your plans.

(1939; Última Tule, 1942)

The Position of America

A TYPOGRAPHICAL error has slipped into the theme I have been assigned, "America, cradle of a new culture," for it should be protected and qualified by a question mark if it is to correspond to my intention. It does not belong to the order of statement which grammarians classify as the indicative mood, but to those which imply doubt and belief, insinuation and hope. Aristotle would have banned it from his *Dialectics* and have admitted it only in his *Rhetoric*. It refers to a principle of probability, not certainty. By reason of the spirit with which I approach it, I would venture to say that it belongs to a fanciful mood of grammar: the prophetic mood.

What is this unbridled impulse to embark on prophecies?

Have we, perhaps, lost the scientific compass? Have we, perhaps, anticipating the disappearance of civilization, feeling that it has betrayed us and not hesitating to sacrifice it, decided to regress to the pre-logical era of primitive peoples, to the times when the tribes were ruled by arbitrary divination, taking refuge, as our Ignacio Ramírez said, "in that hospitable no-man's-land of all exiles, where we would give ourselves over nightly to a frenzied, mænadic dance"?

No, prophecy cannot satisfy science, but it can satisfy the longing to survive, and in this sense it, too, contains a truth. If dialectic's field is things as they are, that of its antistrophe, rhetoric, is what we want them to be. Today, at any rate, we Americans have the right, perhaps the duty, to be a kind of prophets, for the very reason that, confronted by the disasters of the world and the agony of mankind, we still aspire to survive. America, like William Morris's heroine, prefers living to dying.

In any case, the term "new culture" is very ambitious. In itself the assumption that human affairs can be absolutely new indicates a lack of culture and an absence of the humanistic sense. Even conceding it a relative value—to the extent that Greece may be said to represent a new culture though it stems in an unbroken line from Egypt and the Near East; or that western Europe represents a new culture though it stems in an unbroken line from classic antiquity—this notion must at once be further qualified lest we be taken for charlatans or, to employ the term used in Juan de Valdés's *Dialogo de la lengua*, for *hablistanes*, chatterboxes. Only after a lapse of centuries, judging *a posteriori* and allowing for the angle of perspective lent by distance, can it be known whether America has managed to work out a relatively new culture. In our case it is rather a question of entering upon the inheritance of a culture in view of the manifest collapse of the nations that built it. It is a question of taking a position and perhaps of taking possession of a culture. Nor is it admissible, in a world so crisscrossed with means of communication between all peoples, a world that for so

long has been co-mingling ideas, techniques, and emotions, to speak, like an anthropologist looking into the past when human groups lived without mutual knowledge or interchange, of cultures in the plural. It seems rather that it is culture's duty, at least theoretically, to be one. And just because of this hope of unification America appears a possible laboratory for this attempt at synthesis.

To ask whether America is ripe for a task of this sort is not farfetched, but it is idle. On various occasions we have been confronted with this question, and we have had to answer that destiny cannot be put off; that, in this order of phenomena outside the control of our will, hardly a nation has ever selected its hour; that perhaps most nations have been prematurely summoned to their arduous task. On the other hand, this sudden confrontation with an unexpected responsibility is the strongest contributing factor to the maturing of nations as well as men. The adopting of a position toward culture is not here an automatic investiture. It implies an act of will. And this will can be stimulated and educated. This orientation of the will—a will that already exists dispersed but clearly manifest throughout the continent—is the function of the prophecy, the sermon, the divining power of the word, and is entrusted to the teachers and writers of America. If we do not heed it in time we shall have failed, we shall be lost, we shall not have hearkened to the cry of Anchises in Hades: "*Tu Marcellus eris!*"

This pledge of destiny has an obverse and a reverse. The reverse would seem to indicate that the capacity of Europe is already exhausted, the obverse that the American bases already ensure the probability of success. Let us examine both sides, making an effort to avoid the sins of both ingratitude and pride. As for the first, it is possible that Europe may not emerge exhausted from the catastrophe, a thing we fervently desire. Even completely conquered peoples often continue to set the course of a culture, conquering their conquerors, thus bringing about that process of osmosis for which the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz has coined the term "transculturation." At the same time, who would

venture to affirm that Europe will emerge unscathed and sound from this frightful ordeal? Now, this very weakening of Europe imposes on America the duty of coming to her assistance, and that in itself is adopting a position. As for the second, the bases that guarantee America's possibilities, we are in duty bound to pause an instant to recall how participation (passive) and contribution (active) work in a culture, and this obliges us to begin with the briefest possible description of what constitutes a culture. I shall proceed by functional outlines, inasmuch as culture is a fluid substance, in continuous movement and change, which does not admit of being defined in static terms unless they be of short range. I shall proceed by general references, for these are sufficient to awaken the memory of notions we all possess.

Except for conventional definitions, culture in its broadest sense is confused with civilization, and this acquires meaning only when, surmounting the frontiers of groups and periods, it is applied to those vast societies, those vast areas of human time and space, which Toynbee calls intelligible historic fields. Taken in this way culture is a sum of emotions, norms, and ideas, whose result and whose criterion of evaluation are human behavior: awareness of life, standards with which to answer life, knowledge that is the result of all this and that in turn acts upon it all. This formula comprehends both the representation of this world and the other world and the reactions of one upon the other, the knowledge of power, the knowledge of the mind, and the knowledge of salvation Max Scheler speaks of. But not to limit ourselves to this formula in man's inner being alone, which would not advance us one step, we must take cognizance of the fact that true culture exists only in so far as its content can be transmitted. This transmission is effected, on the horizontal plane, the spatial, by communication between contemporaries, and on the vertical plane, the temporal, by tradition between generations. This means that, though nature gives rise to culture, it does not provide it ready-made, that man must bring it out of himself; that culture is learned, not acquired by

biological inheritance. But during the process of learning, it, in turn, is transformed, deflected, broadened; it takes on new qualities, discards others. So there is no completely integrated culture, nor does each and every one of us even need to know the theoretically complete pattern of the culture in which we live.

The point is that culture offers different factors, which may roughly be grouped on four different levels—even though these be levels of metamorphosis—depending on their drive or necessity in the sustaining of human societies: Universals, Specialties, Alternatives, and Individual Peculiarities, as Linton terms them in *The Study of Man.* The Universals and even the Specialties are the nucleus of a culture and determine its character. The Alternatives and Individual Peculiarities are the periphery of a culture and may reach the point of complete indetermination. Yet, in a certain sense, it can be said that the essence of a culture is centripetally nourished and draws its force from the periphery to the center. This calls for further explanation.

The Universals are the common inheritance of all the members of a society, and for this very reason are the indispensable basis of a culture. Emotions, norms, and knowledge, which correspond to the "general topics" of Aristotle, the lowest or sole common denominators that can include all the members of the group, these factors make up the bed of the stream of social conscience upon which all the other factors precipitate their products. They are not, therefore, the beginning or genesis of a culture, but its final flowering, its balance, its result. Like all results, this one is not necessarily equal to the sum of its parts. It is qualitatively different, and may even, at first glance, be in contradiction with certain of the factors to which I shall refer later. The maximum participation in a culture is in these universal factors, but it is, in a measure, passive, automatic. It is the air we breathe. It is, within the change inherent in life, the basis of the things that vary least. Among these factors are things that have not changed since man first appeared and will not change as long as the species exists.

In this field it is possible to speak of new things only in a very relative manner. There is a maximum participation from the collective and unconscious point of view; but from the individual and conscious standpoint a minimum, indirect, and remote contribution. A nation, a group of nations, a continent cannot propose by premeditated accord to change the Universals of a culture. A culture cannot be ordered *à la carte* like a dinner. The founders of the romantic theory of the epic almost persuaded themselves that the *Iliad* was the product of a plebiscitary art, as though the poem had burst like a divine storm from the coming together of peoples, as Sainte-Beuve puts it. But even these theoreticians would have found themselves at a loss if they had been asked: "Do you think the culture the *Iliad* presupposes was also the result of a collective decision?"

Specialties are of the order of the "specific topics" of Aristotle, and refer more precisely to knowledge. Good and evil in general, the more and the less in general, were universal matters, and within range, so to speak, of everyone's means. Good and evil or more and less in the biological or physical field already begin to carry us from the common patrimony to the patrimony of specialists in specific disciplines or sciences. The concepts to which they refer do not need to be shared by all the members of a society, but for the well-being of the whole it is indispensable that certain members possess them. Specialties develop into Universals as the function of learning, characteristic of the culture, increases. Certain men of any nation or continent of necessity share this level of culture, provided only the nations in question are already incorporated into this culture; but, in addition, they can contribute to this level of culture provided only that they possess the necessary conditions for their work. To a greater or less degree the nations of America possess these conditions, and it is now a question of increasing them, which is the province of political culture in its broadest sense. In principle, there is no opposition to this. In a small village an observatory may be installed for the measurement

of cosmic rays, one of science's most delicate achievements. From one end of the continent to the other, above the majority engaged in the elemental activity of earning a living, there are minorities devoted to the specialized activity of philosophical thinking, minorities whose contact with one another grows daily. The means of communication between contemporaries or by tradition between generations have achieved in America their full development. They are susceptible of perfection, and must be perfected, of course. This is the realm of prophecy, of the prospective function of the word, which is none other than rhetorical suasion; this is the labor of teachers and writers.

Passing to the third element of culture, Alternatives, we enter upon the order of relatively indifferent substitutions. This concept is related to the knowledge of power: a variety of methods for achieving social ends. When there are several relatively equivalent means of achieving the same end, there is a choice, an option. Members of a society can choose different roads to Rome, and can use airplane, automobile, or railroad. Each method has its own technique. The relative techniques are not, in principle, indispensable except in connection with the immediate end, with the points of interest that history emphasizes in each moment of its development. Alternatives continue as such only as long as their influence is superficial. As soon as one of these traits takes on the necessary importance, it displaces one or several other traits and precipitates itself toward the core of the culture as a Specialty or Universal, as the case may be. Alternatives represent the experimental field and, at times, the sore spots that may turn into revolutions. It is superfluous to say that option of participation or of contribution is open to our America. This depends, in the last analysis, on the conquests in the field of specialization, and the argument goes back to the preceding argument.

Peculiarities take us into the field of individual action. Peculiarities can, in each case, be lost or utilized for the purposes of a culture. If the first takes place, we need not waste time ex-

amining them; if the second, they result in invention and discovery. These, as they are extended by social imitation, according to Tarde's concept, signify the continuous nourishment of a culture, that which makes it possible for it to renew itself and change with the invariable changes of life either as innovations demanded by circumstances or through disinterested discovery, and whose incorporation into the body of a culture will appear only *a posteriori*. Here the concept of the new assumes its full value. When there is an overemphasis on the new, as in our present epoch, total integration, which in principle is the aim of a culture, becomes disrupted through excess, and the composite organism seems to lose a part of its coherence. This is what is meant when it is said, in analyzing the crisis of our times, that the machine has outdistanced man. Inventions and discoveries appear not to have been properly assimilated as yet into the ethical content of culture. It becomes apparent, therefore, that Individual Peculiarities are, or may be, the genetic foci of a culture, but that in a sense they resemble the individual mutations of biology, being transmitted only to a limited group; and if they do not extend themselves when they should and are not preserved by conscious reiteration, they finally disappear. This is directly related to a characteristic of a culture itself, that it disintegrates when its line of transmission is cut. This is, in a way, analogous to what takes place with Creation, according to certain theological doctrines: it must be renewed continually, because it comes into being and dies continuously.

In the same way the new traits of a culture, those which guarantee its endurance, inasmuch as life never stands still, are born, we might say, outside culture, in the individual variation of invention or discovery. How could this possibility be denied the new continent when exceptions of genius still manifest themselves here? Rubén Darío, the great reformer of our poetic idiom, comparable only to Garcilaso or Góngora, came from a little Nicaraguan village unheard of by the world before him.

The foregoing review of the structure of a culture in its four

factors, those of the core and those of the outlying zone, was not really necessary to reach the conclusion that history had already proved to us beforehand: the possibility of America's taking its rightful place in culture by participation and by contribution. But it was advisable in order to emphasize two observations to which it lends itself. First, that in a period of renewal of content such as ours, the opposite of the classic epochs with their relative stability and still waters, the centers of culture tend to extend themselves so that the cores of Specialties and Universals suffer from the influx of new, incoherent elements. This phenomenon of incoherence and restlessness is the explanation of the moral crisis the world is suffering, and the only means of salvation lies in intensifying the transmission by communication and learning. What does this mean? This means democracy. Only democracy can save us, because it alone makes possible the full, unrestricted circulation of the blood, with all its new elements, throughout the social organism. The second observation refers to the human sources from which culture stems, and to the direction of the social intelligence in a sense favorable to the harmonization of culture. For culture exists only in the intelligence of individuals, and is maintained by it alone. Let us now return to the discussion at the point where we left it to examine the four cultural factors, and take under consideration the bases of American intelligence in so far as they affect our topic. That is to say, we shall pass over the waverings and accidents from which the history of America may have suffered since its inception and in its evolution to focus our attention only on its present possibilities.

The American possibilities reduce themselves to a possibility of continental harmony. Is there today an orientation of the American intelligence sufficiently uniform to guarantee the adoption of a position vis-à-vis culture? First let us examine the homogeneities, then the differences, and then ask ourselves whether these differences are by nature insuperable or can be overcome through the conscious effect of education and the state of evolu-

tion that the societies of America have reached. If this latter assumption gives us a positive conclusion, our thesis will have been proved and I shall have only to conclude these pages with an exhortation or peroration, as prescribed by the canons of classic rhetoric, on behalf of American harmony.

The first observation has to do with the general concept that attended America's appearance. After having been foreshadowed by a thousand inklings in mythology and poetry as though it were an inescapable mental concept, America emerged as a geographic reality. And from that moment its role was to enrich the utopian dream of the world, the faith in a better, happier, freer society. This was how European thought understood it, the ministers of all Christian sects, the wanderers and refugees of all nations, and even those who merely wanted to start life over again, wiping out their previous errors or accidents of behavior. The fact that to this conception the desire of exploitation was cojoined is only human, and in no wise invalidates the philosophic aspect of the process. As a result of its lighter ballast of fortuitous traditions, of stratifications brought about by the accidents of history rather than by actual desires, America is, essentially, a greater possibility for the choice of the good. This pattern, like an overall design of behavior, holds true for all the New World. It is profitless to try to discover whether this phenomenon is owing to the concept of youth, which for the case has only a limited meaning, or rather, as is my belief, to the concept of a new point of departure. To be sure, this new point of departure implies the utilization of previously established forms of culture and is always exposed to unforeseen accretions of useless elements. Every trait extends its influence far beyond the need that gave rise to it, and anthropologists explain to us that the custom of mounting a horse from the left side dates from the time when every rider wore a sword on his left flank. But, if one allows oneself to become bogged down in such details, it is because of one's incapacity to distinguish between the essential and the accidental. The guiding concept of America is a concept of im-

provement, based on the possibility of selecting and discarding. It could even be said that this aspiration is common to all men. But if we expand it to groups in society, it becomes evident that America affords a more propitious soil for it than Europe.

The second observation refers to something that, at first glance, would seem a shortcoming: the colonial or subordinate character of America's origins. On the one hand, in every colonial culture there exists a trend to revert toward the more elemental or more antiquated forms of the mother country. This regression is explained by difficulties of transportation, by difficulties of adaptation to the new environment, and by the pedagogical problems involved in transmitting to strange peoples a language, a religion, a vision of the world unrelated to their habitual customs. This is the "theology St. Thomas ignored," whose problems vexed the missionaries of New Spain. We see in the origins of the American theater—the theater was at once adopted because, by reason of its wide appeal, it was the literary form most suited to propagate the new institutional forms—that in order to serve religious ends the American stage created by the Catholic priests reverted to ritual, ecclesiastic types that had already been superseded in the unfettered theater of the mother country. To this unavoidable regression was added another that was optional and that came about as a result of the state of the public conscience in the period of creation of the American colonies: the mother country threw up walls around its colonies and reserved to itself the exclusive privileges of economic exploitation and cultural transmission. The breaking of these economic barriers was one of the incentives that moved England to favor the cause of Spanish-American independence. The ideas of the French Revolution, which exercised such a strong influence on the philosophy of the independence, entered our world surreptitiously and occasioned investigations and punishments. The rebel leader Hidalgo was branded as an *afrancesado*—a follower of French ideas. And the fact that certain European scientists, such as Humboldt, were able to secure permission to

travel through the American colonies and study them freely was one of the effects of the liberalism that was spreading, was in itself an indication that the future emancipation—to which certain ministers of the Crown wanted to make concessions in the hope of warding off the greater evils they were beginning to sense—was already handwriting on the wall of the existing system.

This inevitable invasion of liberalism, or open-door politics, reached its climax with the American independences. From that moment the former colonies were left in the category of societies that had not created a culture, but had received it ready-made from all the cultural centers of the world. By an understandable process, the entire cultural heritage of the world became their patrimony on terms of equality. Their culture, however, as far as our peoples are concerned, always stemming from the Hispanic source, broadened with the absorption of all foreign contributions, at times as an act of deliberate hostility and reaction against the former mother country, but more often out of conviction and as the result of an attitude of universalism. This universalism thus becomes the hidden asset of their colonial formation. The citizen of those nations which have been the great creators of culture has little need to leave his own linguistic frontiers to round out his vision of the world. The citizen of the sometime colony must, of necessity, establish international contacts to complement his vision; in addition, he is in the habit of seeking the sources of knowledge abroad. This explains the foreign flavor characteristic of certain periods of our cultural adolescence. Later on, in the period of maturity which has just begun, comes the casting-up of accounts among our nations, the common denominators this reveals, and the envisagement of new techniques acquired through the study of their now visible, developed characteristics, national and continental.

Some years ago, considering this aspect of American suppleness, which we could call the ease of international understanding, I touched upon these points of view before the American writers

assembled at a meeting of the PEN Club of Buenos Aires, and I employed the term "synthesis of culture," which the Argentine philosopher Francisco Romero, without any previous agreement between us, used for the same purpose. The rapidity of the discussions that followed and lack of time prevented the Europeans from grasping what we had meant to convey. Some of them reached the unfortunate conclusion that our objective was to reduce the function of the American intelligence to organizing compendiums of European culture. In the first place, we were not referring to the European tradition alone, but to the entire human heritage. Then, we understood by "synthesis" the creation of a patrimonial storehouse where everything would be guarded, and for this it seemed to us that the American mind was well equipped, for the reasons previously set forth. Finally, we did not mean by "synthesis" to imply a compendium or résumé, a mere arithmetical sum, which is not what happens when oxygen and hydrogen unite to form water, but a qualitatively new organization endowed, as is the case in every synthesis, with virtues of its own. Once more, a new point of departure. This is the second observation on the homogeneities of America.

The third is closely related to the foregoing, and refers specifically to international habits in a more limited and political sense. By and large, and without entering upon comparisons, which are always odious, the nations of America, as a result of their analogous historical formation, are less foreign to one another than are the nations of the old continent. They share a common basis of culture, religion, and language. And by reason of their ethnic structure they are singularly fitted not to exaggerate the trifling importance of racial differences, a sterile concept devoid of scientific basis and with no bearing on human dignity and intelligence, which, basically, react uniformly when accorded equal possibilities; a transitory matter, moreover, whose complete equalization our America regards as one of its inappellable and indisputable social obligations. We believe that such barriers as

still persist are bound to disappear in the process of democracy and, meanwhile, represent only cysts, like others to be found in the body of a culture, inasmuch as the ideal of complete integration is a goal to be striven for, and no nation on earth lives completely faithful to the norms it has established, though this in no wise implies denying the validity of these norms.

This great homogeneity in the national majorities of America made it possible for our countries, in keeping with Bolívar's dream, to carry on a certain steady, harmonious intercourse on an international level over a period of more than half a century prior to the European League of Nations, and with far more lasting results, in spite of the shortcomings and imperfections of all human endeavors, and nothing short of amazing when one considers the territorial scope and the variety of nations involved.

The authenticity of this homogeneous character and the ultimate guarantee of its success lie in the fact that this international co-operation functioned long before it acquired institutional form. The concept of the defense of America against foreign threats antedates the Pan American Union—which for the most part limits its activities to intercontinental conciliations—and existed long before the latest, redoubled obligations we have acquired as the result of the confusion that dominates the world today. At the time of Napoleon III's invasion of Mexico the whole continent reacted without previous accord as though the threat to one affected all. From one end to the other came proofs of a continental solidarity. The United States became hostilely alert. From the south, from Chile, came men and supplies. And even Brazil, in spite of its dynastic ties, ostracized Maximilian's diplomatic envoys to the point where they finally decided that the most prudent course was to abandon the Legation almost without giving notice of their departure.

And if we go farther back in history, did not all the South American countries lend each other troops, leaders, heroes, to assist one another in the campaigns of independence and in the

defense of the continent, considering it a matter of common interest, even as in our own day? With penetrating instinct, the proclamations of the first insurgents were directed to Americans in general and not to the inhabitants of this or that country separated by the accidents of geography and history or the administrative convenience of the colonial regime.

By analyzing the processes of history during the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth we would be able to set up a certain parity of stages which would reveal in varying degree the homogeneity of America: the coincidence of the attempts at emancipation; the same initial indecisions with regard to the form of government, all ending in the adoption of the republic; intellectual influences having the same origins; a parallel predominance of the military; then the rising intellectual tide in the era of lawyers; the economic and technical era colored by positivism and Saint-Simonism; the recent revolutionary crises and overthrow of dictatorships; the growth of interest in the autochthonous elements; and so on. This is not the moment to enter upon a discussion of these manifestations, which are familiar to us all and apparent at a glance.

Finally, and to conclude the discussion of the homogeneities, the destiny of America has so ordered it that among us even the specialist is more imperiously called upon than his European colleague not to forsake his general profession of being a man, and to serve as teacher, legislator, statesman more frequently, to keep in closer touch with the man in the street. Many have rightly complained that this distracts them from pure research, obliges the man of intellect to play the difficult role of a man of affairs, which invariably entails compromise or the partial sacrifice of principles. But in moments of crisis and social reconstruction this becomes an advantage because the Specialty is better prepared to merge into the cultural core of Universals.

As for the differences, or heterogeneities, of America, they reduce themselves to concepts of race and language. I have said

enough on the subject of race, and it would become tiresome to pursue it further. As far as America is concerned, the only race is the human race. Even before modern scientific investigations Freeman, in his *Historical Essays* (1879), had already spoken out on the limited range of such notions in themselves and in relation to one another. The nature of societies is determined by their geographic location, their economic ties, and their common culture, rather than by race or even language. Societies dominated by another racial group and converted to its religion come to adopt the style of dress, the gestures, and even the physical characteristics of this group. The inhabitants of certain Polish villages that had been converted to Judaism passed for Jews a century later. When political interests made it advisable, the Japanese were accorded Aryan status, and those so desiring constituted themselves representative Aryans.

There is no denying that differences of language create gaps in understanding, that each language has its own metaphysics or conception of the world. But this gap tends to disappear between the communities of culture of our present-day world, where the minorities that establish the social norms are educated and think in several languages. Transmission sets up bridges, seeks fords, the shortest roads to indispensable unity. Among the Latin tongues of Europe, Portuguese is separated from Spanish by a fragile cobweb even though it has been a factor in preserving the unity of the noble Brazilian people. French is known and employed by the cultural leaders of other nations; the autochthonous tongues are an archæological survival, and the trend of this continent is to win those who still speak them to the use and advantage of the great national languages. There remain, in evident contrast, the dialogue between the Anglo-Saxon tongue and the world of the Latin languages. Day by day the cultural campaigns directed toward mutual interchange and enrichment progress. Neither of these languages contains cultural factors that defy translation, aside from peculiarities more in the nature of philological survivals,

comparable to the dialectal idiosyncrasies of the different Latin-American countries or the various linguistic zones of their remote areas. The question of unbridgeable gulfs cannot be seriously propounded in problems having to do with a synthesis of culture. The great moral and political examples, the free wind of democracy that blows through the continent, exert their leveling force on behalf of *homonoia*, or international harmony.

We must bear in mind at this moment that the world America confronts is not an easy one. Economic disintegration is inevitable. But there are advantages to be drawn even from this, which will make it possible for us to slough off traditions and rid ourselves of the adipose tissue that hampers old cultures. Human societies are not built in response only to reason and necessity. There are always problems present that some call supernatural and others merely extra-natural. And they are inwardly nourished by a kind of inventiveness for its own sake, a maximum stimulus to progress, which undoubtedly comes from mankind's infinite capacity for growing bored. The fact is that societies sometimes disintegrate for irrational reasons that develop with time, like those Eskimos who starve to death because of a taboo against fishing in a certain season. The ancient Japanese, whose warfare was carried on according to a prescribed ritual, fell under the swords of the Mongols, who neither understood nor respected their ceremonies. Nations brought up in the theories of international law have suffered a violation of their good faith by an aggression employing methods that had been outlawed, just as a fencing master would be helpless against a gangster's knife.

It is the responsibility of the select minorities, of the seers, the teachers and writers, to guide the will of America toward assuming its place in culture, for it is by them that cultural movements are engendered. And on them rests the immediate scrutiny of conscience, the careful examination of man's heritage, in order to prepare our peoples to make sacrifices when the hour of universal poverty, which is not far distant, arrives. Their influence

must be exerted on the young, for whom everything is new, both the new and the old, and who with the same proud ease assimilate the one and the other when their hour comes to plunge into the business of living. Let us devote all our care to the youth of America whom this heroic future awaits, and soon. One day the world will thank us for it.

The three types of knowledge that Scheler defines have each had their day of triumph: "In India, the knowledge of salvation and the vital and psychic technique of the power of man over himself; in China and Greece, knowledge as an end in itself; in the Occident, since the beginning of the twelfth century, the practical knowledge of the special, positive sciences." But, he adds: "the hour has come to make way for the new level, and at the same time an integration of these three partial directions of the spirit." It is a somewhat summary outline, but it brings out clearly the meaning I had in mind when speaking of the American synthesis. The knowledge of salvation alone would turn us into prostrate peoples, gaunt, begging holy mendicants; knowledge as an end in itself, into sophists and mandarins; knowledge for power alone, into scientific barbarians, who, as we have seen, are the worst type of barbarians. Only a balance of all these can ensure our loyalty to earth and heaven. This is the mission of America.

(*1942; Tentativas y Orientaciones, 1944*)

Epistle to the Pinzóns

Martín Alonso, Vicente Yáñez, Francisco Martín:

Your private wrangles with Christopher Columbus do not affect America's gratitude. Particularly in view of the fact that Martín Alonso, who died on his return from the first voyage, was not even able to plead his own case. Your personal shortcomings of character matter nothing to history. The possible confusion of identity among you makes the verdict even more difficult, and we would be well advised to suspend judgment on matters on which in truth we lack information. We have no way of knowing for certain whether it was Martín Alonso or Francisco Martín who accompanied the Frenchman Jean Cousin as second

in command on the supposed expedition that, some say, sailed from Dieppe, at the suggestion of Father Descaliers, master pilot, and reached the mouth of the Amazon, where, turning toward Africa, it passed Point Aduja, which Bartolomé Díaz had touched upon already. Those who hold the opinion that it was Martín Alonso claim that he was guilty of disloyal conduct, inciting to mutiny on board against his captain so he could deprive him of the glory of the undertaking, and that for this reason, on his return, he was tried and sentenced by the Admiralty Court to lose his honors and exemptions and made permanently ineligible to serve the city. Thus they account for the authority with which Martín Alonso managed to calm Columbus's mutinous crew, like a man who already knew those waters, for the assurance with which he advised veering toward the southwest, which may have been responsible for their reaching the island of San Salvador instead of Florida, and even for his disobedience in secretly leaving Columbus in Cuba to make a fruitless forty-five-day search for the already discovered route of the Amazon. What we do know is that as soon as they sighted land, land that Martín Alonso's caravel, the lead ship, was the first to discover, his defects began to reveal themselves—his jealousy of the makeshift admiral who was in command, his ambition to be the real discoverer. What we do know is that on the return voyage, in spite of the damaged state of the *Pinta*, Martín Alonso made superhuman efforts—even blessing the sea, which had become tempestuous—to be the first to arrive with the news of the land discovered, and thus to reap the first rewards. All to no avail, for Columbus managed to come in before him. There have also been attempts to charge Vicente Yáñez with sinister intentions, though he never deserted Columbus. But nothing can erase the established facts and the truths that have been discovered with regard to the Pinzóns' co-operation, which was decisive.

Yours was a hard fate, Pinzóns! You spent your lives dreaming of being discoverers; you were professional mariners;

you joined all the famous expeditions of the day, venturing credit, money, family, and lives, and not one of you has gone down in history as the discoverer of a single island. It was Martín Alonso's lot to yield precedence to Columbus. Vicente Yáñez—who in 1500 with four caravels reached the Cape of Santa María de la Consolación (be this San Agustín, Mucusipe, or Cabo Norte), continued along the coast of Brazil leaving landmarks, observed the *pororoca*, the bore of the Marañon at the mouth of the Mearim, and entered as far as the delta of the Amazon—lost out to Cabral, who was not a navigator either, and who also discovered Brazil by chance, three months later.

The thing to bear carefully in mind is that Martín Alonso was a rich seaman, known for his skill and his standing, and not a foreign Johnny-come-lately whom people were loath to trust. He was one of a large, well-known, reputable family; he was a man of some learning, on friendly terms with the scholars of Rome, and, when circumstances demanded, a bold man, as he proved in encounters with the Portuguese. Of the three caravels of the Discovery, two were his. Thanks to his influence, his brothers and Juan de la Cosa, skilled in the art of navigation, decided to help Columbus. Out of his own pocket he put up a third of the money for the expedition; and, finally, it was thanks only to his personal guarantee that it was possible to recruit men for the voyage. For it is a known fact that before he joined up with Columbus, it was impossible to sign on a single sailor in spite of the royal decree granting amnesty to all prisoners willing to offer their services.

This is the way things happened. After the articles of agreement between the Crown and Columbus had been signed, the city of Palos, an important center of overseas commerce, was ordered to supply two caravels at its own expense. Why this order? From the royal letter we learn that this command was part of a sentence under which, "because of certain infractions of the law," the city of Palos was obliged to put two armed caravels at the service of the King for a year. It was, therefore, a penalty that

had to be paid, and in no wise a generous gesture on the part of the King. But the city of Palos paid no attention to the order, and Columbus came to feel that he had been abandoned. The *Pinta* was then impounded by the officers of the Crown and turned over to Columbus. But of what use was a ship without equipment and supplies? To Columbus it seemed an affront. It was then that the Franciscan friar Juan Pérez came to his aid; and the aid consisted precisely in winning over to the undertaking the Pinzón brothers, without whom the royal decree, the protection of the Duke of Medinaceli, and the favorable attitude of Marchena would have been unavailing.

From that moment everything changed. Men came forward; stores, victuals, arms, medicines, sails, rigging, and the water supply needed for so long a voyage were found. And the expedition was fitted out in a couple of weeks. The *Pinta* was no longer a ship that had been seized by force, but was voluntarily turned over. Vicente Yáñez contributed the *Niña*, and Juan de la Cosa the *Calega*, which was rechristened the *Santa María*. Between Palos and La Rábida a stream of people came and went. Besides the three Pinzón brothers, three more members of the family manifested their readiness to embark: Martín Alonso's son, Arias Martín, Diego Martín the elder, and Bartolomé Martín, his son. Is it any wonder that the Pinzóns should afterwards have felt themselves entitled to a little of the gain and the glory? Martín Alonso's authority can still be felt through the testimony of the trial, held twenty years after his death. And during his lifetime it was certainly felt to an eminent degree on the occasion of the mutiny aboard produced primarily by the terror the deviation of the compass caused as they approached the equator, a mutiny that might have ruined everything, and that neither Columbus nor the firm-handed Juan de la Cosa was able to subdue unaided. Columbus was the admiral; Martín Alonso the comptroller. The former was the leader; the latter the technician. Such a duality, bearing within itself the seeds of discord, was nevertheless the

thing that made the Discovery possible: the spark of a dream had fallen on the grain of powder of reality. And the Discovery, like all the great Iberian achievements, was in a great measure the fruit of private initiative.

This private initiative was a powerful factor in the reconquest of the peninsula from the Moors, and the hero who symbolizes it was the Cid, an outlaw, "cast out" or exiled by the King; the Cid, to whom the sovereign had ordered all the inns of Burgos barred; who secured the money he needed by pledging a chest full of pebbles; who recruited his followers among the desperate and the needy, those who had nothing to lose and everything to gain by the venture; who, as a freebooter, won the cities of Castejón, Alcocer, and Poyo de Monreal, harried the lands of Alcañiz and the possessions of the Count of Barcelona, seized Murviedro and Puig, and finally, always by his own authority, made himself master of Valencia; and even, from time to time, allowed himself the pleasure of sending gifts to the King, fine horses with ornate housings, partly as a glorious act of pride and partly out of a deep sense of fealty, for the individualism of the Spaniard was neither anarchic nor rancorous.

There was a moment at the time of the Catholic kings when it seemed—the paradox is employed for the sake of brevity—that private initiative had ascended the throne; and the home-grown, national monarchy was gradually bringing a measure of unity to the kingdom. But Ferdinand and Isabella were unfortunate in their succession, and the foreign monarchs who followed either deflected the course of Spain's national life enough so that with time the angle of divergence had become considerable, or were unsuccessful in establishing links between Spain and the rest of Europe.

In the Discovery, Pinzóns, the private initiative was yours. In the Conquest it was Hernán Cortés's, who began by freeing himself from Diego Velázquez's control and setting out for Mexico on his own responsibility. And the *adelantados*, what were they if

not examples of private enterprise on whom the crown bestowed its sanction after their successes, as King Alfonso had done in the case of the Cid's victories, which had not cost him a farthing? At the time of the Napoleonic wars, again it was private initiative that took up arms to save the nation's sovereignty, even against the will of the supine monarchs.

This intense sentiment of private initiative, so characteristic of the history of the Iberian peninsula, explains why the first settlers of New Spain—and the phenomenon was repeated in the other colonies—felt themselves in a different category from the lately arrived state officials, and were already harboring within themselves the germs of future independence. Up to a point—and despite the fact that the Spanish Empire was at war with the French, the Turks, the Germans, the Flemings, the Moors, and the English, as has been pointed out to us on occasion—we still believe that, essentially, that Empire endured not so much because of its official administration, which was always unsuitable, or its sea power, which was never really absolute, as because of the Spanish temperament, the way of being of a people who by nature tend to transcend institutions in an impetus of personal energy. A miracle with scant empirical support but with strong ideal bases was their concept of religion, of monarchy, and of liberty. Although faulty from the point of view of colonization, half of Spain moved to America, and there began to live in keeping with its knowledge and understanding. Thence our republics; thence the fact that the Hispanic world far exceeds the limits of the peninsular state. This is the underlying sense of Iberia's creation, a creation of the people, a creation of the unknown soldier, who is called, plainly and simply, "Juan Spaniard."

(*Última Tule, 1942*)

Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci

AMERIGO VESPUCCI'S lacunæ-filled life is known to us only in its broad outlines. He was born in Florence around the middle of the fifteenth century, and died in Seville in February 1512. The son of a notary, he was an indifferent student of letters under the tutelage of an uncle, but outstanding in mathematics, cosmography, and commerce. He traveled in France. Back in his own country, in the service of the Medici, he negotiated and traded with Spanish merchants, and finally moved to Spain, where his dealings were with the Seville ship-brokers who freighted the ships bound for the newly discovered lands. It appears that he made one or two trips to the Indies, and later, in the service of Dom Manuel of Portugal, his third and most famous voyage. The fourth, on which he attempted to reach Asia sailing round the south of the

New World, ended in failure. Then, perhaps somewhat out of favor with Dom Manuel, he sought the support of the Spanish monarchs, about the same time the shipbuilder Cristóbal de Haro, the astronomer Ruy Falerro, and the famous Magellan were also seeking it and leaving Portugal. Columbus's affairs were not in too prosperous a state at the moment. Columbus approached Amerigo Vespucci to solicit his support at the court. In Toro, Vespucci was able to secure royal approval for his old plan of a voyage by way of the southwest of the New World, and began his long preparations with Vicente Yáñez Pinzón. Having established himself in Seville, Vespucci married María Cerezo and became a naturalized Spaniard. The preparations proceeded, but the Portuguese claims, based on the bull of Alexander VI, blocked the realization of his undertaking. It is assumed that he made four other voyages, two very dubious and two preposterous. Later he held the post, perhaps created specially for him, of Master Pilot of the Clearing House of Seville. There he died, an official of overseas navigation, watching from his lookout the boats come and go. Let us examine a little more closely the travels of this other Italian associated with the Discovery.

When in 1497 Vespucci embarked on his first crossing, Columbus had not yet entered the Gulf of Mexico, and the only part of America that was known was the Antilles. The expedition of which Vespucci was a member entered through the Gulf of Honduras, skirted the Yucatán peninsula, and ascended the Mexican coast to Florida, or perhaps as far as Georgia. This did not prevent Juan Ponce de León from discovering Florida some years later for the second time in his three-year search for the Fountain of Youth. Two years later Vespucci sailed as pilot on Alonso de Hojeda's expedition. After they had reached Cape San Roque in Brazil, they sailed back up the coast as far as the Gulf of Venezuela.[1] But Ves-

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[1] Today it is more generally accepted that the voyage of 1497 has been confused with that of 1499, and that the latter is the correct date for the voyage to the Gulf of Venezuela.

pucci's fame rests on the third voyage, on which he visited the entire coast of Brazil, from San Roque south, sailing along the Bay of Todos Santos, and perhaps the actual site of Rio de Janeiro, to the mouths of the Plate. There he continued southward and came to an unidentified antarctic region, from which he turned back to Africa. This voyage confirmed Vespucci in his belief that these new lands could not be Asiatic, and it was then that he conceived the idea of reaching Asia by way of a southern route round the new continent. But it may be that he always imagined the territory of South America as terminating in the mouths of the Plate. Thus, on his fourth voyage he attempted a southwest passage to that Asiatic region vaguely known at the time by the name of the Moluccas. Others, likewise persuaded that the new lands were not Asiatic, sought the passage to the Moluccas through some strait possibly lying farther north. Columbus, having accepted the idea that the new lands were Asiatic, was seeking the passage to the Gulf of the Ganges, which he believed near by. Not Vespucci. Vespucci conceived the plan that twenty years later Magellan was to carry out. Unfortunately, he became separated from his captain; and after exploring those coasts of Brazil with which he was familiar from his earlier voyage, and taking aboard a cargo of valuable woods, he returned to Lisbon. In this brief summary his other voyages are not worth mentioning.

Every variety of argument has been laid hold upon to prove that at least certain of Vespucci's voyages were imaginary. For example, of the first voyage, the only testimony is that of Vespucci himself, whose reliability was always suspect because of the bad luck that seemed to dog him. But is there any record in the archives of Barcelona of the reception the Catholic monarchs accorded the lucky Genoese, Columbus? Nevertheless, this took place and nobody doubts it. On other occasions it has been alleged that Vespucci's *Relations* are too vague to be true, and that they omit important details, such as the peninsular nature of Yucatán and Florida, which he seems not to have noticed. There are those who

point out that he came into contact with such civilizations as that of Yucatán without saying a word about them; that he does not mention the Rio Bravo del Norte or the Mississippi. But Marco Polo was in China, and he has nothing to say about tea—a great novelty—or the Great Wall.[2] On the other hand, those who defend the voyages point out that the first *Relation*, the most censured, is not complete, but a summary of a more extensive narration that has been lost; that, by and large, everything can be better understood if the hypothesis of the voyages is admitted; that, moreover, there are certain irrefutable proofs, such as various maps of the epoch, whose information and names can come only from Vespucci, unless, in the words of Occam, "beings are multiplied without necessity" and the possibility is admitted of other voyages in addition to those already known. And finally, admitting doubts, there is no more basis of belief for the voyages of Cabot, and they are accepted as real and authentic. The lack of documents, used as negative proof, would erase the better part of history. Besides, time has been bringing to light certain evidence that supports Vespucci's veracity.

If Columbus—even though earlier he may have had certain glimmers of the truth—died in the mistaken conviction that he had discovered the coasts of Asia, men of science suspected from the first moment that these countries had nothing to do with the East Indies. Very soon, in the documents of the Catholic monarchs, they began to be called the West Indies, probably with the idea of rectification or indicating a doubt. Columbus was in the habit of referring to them as the "New World" without giving the phrase other than a rhetorical value. But the geographers of his day little by little came to agree that this was really a new world. The islands that had been discovered were certainly very close to Africa; it could not be Asia, nor did the Antilles in their natural or social aspects resemble the Asiatic islands. (With regard to the more

[2] Ephorus, a historian of the fourth century, was suspicious of too much detail in reports of far-distant history.

northern America, the idea of its continuity with Asia persisted.)

Vespucci, though we do not know just to what extent, was a better cosmographer than Columbus. Vespucci knew his routes. His voyages along the coast of America went far beyond those of any of his predecessors and—except for arctic and antarctic regions, and the little waist of Darien—made it possible to establish the continental nature of America. If he himself did not carry out Magellan's countercheck, at least he laid the way for it. Thus his influence on the cartography of his day was far more important than that of Columbus.

More professional than Columbus, Vespucci was decidedly less capable as an organizer. He never became the leader of an expedition, and he failed even in his attempts to circumnavigate America by the southern route. But this modest figure—discreet rather than heroic—had a scientific knowledge and a born narrator's style as interesting as his voyages themselves (assuming that the *Relations* really proceed from his pen). As for the circumstance of his name being given to the continent, he did not even live to know it. The rivalry between Columbus and Vespucci is an error of perspective, a fallacy on the part of posterity. It is a matter of record that the most cordial relations existed between the two men, and that the Admiral regarded the Master Pilot as his very devoted and "most goodly man." Ferdinand Columbus does not seem to have even suspected this error of perspective, and, although he knew the famous *Relations*, he never said a word against Vespucci, he who was so touchy about anything that might dim his father's fame.

(Última Tule, 1942)

Social Science and Social Responsibility

It has been said that man in his entirety is a social being. Theoretical attempts to envisage him in isolation have only the value of a conundrum, and are in the nature of an apagoge or *reductio ad absurdum*. Thus the Robinson Crusoe of our childhood reading makes every effort to find a substitute for the social sustenance of which he has been deprived, affording a negative proof of how indispensable, how precious such sustenance is. And his metaphysical counterparts, from ibn-Tofail to Gracián and their imitators, are telling examples of how the solitary man gropes his way toward the goal of a social existence. Just as the theme of the river is the sea, the theme of Robinson Crusoe is society, which he longs to rejoin some day.

If every man is a social being, social science embraces the

entire range of all conceivable human disciplines, and all form a part of it. The need to avoid duplication, however, obliges it to limit such imperial frontiers, confining its techniques, for the sake of convenience, to what we could call the delta of the river, leaving to other sciences the earlier adventures of the current. After all, reality is a continuous thing, and all things and all knowledge are interwoven: they live by cross-fertilization. But as the human intelligence falls short of the angelic scope, it proceeds according to the *Discourse on Method*, portioning out the difficulties and entrusting to a different expert the cultivation of each special field.

But woe betide the science that forgets the integration of its human ends, and particularly if it be social science. This integration is known as ethics. The specialist—and today we are all specialists as a result of the multiplication of knowledges and techniques—must never neglect the universals, lest he engender monsters and abet crime. Ancient cultures never lost sight of their social aims. The task of constructing and maintaining the *polis*—the "defense of the walls," as the poets and philosophers put it—was their guiding star. They produced works of art so astounding that interpretation of them has often been attempted in the light of a purely æsthetic, almost sensual concept. But when the moment came to pass judgment on themselves, these cultures applied only the norms of religious, ethical, and political values. For this reason they are cultures—that is to say, integration. The culture of the Middle Ages, in its intense relation to God, left no loophole through which the energies of its system might escape, and carried man in its arms straight up the slope of salvation. Modern culture has been turning into a mosaic for lack of a connecting bond, for want of a true needle. Each piece seems to us much more finished in itself than the rougher bricks of the preceding epoch. But the pieces no longer fall easily into place in the jigsaw puzzle because of the lack of an over-all design. It must be put down to Comte's honor that he strove to substitute for the old mysticism the mysti-

cism of service to humanity. But the unharnessed scientific and philosophical currents assailed his improvised fortress on all sides until they had battered it to the ground. The same may be said of the so-called "socialist Utopias." And is this crisis we are living today anything but the tacking and veering of specialization without the steering compass of ethics? It is useless for the Swedish inventor to try to prove to us that dynamite was invented to serve the ends of industry and human welfare. It is useless for him to have instituted, as proof of his philanthropy, prizes for science and the arts. The specialist without universe employs dynamite to kill men. Sad, indeed, is the fate of the discoverers of our day! I was in Rio de Janeiro the morning Santos-Dumont was found hanged in his home. It is not sufficiently well known that the forerunner of the "air man" left a letter in which he begged men to forgive him for having brought into the world a machine that turned out to be the supreme arm of all destructions.[1] Would you like a brief caricature of the malady from which we are suffering today? Then imagine a physiologist who thinks and acts only as a physiologist, and who cuts open the vitals of his child in order to study their hidden workings; imagine—or rather, contemplate—a state that kills off its own children to batten upon them because it thinks only in terms of abstract ends and has forgotten that it came into existence to serve man. We are ill with a strange malady: that deep-buried pulse of the soul in which the sense of orientation resides has gone mad. We are wounded in our bearings, deprived of our compass.

If in all sciences the social responsibility is more imperious today than ever before, most of all is this true of social science, whose very field is the political problem in its loftier sense; that is to say, the problem of men's living together and pursuing their happiness. A problem of such magnitude far exceeds the possibili-

[1] "In vain the higher mind separated the nations with mountains and seas, if the daring of men has found bridges to transport their malice." Gracián: *El Criticón*, I, 1.

ties of the men of science assembled in this Congress,[2] eminent though they be, for from the confines of this hall we could not deal with all mankind. But, as Goethe said, if everyone sweeps his own doorstep, between us all we shall have cleaned up the whole city. Moreover, the problem, in view of the imminence of the dangers that threaten, would seem to fall within the province of governments rather than of the laboratories of scientists. However, gentlemen, those who make up the government, for reasons of education, obligation, and profession, cannot deal with problems in those panoramic areas we call fields of science. The daily incident, demanding its daily solution, distracts their attention. However much they do, for all the pains they take, it is in the nature of things that the trees should prevent them from seeing the forest. This does not hold true of men of science, free from administrative obligations and bureaucratic pressure, and already trained to take the long view, which is the essence of historical studies. And the hour has come for men of science to force the doors of those in power and make themselves heard. After all, they are not asking for favors or looking for posts; they are only demanding the function of advisers, which is their due, and which Plato assigned them in a famous letter, inasmuch, he said, as the dream of the philosopher as king is unattainable. Mankind is weary of being ruled by chance or improvisation, the inevitable paths that must be taken by those who offer panaceas whose effect is momentary for chronic ills. If governments are to fulfill their difficult, their portentous mission in this fateful hour, they must heed the voice of science. If men of science do not wish to be adjudged aberrant monsters, carvers of pinheads without respect for men's heads, they are under the obligation of making themselves heard by the statesmen.

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With this criterion, let us look at our American world. For some time America has been revealing its disturbance in the face of the disintegration of Europe, which began by trying out the

[2] Congress of Social Sciences convoked by the Mexican Society of Geography and Statistics.

virulence of its arms in Spain, and then threw itself wholeheartedly into what is today its favorite sport: destroying all it has built up.

Teacher, civilizer, long skilled in the arts of empire, Europe now threshes about witlessly. The Americans, who have always had the reputation of being undisciplined, and even sanguinary, have seen with stupefaction that their endemic revolutions destroy fewer lives in a decade than an uprising in Europe in a week, to say nothing of wars.

It may be said that this is the result of the formidable machinery of war, which we here do not "enjoy." But facts remain facts: compared with those collective crimes, the worst of American quarrels are knightly jousts, in which the *caudillos* challenge each other to combat in the open field, far removed from women and children. There is the famous instance, with an almost saintly flavor to its humor, particularly in this twentieth century, of a certain rebel who chose to forgo victory and turned back at the gates of a South American city "at the request of the families," or the no less significant episode of a province that had taken up arms against the capital and preferred to lay them down—so the military communiqué read—"to protect the patrimony" of the region.

Now, in the face of the madness of Europe, we have the pathetic case of a continent that would defend itself by means of a *cordon sanitaire*. History affords nothing more terrible. One must go back to mythology, where we find Gea, filled with misgivings, hiding her children in her bosom to protect them from the devouring madness of father Cronos.

America can take pride in a juridical tradition of continental accords that have been in force for fifty years, a thing Europe has never achieved. The errors, the shortcomings, the setbacks do not matter; the great ideal has been preserved and has borne fruits. More than one armed conflict has been halted by peaceful means. And when a war has broken out, the American conscience has regarded it as a calamity, not a cause for pride. On this stress of intention the ethical dignity of public spirit is based.

It may be said that all this was possible thanks to the common Iberian denominator of our nations, which brings them into an understanding, utilizing even that intuitive instrument of a similar language. But facts remain facts, fortunate results of a circumstance that makes possible an orientation of concord, at least as a resultant, a final casting-up of accounts.

The international spirit, education in internationalism, has been able to flourish with relative prosperity where frontiers are regarded as political agreements and across which a man may cast a friendly glance upon the land over the border.

And when in North America Pan-Americanism is discussed —divesting the term of all its official accretions and dealing only with the concept—the fact should never be lost sight of that one of the bases of this harmony is the recognition of the homogeneity of Ibero-America, which in the vastness of its extension overflows even the ethnic frontiers that seemed most insurmountable.

Thus it is possible to create a continental concept that must be insisted on for the decorum of the New World, without on that account abdicating basic mutual respects—rather, on the contrary, founded upon them. For if a trace of imperial aspiration were unfortunately to becloud such respect in the slightest degree, the whole structure would immediately collapse. And then we would reproduce here the lamentable spectacle of Europe, with the added disadvantage that here we would interpret *à la creole* certain procedures which, if they cause havoc there, would be even more disastrous here.

So, then, defense policies, military preparedness, *cordon sanitaire*, are emergency measures, not scientific solutions. Praise be for such stopgaps if they at least help us to ward off the immediate blow! When all is said and done, being comes before philosophizing, as the classic maxim puts it, and there must be an immediate defense to meet the immediate offensive. But these are only measures of desperation, to gain a momentary breathing-spell, which sow the seeds of future ills in their wake. While the

governments stand guard in the front line of defense, it is the duty of science to work with all its resources in the second, preparing remedies of a more transcendental nature. We cannot demand of the American governments, which meet again and again to try to devise certain measures demanded by the moment, that they formulate the questions in all their scientific integrity. We can be grateful that they are inspired by the lofty ideal of a continent that, from the moment it appeared in history, has always had as its ambition to be the stage on which the concept of a fairer, happier humanity was tried out. We can be grateful to them for extending credit and confidence to the fugitives of Europe and saying to them: "Men of Europe, bring to us, like Wilhelm Meister, your energies for undertakings of good will; do not bring your resentments here." But in the meantime let us in the rear guard help our governments to prevent the new peace, or whatever it is that comes out of the present conflict, from finding our America, mankind's last refuge, in that same deplorable state of unpreparedness in which the peace of Versailles surprised the world, a state of unpreparedness whose consequences we are still purging.

The long-view solutions, the preparation for the new world with which we shall soon be confronted—let no one expect a reproduction of the past, for the clock cannot be turned back—are the problems of science. Education, the last court of appeal of the political function, must patiently inculcate the new mental habits that will ensure the existence of the young generations and the preservation of human decorum. And social science must study this chaos in which we are now floundering, break trails, cut away the undergrowth, and thus lay down the precepts on which education is to be based.

So that we shall not rest on good intentions and velleities, allow me to cite certain examples and point out certain concrete intentions.

First there is what we may regard as the general problem of America. What America is, what it represents in this upheaval of

history we are witnessing, should constitute the daily, unremitting concern of all Americans—statesmen, writers, teachers, leaders of nations in the broadest sense of the word, the university students who will be called upon to supply future orientations, even the school children, who should be asked to ponder, as a spiritual exercise, for a brief moment every morning, the human significance and the destinies of the New Continent.

It is chimerical to think that mankind develops in watertight compartments, least of all in our day. The era of civilizations that knew nothing of each other is definitively over; it began in prehistoric times and ended with the discovery of America. And what was already true in concept, what from the sixteenth century was a theoretical possibility, little by little became a practical reality, thanks to physics, the glory of Occidental thought, which gradually brought under complete control terrestrial time and space. Today the historical process is common to all the earth and is, in a sense, simultaneous.

Thus, in the face of events such as we are witnessing, whose principal center is in Europe, whose secondary center is in Asia, and whose immediate reflection falls upon Africa, can unilateral political measures safeguard America? Or to what degree can it, at least, be relatively immunized against the inevitable general disturbances to prevent their assuming among us, too, a catastrophic character?

This problem breaks down into several partial problems that depend on how the general event affects the different functional groups of America. Following the lines of parallel from north to south, we find these clearly defined zones: Canada and the United States; Mexico and the Caribbean area to the frontiers of Colombia; the America of Bolívar—Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru; Portuguese America; the America of the Plate estuary. There can even be discerned, in the political multiplicity of South America, certain variations along the line of the meridians from east to west: the Atlantic zone, the zone of the interior, the Pacific

zone. And, of course, these large zones having different geographical relations and different intercontinental connections could be further divided into more circumscribed regions. As, for example, the basins of the great rivers.

Now, with what intensity do the extra-American occurrences affect each of these regions, and to what extent can each of them effect a quarantine of isolation for the time being? Does the European or Asiatic order or disorder affect the various longitudinal or transverse zones similarly? And to what degree does the repercussion of the extra-American in each zone determine an inevitable reaction in the other bordering or remoter zones? To what degree, for example, does the United States come within the British orbit or "belong to the British peace"? To what degree is our America dependent on this, and is this dependence absolute or does it vary in the different zones? To what degree is the Plate zone dependent on the British commercial system? How can the conflicting and common British and North American interests in zones of mixed influence, such as Brazil, be graduated and settled?

And the question remains, if all possible mental attitudes are to enter into the consideration of the problem, whether or not it is preferable for America to offer resistance; if it should not simply allow itself to be passively invaded by the wave that is sweeping Europe. But we may discount this point of view at once, for what is taking place in Europe so far is destruction and not reconstruction; and if we wait for Europe to begin its rebuilding, we shall have lost precious time and have put ourselves, with a criminal lack of foresight, in the situation of having lost ground as far as the state of relative "uncontamination" in which we for the moment find ourselves is concerned.

Still to be considered, along with the stark aspect of material interests, is that of spiritual interests. The solution of the first is more urgent, but that of the second is more transcendental. From the very outset both the material and the spiritual needs must be attended to. And it is here, naturally, that the consideration of

what America owes to the traditional democratic concept and what it can expect from the new totalitarian concept enters, even assuming that this latter were not deflected or polarized toward bellicose aggressiveness alone, which, in truth, presupposes stern measures of previous quarantine.

This is the program for the workers in the field of social science, certainly not unworthy of their instruments and their abilities, it would seem. For the fact is, in short, that we are trying to control a hurricane and, as it is not possible to detach America from the earth, to make the disordered forces reach us in a relatively attenuated form, in a form that will allow them to be directed as far as possible, and, if dreams are more than dreams, even to turn them to advantage.

Who knows? America is awaiting its hour, and feeling it foreshadowed in the pulsations of the world. Somewhat prematurely it has been summoned to its high responsibility, its responsibility as the continuer of civilizations; but it had to start sometime, and it is better soon than late. In a difficult moment America has been called upon to realize its mission, but all peoples selected to carry on history's designs found themselves in the same position as the result of a disaster. The flight begins against the wind, not with the wind. Kant's dove rises thanks to the obstacle.

There is no time to ask ourselves whether we are ripe to accept the inheritance of a culture and transport it definitively to our channels; and thus, saving the inheritance, at the same time save ourselves. When all is said and done, it is only when an adolescent becomes aware of responsibility that he becomes a man. It is enough for us to feel the responsibility and to cherish the determination to meet destiny's challenge. This willingness is, without doubt, the determining factor in the maturity that now calls upon us. In a sense, the catastrophe of Europe has come as a providential warning to arouse us from our infancy. Amidst the ruins our destiny as creators can thus be glimpsed. Dangers purify a culture's awareness. Our lands, descendants of the culture of Europe, have

been revealing their historic authenticity to themselves through their travails, and today we can unhesitatingly say that our America does not want to imitate, but to apply the techniques acquired from Europe to the investigation of its own phenomena, which, at the same time, reveal to it the possibility of new American techniques. And it is this that our science should emphasize in the face of what is taking place in the world. Beyond a doubt these occurrences disturb us. It is entirely possible that they may perturb us even more. But I do not believe that they will necessarily drag us into their vortex to the point of preventing what we have referred to as American maturity. On the contrary. We must say, and repeat to ourselves, that the moment has come. It is now or never.

(1942; Última Tule)

Native Poetry of New Spain

SPANISH literature in its most popular forms, those lying closest to the living language and least linked to the written word, entered Mexico on the lips of the conquistadors themselves, in the proverbs and ballads Hernán Cortés and his lieutenants bandied back and forth astride their horses. In two or three passages Bernal Díaz del Castillo depicts this symbolic moment. Once it is Cortés who says to Juan de Escalante: "No siesta for the tricky goat," as he prepares to find out the destination of a certain boat anchored in the waters of the Villa Rica. Again it is Hernández Puertocarrero who, in sight of San Juan de Ulúa, recalls the ballad of Calaínos:

Behold France, Montesinos;
Behold Paris, the city;
Behold the river Duero,
Bearing its waters to the sea;

which Cortés, grasping the allusion, caps with:

May God grant favor to our arms,
As with the knight Roland.

And then it is Bachelor Alonso Pérez who, after the Spaniards' desperate retreat on the *Noche Triste*, hearing Cortés sigh as he gazed upon the abandoned city of Mexico from the pinnacle of the temple of Tacuba, chides him gently: "Sir Captain, be not so sad, for these things are of common occurrence in wars, and let it not be said of Your Worship:

Nero gazes from Tarpeia's rock
On the burning city of Rome. . . ." [1]

Soon afterwards Spain was to send us her still tart Renaissance literature, which quickly mellowed into Petrarchian sweetness, to burst later into the baroque restlessness of the golden age. And what native literature did Mexico possess?

There was an autochthonous poetry, much of which has been lost, linked as it was to a civilization that the Conqueror deliberately repressed and to religious manifestations that it was the missionary's purpose to expurgate, holding them to be gentile and diabolic. The oral tradition could preserve it only imperfectly,

[1] Those interested in Cortés's use of proverbs will recall the *Letter of Relation* in which, referring to the divisions and rivalries that existed among the Indians, he says how helpful this proved to his Machiavellian designs: "to more quickly subdue them, as the old saw goes: *From the woods*, etc. [*From the woods flees who the woods fires*]; and I even recalled a verse of the Scriptures which says: *Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation* (Matthew xii, 25)." Even when writing to the Emperor, Cortés makes abundant use of proverbs. In the *Relation* of Andrés de Tapia, Cortés, haranguing his men, exclaims: "Let me cite you a proverb used in Castile, which says: *Death to the ass or to him who goads it. . . .*" And a little farther on: "Gentlemen, you know it is usual among men of arms to say: *Dawn is the hour to fall on the enemy. . . .*"

inasmuch as the hieroglyphs were unable to convey it as a score does music, and phonetic writing was still in swaddling clothes.

How could the conquerors be expected to safeguard the manuscripts of that ancient poetry when it was the Tlaxcalans, allies of the invaders, who destroyed the archives of Texcoco and Tenochtitlán? This poetry, transmitted by word of mouth, probably took refuge in the remotest regions; it disappeared or was dissembled by the last bards and priests, who for the most part concealed their calling; it took on a conspiratorial air, and little by little disappeared. Its final echoes voice terror of the bearded white men, of the gunpowder, of the horses. The soldier was neither a folklorist nor a scholar. The missionary was, at least, charitably curious. But all the pious comprehension of a man like Sahagún or the somewhat disconcerted tolerance of Durán were of no avail to contain the engulfing wave of history, nor was such their intention.

So, restored *a posteriori*, after it had ceased to exist, as when the blurred letters of a palimpsest are made legible; sometimes retouched, sometimes garbled when fitted to the alphabet; blended with authentic texts predating the Conquest and with others of subsequent origin; sometimes reconstructed hypothetically as regards subject matter; sometimes consciously or unconsciously contaminated by the humanistic or Biblical equipment of the friar who took it from the lips of his timid catachumens, it has, nevertheless, traces of an old, unmistakable aroma giving evidence of a non-European æsthetic concept and sentience which makes it possible to surmise its flavor.

Such poetry belongs to the mythical mental stage—idea conveyed by emotion—which Vico has called "the heroic mind." It belongs to that barbarism which Baudelaire spoke of in his gifted anticipations in *L'Art romantique*, illustrating his point with examples from the art of Mexico, Egypt, and Nineveh: not barbaric because of limitations, but because in its order it achieves a perfection half-infantile, half-synthetic, embracing the totality in a

subjective, fantastic vision that is almost palpable in its realistic striving for detail through the synonymy of word and phrase, and even prior to and removed from the sense of personal consciousness.

The poems that have been preserved in the native tongue are characterized by irregular stanzas, groups of verses, rhythmic quantities without syllabic count (in Nahuatl often trochaic), parallel or counterpoised vowels, phrases, and periods, the repetition of refrains. They were recited and chanted, accompanied by music, dancing, and pantomime.

This poetry, all of it anonymous, is the product of two different native cultures. One is the maternal, the Middle American, which both in its first period of river civilization that antedated the Christian era and for five centuries, while the greater part of Europe slept its troubled prehistoric sleep, extended itself from Chiapas to Honduras along the Usumacinta, as well as in that second phase of its mysterious dispersion, toward the sixth century of our era, when, after "tribulations and migrations," we find it stretching from Yucatán to the mountains of Guatemala. Was the forsaking of the original cradle—or "dawn"—the effect of natural disasters, wars, overpopulation, soil exhaustion, epidemics, perhaps? A civilization destroyed by a mosquito, to use Paul Valéry's exaggerated phrase.

The second native culture, the filial, certainly inferior to the other, is the one vaguely termed Mexican. Its center is in our highlands, and it includes the Nahuatl or Aztec, the Zapotec, the Tarascan, the Otomí, and so forth.

The navel cord between the two cultures had been severed; there is a historical hiatus; vast gulfs of space and time separate them. The assimilation of the culture of Yucatán by the tribes of the Mexican highlands may have occurred around the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. In each phase the poets, like the Homeridæ, continued with the passing of the centuries to add their own contributions to the patrimony they had inherited: a new phrase, another verse, an explanatory reference. The result is that in the re-

mains of this poetry there is a mixture of the archaic, the intermediary, the modern, difficult to distinguish at times. Aside from the subterranean current common to them all—to the point where the Mexican myths are illuminated in the light of the Mayan cosmogony—it is indisputable that the unification brought about by the Conquest, however incomplete and uneven it may have been, gave rise in both to certain later contaminations that were more or less intentional. And this completely discounting the "Toltec madness" scoffed at by Professor Raynaud, perhaps a device of the imagination, like the Pelasgic madness of Mediterranean antiquity, to relate the present to an already forgotten past.

To the old or Middle American phase belong the "*Ramayanas* and *Mahabaratas* of America"—the Biblical corpus of the *Popol-Vuh* or *Book of Counsel*, which reveals a high degree of archaic purity; the *Books of Chilam Balam*, in which the confusion of periods, styles, and graphic systems is more evident; and other documents of secondary importance, which round out the others in regard to the period of the migrations and settlements when these become historical or on the point of emerging from the realm of fable. Among these are the *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán* and the *Annals of the Xahils*. They are written in different tongues of the Mayan group, alphabetized about the middle of the sixteenth century—with later interpolations, even of the nineteenth—by former priests and scribes who secretly set them down following oral versions and the ancient sacerdotal, hieroglyphic texts. They begin with the Creation and come down to the Hispanic epoch, when they inevitably reveal certain Christian influences. The different epochs and phases are all projected on a single plane.

To the Mexican phase belong hymns, epics, epigrams, and prose passages encrusted in the relations in Spanish and dealing with the most varied subjects, sacred, heroic, and profane.

Archæology has by no means exhausted its surprises. Even as this study was being written, the Mexican zone yielded up the paintings of Paradise of Teotihuacán (1942); and shortly after-

wards, in the Mayan zone, the paintings of Bonampak aroused the wonder of the world (1946). In connection with the Mayan zone, the calendar they employed, almost like the Julian, and antedating that of Europe, is common knowledge; their amazing system of measuring time; their astronomy, which knew the revolutions and the phases of the celestial bodies; their numerical system, based on the vigesimal plan, which had already discovered the zero; their architecture, monumental, ornate, symbolic, as impressive as that of the Nile; their society, based on a balance of clans, which rested on a slave population of masons and stone-quarriers. In an ascending process from the inscribed stele to the painted manuscript, their writing had reached a graphic stage comparable, though inferior, to the Egyptian, and was to evolve into the "Alphabet of Landa" well into the sixteenth century.

The Indian Bible, the *Popol-Vuh* or *Book of Counsel*, a poem in the Quiché language set down in Latin characters between 1554 and 1558, "which contains passages that are evidently ancient and offers numerous vestiges of old poems to be chanted or sung, and at times to be accompanied by dancing, reveals, as do so many other documents of Middle America (such as the drama-dance of the *Varón de Rabinal*, a priceless jewel in the literary crown of Guatemala), the frequent and even excessive use of parallel and counterbalance; and not only in the ideas, phrases, and periods, but in the proper names of gods, heroes, chieftains, places, uselessly coupled in pairs, often having the same or practically the same meaning" (G. Raynaud). These names offer a delicate problem in translation; if, at times, one of the two explains the other, the original meaning of others, when transposed from one language to another or for some other reason, is obscured; this lack of understanding gives rise to an explanatory myth, the "ætiological tale" of mythologists. Nor is there a lack of errors caused by the transcription of ideograms or phonograms, and other pitfalls. To attempt to construct a consecutive account of this patchwork of oral versions and sacred texts still seemed to Max Müller a chimerical

pursuit. Nevertheless, science has finally managed to glimpse through the iridescent clouds of the *Popol-Vuh* a historical synthesis. In this connection I would refer the reader to the diaphanous introduction that Adrián Recinos—the illustrious Guatemalan whom the ingratitude of politics has restored to the Muses—has written for his recent scholarly translation of the work. Although attempts have been made to attribute the work to an Indian, Diego Reynoso, the proofs are unsatisfactory, and for that reason "the famous manuscript must continue to be considered an anonymous work, written by one or more descendants of the Quiché people, faithful to the tradition of their forefathers" (Adrián Recinos).

The first part deals with the origin of the world and the creation of man; the second and more extensive relates the prowesses of the legendary heroes, Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué. It has served German poets as a source of inspiration; it has been compared with the *Ramayana* by reason of that magic participation of animals in human destinies; with the *Iliad* by reason of the intervention of the gods in earthly combats; with the *Odyssey* by reason of the supernatural adventures or the pleasant scenes of everyday existence. The publication of its first version in 1857 opened a new horizon in the study of America's antiquity.

Here we have, then, a maze of cosmogony, theogony, and human genesis, not created *ex nihilo*, but derived, as among the Greeks, from pre-existing materials; an example of anthropomorphism that centers in the breast of man the twelve cardinal points according to the three concentric visions of heaven, earth, and the sub-earthly regions; a blend of religion, in which the priest implores, and of magic, in which he commands and enslaves, the god with words; a Cabbala of mystic numbers; an outstanding example of the Ægeo-Hellenic contrast between the belief of a conquered people—a folk manifestation, chthonian, frowned upon, taking refuge in caves and impregnated with "nagualism" (guardian spirits and animal metamorphoses)—and the official belief of

the conquerors, established into a church, and, in the end, less proof against the impact of Christianity than the other, as can be seen even today in the determined survival of the Lacandón Indians.

The poem begins grandiosely enumerating the divine beings and their various names: the three true goddesses, the Mothers—Grandmother, Giver of Monkeys, and Virgin Blood, the Eve of the scheme—accompanied by masculine, inferior counterparts, as in the Ægeo-Asiatic mythologies. We are told the genealogies of those who preceded Creation, the Powerful Ones or Master Giants, who, with the help of the Grandfather and Grandmother, gradually create sky and land, water, plants, animals, and finally the stars (the light had existed from the beginning); and who, needing prayers and offerings, spiritual and physical sustenance that the animals were unable to provide them, finally attempted to form human beings.

The task proceeds amid countless difficulties, supernatural wars, the wars of the Giants between the descendants of the gods and the Spirits of Disappearance—symbolized in the tournament of the ball games—echoes of great natural disasters and even of intertribal wars, the subsuming of vital energies, thunder and lightning. But all this fails to bring forth human beings, produces only brute beasts and monkeys.

Finally, when the powers of light have overcome all the demons of darkness, when the shadows have been dispersed, the king of grains, Corn, is discovered and converted into living flesh, makes man, the husbandman, the Maya-Quiché, as opposed to the wild barbarian.

But before this success was achieved, various calamities occurred. The Grandparents begat twins, the first-born of which, in turn, engendered two artists in some shadowy goddess. And these, reduced to monkey gods, were to become, among other peoples of inferior category, the supreme patrons of the arts. Dur-

ing the ball tournament, in which the gods of Disappearance are "disqualified" because of fouls, the first-born of the twins found time to consummate a union with Virgin Blood, daughter of the shadowy regions, who conceived by him. Virgin Blood fled from her father's wrath, overcame trials and accidents, reached the surface of the earth, and took refuge in the land of the artist, where she gave birth to two new sorcerers—Wizard and Little Wizard—who, tormented by the envy of their elders, turn them into monkeys, who flee to the jungle.

By order of the supreme gods, the sorcerers do combat with and defeat the false god Guacamayo, who claimed to be the Sun and the Moon, and this may be a vestige of the religious conflicts between the Quichés and the Yucatecans before the sixth century. When this had been accomplished, they attack the false god's two sons, terrestrial divinities: Earth-Fish and Great Earthquake. Episodes of the fight between Earth-Fish and certain beings who may be the Pleiads and other complicated events are interpolated here.

There follows another challenge to a game of ball, another Titans' war between the Lords of the Place of Disappearance and the sorcerer gods, and the alliance, as in the *Ramayana*, between the sorcerers and the animals, with whom the former exchange the sacred oath of the jungle. And as, besides, the names of their adversaries have been revealed to them, with these in their power it becomes easy to defeat them. But before this takes place they must allow themselves to be killed, or pretend to be killed, "rites of passage" indispensable to effecting the return from Disappearance to Life. Then the defeated are transformed into the gods of Death and Misfortune, forever subordinated to the divinities of the sky.

Incidentally, the formulas necessary to escape complete annihilation are provided for us, for it is necessary to know how to die properly if we are to transcend the threshold of the other world—a veritable *Book of the Dead* comparable to the ritual of Osiris—and we are also acquainted with certain festivals and dances of

the tutelary spirits, the *naguales*. Once the struggle between Light and Darkness has been resolved for all time, the Sorcerers ascend to heaven transformed into the Sun and the Moon.

And we pass from theogony to legend, the prelude to history. Here, too, as in Greece, the divine prowesses are relegated to a past antedating time, the "archæological time" of Picard. The gods themselves no longer operate, but act through intermediary heroes, semigods or national guardians: Volcano, Sower, Rain. Four heroes emerge, gigantic beings endowed with great wisdom, whom the jealous gods, their creators, gradually reduce to the stature of chieftains, augurs, and leaders of migrations. These lead the tribes, probably following the route of the sun; they live for several generations; they battle with savage hordes; not always do they triumph.

This great progression is interrupted by ætiological tales having to do with the coming about of birth, the gift to man of fire, the reason for the existence of certain animals, fables pointing a moral, gods tempted by mortal women, the play on words that explains human sacrifices, and other universal themes of folklore.

The wars between the tribes, their disputes for the possession of better lands, are the foreshadowing of history, still misty with legend and magic. Thus the visits to the Eden of Tula (this is not the Tula of Mexico) and the evocations of a golden age. Then, quickly, we find ourselves on solid ground with the enumeration of the tribes, the families or "Great Mansions," the captaincies, the priesthoods. In the *Popol-Vuh* the nuptials between the sublime and the grotesque are celebrated.

The *Books of Chilam Balam* are the most important Yucatán codices extant. The theory is that they were composed over a period of four centuries, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth, or, perhaps, revised, and they number twenty. The most important manuscript of this body of material appeared in Chumayel around 1850. It is illustrated with a profusion of drawings, and is, for the most part, a mystic text, but it contains historical touches and a

certain accent of legend, too. In it certain chronological cycles known as "Katuns" are explained or at least investigated, and as with other ancient documents, the specialists in the field make allowances for the elasticity of the time count, seen over the span of centuries, known as the Long and the Short Reckoning. What seem like riddles in it now turn out to be real formulas of magic or religious initiation. The content is heterogeneous. The initiated stored up in them, as in a precious secret coffer, all they knew, from the prophecies of the priest Chilam Balam to information concerning medicinal plants, the fauna of the region, the totemic ceiba tree. The mythical ideas about the four directions of the universe, the origin of the four races—yellow, white, red, and black—and the necessity of propitiating the deities that preside over agriculture predominate. The style brings to the critic's mind the *Upanishads*, the *Atarva-Veda*, "the nebulous Iranian texts."

But apparently nothing can detract from the importance of the historical facts that can be glimpsed in the *Chilam Balam*, not even the indisputable contamination by Biblical literature or almanacs and lunar tables of modern Europe (there are even traces of church and lay Latin). The tribes set out from Tulapán, come close to Chichén, move to Champotón, return to their ancient dwelling-place, find new dwellers established there, unite in confederations, and enjoy an era of well-being under the three ruling brothers of Chichén, suffer civil wars, fall under the oppressive tyranny of Mayapán, which finally collapsed (Landa believes the date of its fall to have been 1566). It is a transcurrence of events occupying centuries seen in microscopic vision, like the movements of an ant-hill, and proceeding through epidemics, plagues, and hurricanes. Until finally the mailed fist of the Spaniard brings to an end this anarchic fragmentation, and Mérida is founded early in 1542.

The Mayas, who possessed an unusual music—trumpets and flutes, percussion instruments and bells, turtle shells, and the *teponaguaztli* of hollow wood whose sound carried several leagues

when the wind was in the right direction—distinguished the vocal registers in almost the same manner we do (bass, baritone, tenor, contralto, soprano), and had both solemn and gay dances. They had a theater, with music and dances, that of the *ixtoles*, and another that was pantomine and recitation, in which the actors, or *baldzames*, as in the early Greek comedy, indulged in sallies and satires at the expense of the spectators. The leading ecclesiastic singer held a post of honor in the temple. The songs imitated the *zachic*, or bird with a hundred voices, the *zenzontle* of Mexico. In the sixteenth century Sánchez de Aguilar praised their farces and admired their wit and buffoonery, and he counseled the church to make use of this old custom instead of prohibiting it, as had first been attempted, but giving it a better application, substituting for the pagan themes others of religious bearing.[2]

The poetry of the Mexican zone—second order or second culture—possessed an epic and a lyric poetry. Its sources date from the sixteenth century: some twenty ritual hymns in Nahuatl, which were communicated to Father Sahagún by ten or twelve distinguished old men of Tetepulco; certain poems whose poetical and metrical character were not clearly recognized by the historians who went about utilizing them; the prose versions in Spanish incorporated into their chronicles (a procedure that must be examined with caution, and for which only the most reliable texts can be employed, for Torquemada, for example, modeled the life of Nezahualcóytl on that of David); and the manuscript of sixty-two Mexican songs preserved in our National Library. The epic embraces the three principal regions of Tezcoco, Tenochtitlán, and Tlaxcala; the lyric, several regions of the central table lands.

[2] The *Rabinal Achi*, a Quiché tragedy of Guatemala, is accepted as being archaic. It is neither Christian nor European, and it even concludes with a human sacrifice, an unusual survival of a work combated by the missionaries. It recalls the ancient Attic ritual theater (Choerilus, Phrynichus, of which Æschylus' *The Suppliants* gives an idea). Five masked figures speak in long epic monologues, each repeating a part of the preceding discourse; there are a number of mute characters: the women, naturally, and groups of dancers.

The epic contains a sacred subdivision—cosmogony and theogony, the ritual relationship between man and the gods—and a heroic subdivision—kings, leaders, and chieftains whom legend has more or less deified. Quetzalcoatl, a combination of reality and myth like Pythagoras, is a historical, albeit shadowy, character, who is finally transformed into a star and even has a hand in creation.

There are times when old Euhemerus was right. His mistake consisted in wanting to be right all the time. To him all the gods are only princes or benefactors exalted to supernatural rank by the adoration of posterity. It is more in keeping with the facts to say that in the mythical phase of the human mind a supreme poetic liberty exists making it possible to "pass from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven" without any concept of historic gratitude, but moved by a simple imaginative impulse.

The epic-sacred subdivision comprises bizarre and copious materials: myths of the sun, the familiar legend of *The Cosmogonic Suns*, etc. On the basis of a mosaic of residues, Father Garibay reconstructs a hypothetical *Poem of Creation* and a possible *Poem of Tlaloc and Xochiquetzal*, which would be among the most ancient.

The epic-heroic subdivision contains a Texcocan cycle, the most elaborate; a Tenochca cycle, restrained and abundant; and a Tlaxcalan cycle, very exiguous, but singular in character.

Texcocan is the *Poem of Quetzalcoatl*, a radiant and enduring image; a *Poem of Ixtlilxochitl*, which is a great novel, the unhappy history of the Chichimecan King, which the old men "with no few tears" recited to the historian, his descendant, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, in which the magnificent episode of the "Death of Cihuacuecuenotzin" appears; a *Nezahualcóyotl*, which is the fantastic adventure of the young King, nurtured on roots in his sylvan exile, a lonely poet in the midst of nature, who was to assume the reins of government of three nations; the *Adventures of Ichazotlaloatzin*, and other fragments.

Tenochtitlán produced a new *Poem of Quetzalcoatl;* a *Poem*

of Mexcoatl, which may be a part of, or the prelude to, the former; a *Peregrination of the Aztecs*, based on codices, Indian songs, and translations; a very important *Poem of Huitzilopochtli*, the first part of which, having to do with the birth of the god, is preserved in Nahuatl, and the rest of which is to be found in various of the Spanish prose chronicles; a *Cycle of Moctezuma Ilhuicamina*, a sort of attenuated Nezahualcóyotl; a *Cycle of Moctezuma Xocoyotzin*, Moctezuma II, begun before the Conquest and completed afterwards, and other fragments.

Tlaxcala is the source of a group of poematic fragments, found only in the work of the chronicler Muñez Camargo, himself a Tlaxcalan.

As for the lyric poetry, which was often of a choral nature and designed for public ceremonies—still revealing its epic affiliation, in a transition similar to that of Pindar—it covers a wide range, from the expression of religious and collective sentiments, through the outpouring of personal emotions, to the epigram, that veritable humming-bird of poetry. Urbina compared it to the *Uta* of Japan. This poetry is divided, in somewhat routine fashion, into four subdivisions: the Song of the Eagles, or of War, heroic lauds, martial chants, battle songs of the type the Greeks called *embateerion;* Song of the Flowers, the most delightful and idyllic of compositions, redolent of spring; Song of Lamentation, an elegy dealing with events of a mournful, tragic nature; Song of the Drum, choral in form, which combined ritual, historical, patriotic, and private motives of rejoicing and æsthetic innovations. In spite of the fact that old misleading standards—such as classifying the poems according to their place of origin, when this does not correspond to different cultural cycles, or according to the person with whom they deal, as when Nezahualcóyotl is credited with songs composed in praise of him—have been in great part rectified, there is still considerable confusion.

Critics have shown good judgment in recognizing the error

in classifying this body of poetry according to classic norms. I do not know that it could not be plumbed further, seeking the sense itself of the poems, as the Chadwicks do in their great work on primitive oral literatures[3] (European, Russian, Yugoslav, Hindustanic, Hebrew, Tatar, Polynesian, Malasian, African), in which they distinguish and separate the intention, divine, ritual, prophetic, heroic, archæological, rememorative, juridical, gnomic, ethical, descriptive, and so on.

The religious bard, or *cuicapique*, received a salary for his work. The singing was accompanied by dances in the temples and palaces, and poetry contests were held for the nobility. And they had, if not true drama, a kind of monologue pantomined in time to the figures of the dance, and a certain simple acting, in which, for example, the poet distributed flowers or even dialogued with the chorus. The poems allude to the presentation of this singular ballet. The image of the divinity, seated under a tree, presided over the festival. Youths disguised as birds and butterflies climbed into the branches, hovering over the flowers, while others, who represented the gods, shot at them with blow-guns. They were received by the goddess and seated at her side, where she regaled them as honored guests with bouquets of flowers and the smoke of fragrant incense. There were also comic dances executed by humpbacked old men.

Three musical moods were distinguished: one solemn and grave; another lively and youthful, for love and badinage; and lastly a licentious, lewd variety known as the "tickling dance." The verses normally pulsate with a trochaic rhythm. The monotony of the dance communicates itself to the poem to an exasperating degree. We have no way of knowing the music. We can form an idea of what it may have been from the melancholy toccatas still to be heard in the Indian villages: the beat of the *huehuetl* and the

[3] H. M. and N. K. Chadwick: *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 3 vols., 1932, 1936, 1940).

teponaztle, the shrilling of the fife. "It fills me with pity and sadness to hear it," said Durán. To the mournful sound the chains of flowers were woven together by the whirling dancers.

The lyric took its subject matter from a variety of sources: "the celebration of religious myths, praise of the gods, allusions to matters of theogony . . . the rememoration of battles, evocations of ancient heroes, praise of the chieftains. . . . And in the [poems] designed to be sung at banquets and gatherings the ever recurring theme" of how fleeting is life, and the urgency of enjoying it before death snatches it away. "It is natural that among peoples for whom war was a sacred institution and the peak of religious offering, poetry should be impregnated with a martial flavor and that the obsession of *death in flower on the battlefield* should be the leitmotiv, even in those poems of more familiar theme" (A. M. Garibay K.). The brave man can see the sun through the holes in his shield; the coward, never.

Without doubt the church took a hand in the act of reducing these poems to the Latin alphabet, not even excluding those prior to conversion to Christianity, and it is a matter of record, as evidenced by certain ordinances, that it forbade them to be recited in public or censored them first. But to suppose that everything was the work of the friars is to concede that they were great poets. In any event, this poetry reveals "a tone of sensual awareness which, in truth, hardly befits the missionaries fathers, simple, apostolic souls . . . whose piety exceeded their imagination" (Alfonso Reyes: *Visión de Anáhuac*). The antiquity of certain verbal forms is apparent. The singer himself was often ignorant of the meaning of the words he repeated by rote, as happened in Rome with the hymns of the Arval Brethren and the lays of the Salii priests. A note of authenticity is the poetic license that radically altered the morphology of words or scattered here and there cries and interjections perhaps for the purpose of adapting the poem to the music; this, joined to the many reticences or evasions—imitating passion's disquietude—adds not a little to the difficulty of the task of modern

translators. The metaphors of the feather, the flower, the gem, with here and there a flash of water and sun, leave us dazzled. The mythical allusions, perhaps deliberately hidden, and the prophetic phrases envelop us in their mystery. The sensibility of that people was keen; it ranged from tenderness to violence, moved quickly from laughter to tears, and revealed itself in a wealth of exquisite detail.

May not certain vague resemblances to this or that passage from the books of Solomon be fortuitous? It has been said, *cum grano salis*, that the *Aztecas* of Pesado (a free paraphrase, to be sure) reveal a highly suspicious influence of Horace on Nezahualcóyotl. But if, as Luis Cabrera, the chronicler of Philip II, observed, "everywhere there is the same way of looking at the world," why should this be so surprising? In the valley of Anáhuac "*Carpe diem*" and "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*" echoed too, in another tone.

The enigma of death and that which has been so rightly called the emptiness of the heart, the doubt, the sorrow, the bitterness in the face of past grandeurs, the longing for mystic consolation, the solicitude of the mother beside the cradle, and the grief for the absent warrior, the delight at contemplating the majesty of lakes, volcanoes, and storms or the lacework of the twilight, the comfort of friendship—these are emotions which have never been the exclusive possession of any one people, and Mexican poetry merely shares, when it voices them, the bread that is the patrimony of all men. But something is lacking; we miss the erotic flame. An indication of the intervention of the church? In any case, it must be pointed out that there is no hint of an amorous scene in the fresco of *Tlalocán*, or Paradise, recently discovered in Teotihuacán (1942). Either this was excluded, as among the ancient Chinese, from every spiritual and sublime representation, or lyric poetry had not yet achieved the degree of individualism that expresses itself in the outpourings of the lover.

A profound religious spirit palpitates in the hymns to the

god of war, of rain, the goddess mother, the gentle grain gods, the somber Tezcatlipoca, the recently anointed monarch. As Vigíl pointed out, "contact with a monstrously exuberant nature, as in India and Mexico," gives rise to eccentric images. The mind shrinks at the memory of the catastrophes that wiped out countless generations of men. Out of the powder of their bones, mixed with the blood of gods and brought to life by a ray of the sun, the Promethean Quetzalcoatl modeled a new human family. Through desperate efforts, bloody sacrifices, and cannibalism for religious ends, these creatures blindly sought the perpetuation of vital virtues and communion with the invisible powers. Every eight years there arose that Song of Tamal-de-Agua, which pierces us with this unforgettable verse:

My heart is bursting into bloom in the mid-hours of the night.

The subject matter of the legends decanted into the old chronicles—assailable from the point of view of reality, not as poetry—is the mythological presentation of our pre-Cortesian history, and the scholars know them in résumé, as the Greek youths knew the fables that antedated their actual historical era.

The ancient native poetry, though retouched at times and at others stemming from an indirect tradition, though it was a literature that had been cut short as a general and social manifestation, and though its body was shrouded in the winding-sheet of the native tongues, endures in spirit, arises from the grave, and fires our imagination over the distance, just as the Orient and the Middle Ages gave their reflected light to the romantic movement of Europe. In the first century of our colonial poetry Terrazas, Villagrá, and others show glimpses of the influence of these compositions, clearly manifest in the lyric poems and ballads dealing with Nezahualcóyotl of Alva Ixtlilxochitl.

Even more indirect, to the point where they can barely be accepted as a hint of the authentic native literature, are those references of the chroniclers to the public and private eloquence of

the people, the councils of fathers and sons, the censure by the high priest of the wicked King, the congratulations and expressions of gratitude of the courtiers, the moral exhortations to upright conduct, abstinence from drunkenness, and so forth. These rhetorical passages of history, often fashioned in the likeness of the discourses with which the historians of classical antiquity abbreviated the exposition of facts and the explanations of their causes, utilizing the allegory of a dialogue between two enemy cities, would carry us too far. Those so desiring can find them in special collections.[4]

(*Letras de la Nueva España*, 1948)

[4] Carlos María Bustamante: *Mañanas de la Alameda de Mexico*, reprinted and augmented with other fragments of similar nature in Rubén M. Campos: *La Producción literaria de los aztecas* (Mexico: Museo Nacional de Arqueología; 1936).

The Tenth Muse of America

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is the epitome of the period in which she lived, but, over and above all this, hers is the imponderable quality of literary beauty, and she adds a new dimension of profundity to thought. She and Ruiz de Alarcón—Mexico's Juan and Juana—are our rightful glory.

Juana is still to us today a living, disquieting person. Her life is the object of detailed study, scholars endeavor to establish the originals of her texts, her iconography is compiled, her library is catalogued. At home and abroad, in Mexico, in the United States, in Germany, the degree of her religious zeal is a matter of discussion, and there are those who in their enthusiasm would canonize her. Swords are still crossed over her. She is popular and timely.

Even the cinema has sought her out. And, as has been acutely observed, it is not easy to study her without falling in love with her.

The controversy over Sor Juana's religiousness is an idle one. It is very natural that in an epoch of faith a person of her make-up should decide to live the life of the spirit, that for this reason she should take the veil, have mystical experiences, and finally give herself over wholly to piety. She came to this by gradual stages. Her distant grandmother, St. Teresa, would say that she discovered the way of perfection through the inner keeps of her castle. If the Spanish nun commands one of the loftiest, tempest-swept peaks, the Mexican is mistress of a captivating knoll with pleasant views. If yonder the burning, dry winds sweep the plains of Castile, here the gentle aroma of gardens—with the least whiff from the boudoir—floats through the viceregal salons. Teresa, habited in coarse serge, walks barefoot and brier-torn; Juana goes in pattens, swathed in silks, hiding her tears, the patrimony of noble souls, behind a mask of light, chaste coquetry. Surrounded by the temptations of the world, courted, she sought in the cloister the refuge of her readings, and after she had deciphered them all, she achieved spotless charity. When at last she lacked for nothing, she discovered that she lacked everything.

"Sor Juana, what a difficult spirit to understand, indeed. To the orthodox she seemed too free, in both her habits and her poetry. A great deal of woman was this woman! If in our century we would regard her as a prodigy, what must she have seemed . . . at the close of the seventeenth century, among the women of her day? And if we consider the boldness verging on the indelicate of her love poems, what speculations do they not give rise to? . . . We know so little . . . that it is almost impossible to dispense with the factor of imagination." [1]

With all, there are in this "way of perfection" four "keeps"

[1] Manuel Toussaint: "Prologue" to the *Selected Works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (Mexico, 1928).

or stages that are unmistakable. First, her infancy in the village where she was born, precocity without example, a lust for knowledge, the autodidact's impatience with discipline. Second, the viceregal court, the triumph of her feminine charms and learning, amorous besiegement (and perhaps deception), the only tribute that society, not yet mature enough to grant her the rule of a literary salon in the French manner, knew how to pay her talents. Third, refuge in the cloister; though the convent of the Hieronymite Sisters was a small academy, it provided her some solitude, and also the indispensable protection for a young woman refusing marriage and refusing to be "a white wall on which all would cast a blot." Fourth and last, "the strait gate"; closely watched over by her inflexible spiritual director, Father Núñez, this muse of the library turns into alms her four thousand volumes, her musical and mathematical instruments, her jewels and belongings, lives two years of ascetism and mortification of the flesh, and, tending her stricken sisters, allows herself to be contaminated by the plague. It is almost the route of a St. Mary Egyptiaca without sin. She died at the age of forty-four, in one of the gloomiest moments of the colony. What with frosts, storms, floods, famines, epidemics, and revolts, it would seem that heaven and earth had conspired to make death desirable. She was surrounded by applause, but by hostility, too, for in one way or another all wanted to cut her down to their own size.

We can pass over her religious writings here, even the *Carta Atenagórica*, a belated answer to the sermon of Vieyra, who held himself superior to the church fathers. The final pages of this letter have the charm of the *sacra conversazione* of Renaissance paintings. We can also omit *Neptuno Alegórico*, an explanation in emblems and hieroglyphs of the triumphal arch in honor of the Viceroy Paredes. Her prose can best be studied in the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz*, that "lay confession," as Abreu Gómez calls it. It is an analysis of her own intellectual formation and a real explanation of her method of study and work. Aside from its human,

psychological, and philosophical excellence, this document represents, in my judgment, the best Mexican prose writing of the period. To the traditional richness and fine style of Spanish prose she has added a certain precision of vocabulary and originality of expression which possess both scientific and æsthetic value. Allowing for differences of time and space, it could stand beside Valéry's *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci.* And without any need to presuppose doctrinal influences, it is indisputable that it belongs to that same order of "fireside philosophy" as the investigation of the individual in relation to the universe, exemplified in the metaphysical Robinson Crusoes from ibn-Tofail to the *Criticón* of Gracián, passing through Descartes's *Discourse.*

The nun gives herself over to her reflections "with only a silent book for master, an unsentient inkwell as fellow pupil, and instead of comment and exercises, many obstacles . . . such as to be reading and have those in the next cell begin to play and sing; to be studying, and two servants start quarreling and come to make me arbiter in their dispute; to be writing, and a friend come to see me, doing me a great disfavor with the best intention." With difficulty she manages to concentrate, achieving a mental clarity and precision that are amazing; she is objective, detaching herself from herself and, like Montaigne, making herself the theme of her physics and metaphysics. She poses, with great sincerity, the obligations of the writer in relation to his world, without overlooking for an instant his right to independence. How right the imaginary "Sor Filotea de la Cruz" would have been if, instead of forbidding Sor Juana her lay writings, she had simply advised her —as Ezequiel A. Chávez so rightly does[2]—to hold out "against the urgings of so many who took advantage of her kindness, soliciting from her verses for every purpose," verses in which her poetry limps a little.

It was not too difficult to explain the reasons for her voca-

[2] *Ensayo de psicología de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* . . . (Barcelona, 1931).

tion. She learned to read when she was three years old by hearing her sister study. At five she could write. Before she was six, she forswore cheese because she heard it said that "it produced noises." At eight she was writing poetry. She wanted to enter the University of Mexico, even though she would have had to dress as a man, because it was not open to women. In the City of Mexico she acquired grammar and Latin in twenty lessons. Her "reading, writing, and arithmetic" sufficed to confound the doctors who examined her. A new Catherine of Alexandria, she acquitted herself in the arguments and answers, as the Viceroy said, "like a royal galleon defending itself against a few canoes." Hers was a felicitous reply to Schopenhauer's acid comment on the long hair and short ideas of women: when she had difficulty with her studies she punished herself by cutting off three or four inches of her hair, that "crowning glory" and especially so "in the flower of her youth," and shut herself up until she had conquered her chimera. Although a certain abbess, "very holy and very ingenuous," ordered her not to study, in the belief that "study brought one into the black books of the Inquisition," and Sor Juana obeyed her during the three months she was in charge of the convent, she obeyed only to the extent of "not opening a book," for that was all that was in her power, and "studied all things that God had created, using them as texts, and all this universal machine as books." The love of letters was innate to her; she could not help it: *Vos me coegistis*, and God knows what he is about, God who—so the Portuguese proverb runs—writes straight with crooked lines:

If good or bad, I cannot say,
But a poet born I know,
For flagellated like Ovid,
In verse I voice my woe.

Juana made a real contribution to the illumination of the workings of the mind not only by her discovery that the alternation of studies is restful, that "while the pen moves, the compass rests,

and while the harp sounds, the organ rests"; but she discovered, too, that there is a process of concatenation between the mental agencies and that they assist one another by means of a kind of inward metaphor. "And I should like to persuade everyone through my own experience that not only do they not interfere with one another, but are mutually helpful, illuminating and opening a path for one another. . . . It is like the chain the ancients feigned came from Jupiter's mouth, from which all things hung, linked one to the other." Sor Juana was musician and poetess, mathematician and theologian, and, suddenly, what baffles her in one subject becomes clear in another. If in Sigüenza y Gongora one finds the latest developments and conquests of science, in Sor Juana, too, there are gropings and explorations, as for example in the field of acoustics, and even experimental investigation, as when she sets a top spinning on flour to discover the curves it describes, or measures triangles of pins, and even how eggs, butter, and sugar react to heat.

But the matter does not conclude merely with the student's adeptness. The intersecting arches have their master key. What gradually emerges is a universal harmony among all the branches of knowledge. All knowledge is a handmaiden to the knowledge of God, a divine encyclopedia set up in a magnificent series of logical consequences. Inasmuch as the allegorical aptitude of the epoch was cultivated to the degree revealed by the morality plays, the concatenation of ideas offers no obstacles. Sor Juana moves without difficulty from humanism to superhumanism. This is the final teaching of the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea;* it foretells that last stage of her existence and prepares a Pascalian night in the garden, a vigorous reaction that will fuse the active and the intellective order in the mystic order. The short cut of ecstasy and mystic trance is not the only road to Rome; one also arrives by the ascending stairway of the intellect. And I understand that it is not sound theology to deny the utility of reason.

Beyond a doubt Sor Juana possessed a cerebral organization

of the most vigorous kind. But why the recognition of the "intellectual" at the expense of the poetess? Does it violate any canon for good poets to be learned and intelligent? To be sure, there are the "inspired idiots," poets by the grace of God. It is they, and not the others, who are the exception.

"It is faint praise of Sor Juana," says Menéndez y Pelayo, "to call her superior to all the poets of the reign of Carlos II." It is indeed. The seven lustrums of that reign were "a most deplorable epoch for belles-lettres." The reign of the Tenth Muse seems to endure still, though there are objections to the taste of the time, and though we must overlook certain circumstantial compositions in honor of viceroys or cathedrals.

Sor Juana's theater is essentially poetic theater and belongs to the school of Calderón. Although *Los Empeños de una casa* is an entertaining work, with amusing situations and even of interest for the life of the poetess, which she herself describes in the character of Leonor, none of it rises to the lyric quality of the scene based on the song: "*No es tal—Sí es tal,*" which has the airy grace of a game of badminton. And in *Amor es más laberinto*, where the Cretan fable assumes the disguise of "cloak and dagger," the passages dealing with Theseus' narrative and the speech of the Athenian ambassador are outstanding. Naturally, in the morality plays the poetic vein flows more freely and less constrained by theatrical exigencies. In *Divino Narciso*, Sor Juana achieves a real masterpiece; and in the panegyrics of her three morality plays her concern for the complete Christianization of the Indians reveals—and this must be credited to the scientific, not the lyric spirit—a rare understanding of the nature-worshipping religions. Important, too, is her interpretation of the Arian heresy in the morality play dealing with *El Mártir del Sacramento* (St. Hermenegild). All in all, Sor Juana has left us two comedies with two interludes, three morality plays with their panegyrics, and several Christmas plays and songs, and the second act of *Amor es más laberinto* was written in collaboration with Juan de Guevara. The paucity of her dramatic

work, in comparison with the lyric, particularly if one bears in mind that Sor Juana was continually requested to contribute to the festivities of the court and the church, is sufficient indication of the true inclination of her muse.

Sor Juana's lyric poetry, on the other hand, is characterized by its abundance and variety no less than by its complete mastery of technique in all its forms and varieties. At her trade she left nothing to be desired. *Silvas*, *liras*, sonnets, ballads, *redondillas*, carols, *loas*, and *tonadas* reveal in their composition, on the one hand, the riches accumulated over centuries by Spanish poetry and, on the other, Sor Juana's gift, a gift that was also the imperious need to write in verse, as she herself has confessed. Juana represents the close of a poetic eopch. All the forms the lyric of the golden age assumed after the Renaissance (to which she was the heir) are to be found in her, and it is in her, perhaps, that they can be admired for the last time, like jewels in a showcase. And she even offers us novelties, as in her ten-syllable verses ending in words accented on the antepenultimate syllable (the portrait of the Countess of Paredes, for example), which deserve to be called "Sorjuanan" verses.

Sor Juana's ear was alert to voices from the four quarters of the compass, and it is a crass error to consider her as completely influenced by Góngora or necessarily difficult when she does not so intend. Her religious poetry follows in the diaphanous steps of Fray Luis de León or St. John of the Cross, and at times she reveals that perfect simplicity which requires no classification in literary history, or "sings with the voice of an angel" in her carols—to use the words of Toussaint—or romps and frolics with the folk in *jácaras*, *ensaladas*, *congos*, *vizcaínos*, *latines*, *tocotines*, and Indian "riddles." [3]

Effortlessly she ascends to the sphere of moral considerations in those sonnets of balanced conceptism which have a pendular

[3] Names given to short theatrical pieces, generally accompanied by music and dancing.

swing and seem to paint exactly what they wipe out, the veritable image of perplexity, concluding in a kind of irrevocable decision upon the disjunctive, or crossroads, to which all meditation on conduct leads. At other times she jogs along in those ballads, half-spoken, half-sung—a prerogative of this arch-Spanish form—which bear comparison with the best of the period.

Love—true, impassioned, plaintive love, bowed in submission or thorny with jealousy and conflicting emotions—inspired her to immortal sonnets, *liras* that flow like running water, ballads or *redondillas* like *Ausencia* or "the effects of love," as fine an example as can be conceived of the perfect alliance between spontaneity and art.

In her poem *Primero Sueño*—our Mexican *Soledades*[4]—Sor Juana writes for herself; that is to say, neither by request, nor moved by any sentimental impulse, but for the pure pleasure of the spirit. "I cannot recall," she says, "ever having written for my own pleasure, except a little thing they call *El Sueño*." When a poet is talking to himself one must approach him respectfully. If the final test of judgment resides in understanding the intention, the declaration of Sor Juana would of itself suffice to "silence the shrilling of three hundred ocas." Ezequiel A. Chávez has conceded the importance it deserves to this oneiric poem which analyzes the six dreams of a single night: "The first section could be entitled *Dream of Night and of Nocturnal Experience;* the second, *Dream of the Universal Dream of the World;* the third, *Dream of the Dream of Man's Physiological Dream;* the fourth, *Dream of Dreams;* the fifth, *Dream of the Dream of Knowledge—of Its Theory and Method;* and the sixth, *Dream of Awakening*." The divisions are not clearly marked. This continuity of metamorphosis which fills the sleeper's mind flows through almost a thousand verses.

Thus when the poetess most closely followed the Cordovan master it was nevertheless her own blood she poured into the foreign mold, her temperament that leaned toward introspection

[4] Most famous of Luis de Góngora's longer poems.

and the contemplation of the deepest hidden realities of her being. Here the sounds and brilliance of the Gongoresque æsthetics are only means to express a purpose that does not end with the externality of the phenomenon; they are but a catachresis for the purpose of evoking some nameless object. Or better still, the practical things of Bergson, which the reason isolates and orders in successions, are fused and remodeled in a different fashion, taking advantage of the relaxation, the great yawn of sleep. Then they seem to struggle in the strata of the subconscious and the elemental ego where the vital unity preserves other worlds, latent worlds that aspire to a simultaneous or superimposed representation. Have the surrealists examined Juana's dreams?

It was a feat of the intelligence to use the instruments of the most refined culture, and even a certain phenomenalism after the manner of Aratus, and a certain materialism after the manner of Lucretius, to give form to these vegetative and intuitive larvæ. We might even say that Juana ventured several steps along the bridge that leads from the "Parnassianism" of Góngora—a résumé of the Græco-Latin visuality as grasped by the sensibility of the Renaissance—to a poetry of pure intellectual emotion. The artistic description, mythology, erudition, history, science (perhaps voluntarily delayed a few moments to make it a little mysterious), philosophy, are all closely interwoven. The poem contemplates, from without, the sleeping world; but it does more: it approaches the sleeper like a vampire, passes into him and into his nightmare in search of a synthesis between waking, drowning, and sleep. Góngora in the *Soledades* is content to let his man rest, an inert mass in the midst of the nocturnal landscape. Juana endeavors to incorporate into his animastic continuity the parenthesis of the night, to integrate the dreamer with the march of the universe. And she stops at the edge of the abysses that open before her. In the *Primero Sueño*, as in the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*—the obverse and reverse of the same medal—the longing to grasp

the meaning of the cosmos fails of solution within herself and is saved on the wings of theology.

It is amazing to find in this woman an originality independent of the literary fashions she followed. Her world, compounded of religion and worldly love, of science and sentiment, of feminine coquetry and maternal solicitude, of valor and tenderness, of courtliness and "folksiness," of playfulness and gravity, is surprising, as is her crystal-clear awareness of social realities: America in the eyes of the world, the essence of the Mexican reality, the contrast between Creole and Spaniard, the incorporation of the Indian, the emancipation of the Negro, the mission of woman, the reform of education. This same woman who at times seems a mischievous girl, a girl concerned with trifles, dolls, "playing house" and marbles, at times appears before us as a togaed scholar and, in the end, wearing the halo of a saint.

All New Spain is evoked by the name of the Tenth Muse, it is true. But that lyricism, impassioned and divinely Dionysiac; that gush of tears which pervades her love poems; the vertigo of Panic poetry which for a moment was hers, that painful ascent to the very limits of human possibilities, even though it was to fail and fall prostrate before the angelic, have neither name, nor epoch, nor local habitation, and belong to none but her.

(*Letras de la Nueva España*, 1948)

In Memoriam: Luis G. Urbina

AMONG the poets who achieved an evolution of their own in the course of the *modernista* movement—except for influences of secondary importance—there are three great Mexicans: Díaz Mirón, Othón, and Luis G. Urbina. Icaza is best remembered for his prose, although this implies no slur on his poetry. Of them all, it is Urbina alone whose wine has kept the unmistakable tang of the romantic cask. Justo Sierra called Gutiérrez Nájera "the autumn rose of Mexican romanticism." What, then, shall we call our cherished "*Viejecito*"? The difference is instantly apparent: Gutiérrez Nájera's type of romanticism died with him, and he himself had evolved toward new modes, though it is impossible to say how far he might have gone. Death

claimed him young, closing that gate ajar through which another "guest at the banquet of madness" had just passed, whereas Urbina rode out the tide in his skiff, and reached the other shore bearing his treasured cargo. He rode out the tide because he achieved a riper age, and also because of his fidelity to the poetic manner he had chosen. He who persists is right; that is a law of nature.

The continuity of his art is matched by the melodious continuity of his technique, which at times makes of an entire verse, and even of a whole brief poem, a single unit, as though the whole were fused into one long word. The continuity of his art is matched, too, by that loyalty of his to a racial sadness, which spans centuries. The unstanched, the "old tear," makes itself heard throughout his work. Years will pass, distance will make it possible to cast up the accounts. Already I have heard a young poet say that he feels the immediacy of Urbina. He reached the other shore in his skiff. He who persists is right.

And after we have given the poet his place, the prose writer he was must still be conceded what is rightfully his; the discerning, agile journalist; the pleasant essayist; the literary historian for whom the cultural past of his people, a latent possibility of his soul, could easily be brought to life by mere force of imagination. Ventura Garcia Calderón, the Peruvian, once said to me years ago: "But doesn't Mexico realize what a prose writer it has in this poet?"

Few have possessed a sensibility so keenly, so purely Mexican. His profound penetration, which made him so understanding and so good, as all who had anything to do with him can bear witness, never lost that rhythm of courtesy which Ruiz de Alarcón established for all time—momentary interruptions notwithstanding—for the music of our souls. His talent was part of his goodness. His profound human understanding taught him that "the greatest of these is charity." He had understood and forgiven everything even before it happened. And the very fact that, like Ruiz de

Alarcón, he was born devoid of the attributes of physical charm—except for his beautifully shaped hands, which he sang with candid admiration—led him to discover the other, the supreme beauty, which during his lifetime seemed to enhance his appearance, and today forever surrounds him with a halo in our memory. He vaguely resembled Morelos (the hero of Mexican independence, whose bust is to be seen in all our processions); he vaguely resembled Socrates, a Socrates without a beard, without abstruseness, and without cross-examinations, because this subtle Mexican exercised the maieutic art through simple, inward compenetration.

When I think of "*El Viejecito*" I always see him in my mind's eye wrapped in his Spanish cape and wearing that broad-brimmed hat which emphasized his diminutive stature. His precise gestures, his perfectly placed voice, made him the finest reciter in the unpretentious manner I have ever known. I do not see him seated among his papers and books. Neither do I exactly see him moving. No. He proceeds along the street slowly, with pattering steps, stopping every minute to greet someone, to speak an affectionate word to everyone he meets. In Mexico and Madrid everybody knew him. He was a kind of tutelary divinity of the quarter in which he lived, the incarnation of a felicitous encounter, and to meet him on the corner was in the nature of a good omen. One walked by, smiling, happy without knowing why, comforted. The little man moves on toward glory leisurely, without haste. The angels can wait; along the way there are many human beings who need a pat on the back, a word of advice, an improvised epigram to give them an instant's pleasure.

The memory of "*El Viejecito*" is linked for me with various scenes. When I came to Mexico City age and respect kept me at a distance from the already well-known writer, the Normal School professor into whose classroom I used to slip for the pleasure of hearing him read aloud from *The Three-Cornered Hat* or fragments of poetry. Suddenly I found myself caught up in the wave of a new generation of writers who, though respectful—it was still like that

in those days—felt no affinity with the generations that had preceded them. In this respect all generations are alike. I have already described on another occasion how that outstanding poet, that eminent journalist, that teacher was instinctively attracted to us, shared in our perplexities, and even began to study with us again. Soon we were using the familiar "thou" to him. Now nothing can separate us.

On Sundays he stayed in bed until very late. It was there he received his friends. Attending Urbina's *petit lever* was a literary rite. It must be mentioned that he was immaculately clean. He withstood remarkably that most difficult test of intimacy. His witticisms were proverbial, so good that they should be collected, like another aspect of his writing. He used to say: "I build my nest like the birds, of the bits of trash from the street." He loved the elemental beings: cats and dogs flourished in his house. Not a stray dog but had the right to come in and find a place beside his bed. After breakfast he divided up the left-over bread among his dogs, and then recited some whimsical verses that said, among other things: "Then they all went away." And it was odd to watch how the dogs, as they listened to these lines, got up and really went away. In his days of grim poverty in Madrid I saw him pick up a stray dog and take it home with him. The death of his dog Baudelaire, which took place before the episodes to which I refer, was occasion for tears and verses. Considerable water has flowed over the dam since then, and I can repeat what he told me. His verses on his dog were sarcastically criticized by his associates of the *Revista Moderna*. He overheard them, by chance, one day as he was coming into the house of Jesús Valenzuela, another whose door was always open, and who could barely get out of bed because of the infirmities that finally killed him. Urbina, whose steps were deadened by the carpet, could not avoid hearing all that was said by those gathered around Valenzuela's bed. Only Othón's hoarse voice was raised in his defense. Urbina withdrew silently without making his presence known. The next day he met Othón:

"I want to thank you," he said. "I know that you took my part yesterday."

And Othón, like the child he remained all his life, answered:

"It was only natural. You know, I am the first poet of Mexico, Diaz Mirón the second, and you the third, and we have to stand up for one another."

Some of those who took part in that cannibal feast will learn, as they read these lines, something they never knew before, and will find new reasons to admire Urbina's tact and poise. His rule of conduct was: "Never to lose my serenity."

But to go back to the Sunday ceremony. He got out of bed very late, as late as possible, and threw on a Japanese kimono that became famous, gray and silver, with blue satin facings.

One morning, when we were alone, he began to tell me his life, of his love when he was seventeen years old for a woman twice his age who taught him to earn a living.

"My origins were very humble," he said with simplicity. "My gratitude never ended."

And then the sentimental accounts of his loves and sorrows. Each woman seemed *the* one, and then there came another. "*Ecce Deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi,*" as the shepherd Hermas exclaimed.

"Nature," he would say, "is cruel and wise, as when a baby cuts its teeth. There is pain and a tooth comes through. We would resign ourselves to this provided we suffered no more. But no; one must endure the aching gums until they have all come through. Until we have the teeth with which to chew the cud of experience."

Other friends would drop in. He talked about the *Diary* of the Goncourts; of the influence of the sensorial imagination on the morphology of words; of the fierce god "Huichilobos," whose name already appears transformed in Bernal Díaz del Castillo; of St. Teresa, the key to whose style he believed was to be found in *Amadis of Gaul*, a book that she read in her childhood and which left an impress on her for life; and he said that she was able to go

into an ecstasy whenever she desired. Then he recalled General Sóstenes Rocha, whose brutal taking of Tampico had given him the cold shudders when he read about it in the newspapers, and whom he had met in the office of the newspaper *El Combate*, which pretended to be anticlerical but received gifts from the archbishopric. Luis, while still almost a boy, had acted as Rocha's amanuensis, when the latter dictated to him a manual for the use of sergeants and corporals, for which he received eight thousand pesos monthly from the government, and which occupied eight pages of the paper's supplement. The work was said to be of prime importance. Of a morning there used to show up at General Rocha's house his intimate friend of the moment and companion in arms, Vicente Villada, Valera, the head typesetter, and Urbina. Rocha, with that face of his that inspired terror, his nose red from exposure to the weather, would make his appearance and begin to dictate: "At dawn the next day . . ." After a few more phrases he would order Urbina to copy the documents to be found in Orozco y Berra until he filled the daily quota. In the afternoon the work was resumed, this time with a certain amount of alcoholic reinforcement:

"Where did we leave off, Valera?"

"At that battle Moctezuma lost, general."

"No, man, he won it."

"Well, there it said he had lost it, and it's been set up that way."

"All right, I'll correct it in the commentary; but don't forget that he won it."

That seasoned old soldier, as is often the case with brave men, could be unassuming, even tender in his dealings with people. Knowing his own strength, he once allowed himself to be slapped by Jesús Valenzuela at the Café de la Reforma, later to become the Café Colón. "I forgive you," he said, and on the spot they shook hands and continued friends as before. He looked after his canaries himself, carrying them around perched on his thick, leathery fin-

gers. There were moments in his memoirs when one caught the flash of the epic sword. It was in the desert of Chihuahua; the troops were choking with dust and dying of thirst, when suddenly they spied a little pool. All knelt down beside it to drink. Rocha had scooped up a handful of water; he saw a little bird coming to drink, and he stretched out his hand to it. As he evoked such scenes, the contrast between the soldier's rough voice and his emotion, which he could not conceal, produced such a strange tragic effect that Urbina could never forget it.

I have intentionally lingered over these recollections, which I jotted down some years ago, because I wanted to give the younger people an idea of how much Urbina heard, knew, and lived. As private secretary to Justo Sierra he had the post of a privileged observer. From the early years of Porfirio Diaz to the triumph of the Revolution he watched the wheel of fortune spin. There was no one who could have written the memoirs he owed us. I was never able to persuade him to undertake the task. I know that in his final years he had begun some pages that he was planning to send me in installments, but I never received these relics.

As our centennial approached, he installed himself in the National Library to prepare, with Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Nicolás Rangel, that two-volume anthology which contains pages of information of curious interest, and the prologue to which, written by Urbina, is a rapid, delightful reconstruction of that dawn of independence. This prologue was the basis of the five lectures he gave at the University of Buenos Aires, which were published separately under the title *La Vida literaria de Mêxico* (Madrid, 1917). On occasion I have referred to these pages as "criticism of final instance," the definitive human conclusion, stripped of all documentation and bringing the pure æsthetic problems to the fullness of their vital function. Urbina possessed unique gifts as a literary historian: his identification with our people; his complete lack of pedantry; his poet's imagination, which, when confronted with a love poem, for example, made it

possible for him to evoke the image of the beloved; his genuine, deep-rooted taste for letters, much rarer than might be expected in the new critical trends, which in the same manner and with equal detachment and complete lack of human emotion apply their psychological-linguistic methods to a venomous lampoon, an elegy, or a dithyramb, leaving us in every case defrauded of its true interpretation. And, in addition, Urbina's exceptional memory for poetry enabled him to act as an unconscious decanter, as when, for example, writing on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, he gave us in the course of his analysis, without being aware of it, a select anthology of her work.

In the great bare rooms of the library, which little by little filled up with tables and books, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Nicolás Rangel assembled materials and prepared monographs. And Urbina traced the pattern on the shifting mass of the work in progress. Writers dropped in, picked up information, took an occasional note. Julio Torri and I gave a little help with certain parts of the work, and I had an opportunity to document myself on the critical history of *The Mangy Parrot.* One day the painter Juan Téllez dropped by. "See, this is criticism," I said, holding out before him a pair of paper-shears. A change came over his face; his eyes dilated. "Oh, yes! That's criticism," he answered, and began to reel off a string of abstruse fantasies, which revealed to us for the first time that our poor, charming friend had already lost his mind.

Fate sent us all our various ways. Later on I met "*El Viejecito*" again in Madrid, where he bore his ill fortune with the strength that comes from wisdom. On the 29th of September 1921 he sent me a gift with this unpublished sonnet:

I send you, Brother Alfonso, this mischievous beastie
Which your son's cup of happiness will fill,
Its gray eyes are full of candor and sweetness
And its mouth has the fragrance of milk about it still.

Its movements are those of a miniature tiger.
It is all silk, grace, softness, and harmony.
It will amuse your child with its agile mischief,
Two innocences keep each other company.

To call it ungrateful is base calumny. How mete
The gratitude of man or beast? Like Francis I observe
The divine law: I believe all life is based
On love. And, proof I am not ungrateful,
To yours I send the jewel of my house:
A creature like a flower: a purring little cat.

We separated again; I never saw his little house in Las Ventas. From his letters and the reports of the Paso y Troncoso Commission, collected by Silvio Zavala, I know how hard he worked in the Archives of the Indies. While in South America, I received his posthumous message: papers that are of no interest to posterity. But what is of interest are those which are among the files of our former Legation in Madrid,[1] now, I understand, in the keeping of the Dominican Legation. If these lines should at least serve as a stimulus to our authorities to salvage this precious heritage, they will have accomplished their purpose.

(*1941; Pasado Inmediato, 1941*)

[1] Mexico has never to date (1950) had diplomatic relations with the Spanish government of Franco.

Virgil in Mexico

Tu duca, tu signore, tu maestro

It is characteristic of a fecund idea to develop independently, outdistancing the intention of its creator and at times achieving wholly unexpected results. True creation consists in this: the child frees itself from its parent and begins to live its own life. Poets are well aware of this, they who work their poem as who should cut the hawsers of a boat one by one until at last it slips into the sea, and from the shore we watch it sail off to battle the shoals after its own fashion. I have no hesitation, as I reflect upon the arrangements for the solemn observance in Mexico of Virgil's two-thousandth anniversary, in adding, on my own responsibility, to the plans of the President; I have no qualms, as I present my own personal contribution, in deflecting the course of the question

a little, diverting it somewhat to match my own angle of vision. We were all invited to help build this tower of homage, and the tower will arise with the stones that each of us brings. Unless, unwittingly, I should merely make a descriptive survey of the site already staked out, for, in truth, I find it difficult to embrace more than is contained in these simple propositions: "In this year the two-thousandth anniversary of the poet Virgil, glory of the Latin spirit, will be observed, and Mexico, vigilant custodian of this spirit, cannot remain indifferent." Any dubiety is impossible. It is a question of an act of Latinism. It is a matter of a conscious, precise, documented statement of the sense that should rule our state policies, and our unequivocal adherence to definite norms of civilization, to a definite scale of moral values, to a definite manner of interpreting life and death.

It is odd that the occasion in question should have as its setting a university world that is already beginning to lose its Latin. The Positivism that has held sway in our schools has been weeding out, whether it was aware of the fact or not, every sprig of the humanities. The students of my day did not learn Latin. The only ones who acquired a smattering of the language were those rare few who had studied in the theological seminaries. Those of us who took the high road of Mexican liberalism—and we represent the great majority of university graduates—passed from one lay school to another without ever encountering Latin, which, to be honest, seemed to us a stuffy relic of the church. And it is still distressing to recall how in the law school, like alms tossed to a beggar, a niggardly course was offered in Roman Law which, even in my day, Professor Eguía Liz taught to the few who elected it as he saw fit, without faith, without Latin, and almost without Roman law.

"Where do you come from, young one?"

"From Puebla, professor."

"P-u-e-b-l-a: six letters. Open the book to page 6 and read me the first thing you find there."

And the student, as best he could, read two or three Latin phrases, which, so far as he was concerned, might just as well have been in Coptic.

But the older generation, our predecessors. . . . This is part of a letter from the Spanish philologist Américo Castro: "I spent nights at the home of García Pimental, examining incunabula. All of the guests knew Latin. We discussed shades of meaning in Virgil. On certain doubts we consulted the commentaries of Luis Vives. It was like the atmosphere of Montaigne's essay: *Sur des vers de Virgile.* The errors of Latin in my study of Cervantes were courteously called to my attention in Mexico, where, in the university, nobody teaches Latin."

But who ever said that the spirit of great poetry is confined to the limits of a single language? Above all, who ever said that a great civilization cannot be decanted, like water itself, into different containers? Not only have we received the Latin sustenance through Spain, a fact nobody will deny, but the British thinkers as well, those who contemplate the landscape from the opposite bank of language and race, on occasion have no hesitation in recognizing that the stones which form the groundwork of their national foundations have come from Rome. The concept of Latin civilization is a broad and elastic one. It overleaps the bounds of religion, inasmuch as the ruins of the pagan Forum are as Latin as the dome of Catholic St. Peter's. For all civilization moves forward, changing as it goes, and the waters that flow into the sea are no longer those which descended from the melting ice of the mountain peaks. Yet it is all the same river, swelled with tributaries, mingled with the salts of other soils, influenced by other systems of climate and rainfall, but always, in the main stream of its current and the channel it cuts through the earth, the same river.

What a satisfying task the educator of tomorrow would set himself were he deliberately to reject all the exotic influences that never became thoroughly acclimated in Mexico, and, turning a

deaf ear to all that trumpery pedagogy that produces surgeons by correspondence, salvaging the wealth of science that Gabino Barreda's great reform made an inseparable part of our culture, were to ransom, too, the neglected treasures of a tradition whose loss robs us of some of the most precious values of the Mexican soul! Return to that which is peculiarly our own. Recover and communicate to others that secret of the humanities which for so long a time have taken sanctuary among the politically outlawed classes. How many Mexican universities know the history of Mexican scientific endeavor, inasmuch as to speak of "Mexican science" would be a paradox? How many are aware of the flowering of Latin studies in Mexico, which the expulsion of the Jesuits in the epoch of Charles III cut short? Where in Mexico can the history of Mexican culture be studied? Which doctor—leaving aside the idiosyncrasies of some autodidact—knows the experiments and attempts of Mexican medicine, or has investigated in any special course of studies the secrets of our native pharmacopeia, a thing foreigners sometimes do, as in the case of *peyotl*? What, for example, is our reaction to the names of Cristóbal de Ojeda, Cristóbal Méndez, Pedro López, doctors of "New Spain" at the end of the sixteenth century, or to that of Friar Lucas de Almodóvar, who possessed healing powers and at whose death, according to Mendieta, portents and signs were seen? Did any mining engineer ever come upon a textbook dealing with the beginnings of our mining or our chemistry? Which lawyer ever found himself in need of knowing who Mariano Otero was and what were the sources of his idea of the *juicio de amparo*? [1] I do not mean to say that all this is unknown; I am merely pointing out that it is not cultivated as a required part of our university program. Only fanatics of erudition are acquainted with the chapters of Icazbalceta on the origins of our sciences and industries. We are on solid ground, at least theoretically, as far as rural, primary, elementary, and manual-training schools go; but we need to strengthen the nucleus, the very heart

[1] A kind of writ of habeas corpus. (Translator's note.)

of our teaching, from which the blood that is to reach the extremities must come.

To say that this if of no importance for the mass of the people is as puerile as to suggest anew that science become the prerogative of a priestly caste; as to expect the people to learn without teachers; as to assume that the people will forsake their vital urges to invent their own culture; as to dream that the great national cultures descend of their own accord upon the masses from the heights of some fabulous Mount Sinai, without the work of scholars who devote their whole life, their unremitting study, to searching them out and testing them.

I want Latin for those of the Left, for I cannot see what is gained by the loss of conquests already achieved. And I want the humanities as the natural vehicle for all that is autochthonous. The autochthonous—from which those of my generation were also drifting away, and, also, without realizing it—may be understood in two ways. At times it is that instinctive force, so self-evident that to defend it with sophisms is to harm it; and to attempt to make it rest upon preconceived attitudes is to deprive it of its greatest virtue: spontaneity. The person who says: "I am going to behave instinctively" is no longer able to do so. The one who says: "I am going to produce a subconscious work of art" is lost and does not know what he is talking about. So spontaneous and even inevitable is this originality of the autochthonous that it often runs counter to the conscious aims of the artist. The *modernistas* of South America threw themselves into the arms of French symbolism, and yet, often against their will, they brought forth an original product, peculiarly their own, rediscovering—despite certain inevitable errors—the treasures of our sensibility and our poetic idiom.

The autochthonous, in a more concrete and readily grasped sense, is, in our America, a vast lode of objects, forms, colors, and sounds, which must be incorporated and dissolved in the liquid of a

culture, to which they communicate a seasoning of varied and appetizing savor. And, so far, the only waters that have laved us—derived from and colored by Spain to a greater or lesser degree—are the Latin streams. We have no moral panorama of our world prior to Cortés, merely a fragmentary vision, whose sole value lies in its curiosity, its archæology—an absolute past. There is no one any longer willing to sacrifice hearts still palpitating on the altars of fierce gods, smearing his hair with blood, and dancing to the sound of beating drums. And as long as these practices are proscribed—along with the interpretation of life they postulate—we have no right to deceive ourselves or disturb others with harmful impostures. Mexico's spirit lies in the color the Latin waters took on here, in our home, as they washed the red clay of our native soil for three centuries.

As for those who say that to concern ourselves with Latin is to set the children of our rural areas to years of learning declensions when what they need for the moment is only the plow, the alphabet, and soap, they are presenting a clumsy caricature and evincing a complete ignorance of the rank and degree of studies necessary in any national system of education, and of the flexibility required of any program designed for a heterogeneous people; a total ignorance of the transformations that can be effected, given the time, in the cultural levels of a country by means of a suitable system. An attitude of this sort would lead in the end to the complete wiping out of human knowledge, through a misguided pity for the illiterate, who now, as always, abound. It is a dangerous kind of muddled thinking and a ridiculous mawkishness. Our political ideal consists in equalizing upward, not downward.

THE POSITION OF AMERICA

It is a distant island of the Pacific, a beach on which castaways of Europe have been washed up, unscrupulous traders, refugees from civilization, exchanging their evils and contaminating one another with their ills and vices. So intense is the heat that a slight drop in temperatures that would be sultry in Europe makes these

men shiver, and nature itself becomes so confused that liquids congeal in the bottles. Beside the ocean sits a beachcomber who has turned his back upon his own name as he stumbles from one failure to another. In his hands he holds a slender volume and reads, seemingly oblivious of the degradation that surrounds him on all sides. The beachcomber is conning his Virgil. ". . . The Virgil, which he could not exchange against a meal, had often consoled him in his hunger. He would study it, as he lay with tightened belt on the floor of the old calaboose, seeking favourite passages and finding new ones only less beautiful because they lacked the consecration of remembrance. Or he would pause on random country walks; sit on the pathside, gazing over the sea on the mountains of Eimeo, and dip into the *Æneid*, seeking *sortes*. And if the oracle (as is the way of oracles) replied with no very certain nor encouraging voice, visions of England at least would throng upon the exile's memory: the busy schoolroom, the green playing-fields, holidays at home, and the perennial roar of London, and the fireside, and the white head of his father. For it is the destiny of those grave, restrained, and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintanceship at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory; so that a phrase of Virgil speaks not so much of Mantua or Augustus, but of English places and the student's own irrevocable youth." (Robert Louis Stevenson: *The Ebb-Tide.*)

I intentionally selected this pleasant episode from Stevenson, Scotch, moreover, and not Latin by origin, to strengthen my argument. It is the complete image of a moral Robinson Crusoe who rebuilds the structure of his emotions on the salvaged fragment of Virgil's verses. His storm-tossed soul gets back on course anew. Harmony reasserts itself and the Latin world restores man to his place in the concert of nature, its clamor now muted, and in the man's riven heart reason and will mount their ancient throne.

It might seem that the miracle could be attributed to the

fructifying warmth of youthful associations, and that a similar prodigy could be wrought by other poetry or books interwoven with memories of home and childhood. This, naturally, is true. Yet we can never expect from the sickly sentimentalism—half mawkishness, half wanton cruelty—of certain required readings, such as Amiel's *Journal*, the moral stimulation, the deep restorative draughts, with their rich brew of history, of lofty examples in which men have always found inspiration, of names which, through long imaginative association, possess the power to roll the stone from the tomb, of incidents and characters that are the yardstick of virtue, that flow from a single page of the *Æneid*. Here is to be found food for men, iron to temper virility, as well as occasion for the touching notes of emotion, and tears for griefs, too. Heroism of human proportions, a path measured to our stride. No wonder Virgil seems, always and for men of all lands, the voice of their country. It is in him we learn that nations are founded on suffering and shipwreck, and at times by turning a deaf ear to the tears of Dido and trampling on one's own heart. In the adventures of the hero who, stumbling, falling, as he bears the sacred household gods to safety, there are many I know of in our own land who have seen the reflection of their own experience, and I doubt that we could call him a good Mexican who could read the *Æneid* unmoved. The national feeling, which in Homer is still an outline, a sketch, is here being filled in with the shapes and hills of the landscape. There is a definite relation between the state of the soul and the vision that fills the eyes, between the glow of the ideal and the sensory perception. But in the measure that this occurs, Virgil's sense of nationality grows stronger until, by its concentration, it rises above it. It leaves the modest local habitation from which it has drawn its sustenance, takes wing, and becomes abstract, becomes idea, as it is for the modern mind, and in this way becomes transferrable, like the gods of Troy that Æneas concealed beneath his cloak to save them from destruction, taking them to be set up anew in the land where he was miraculously shipwrecked. Educators should not

overlook the fact that the reading of Virgil cultivates in all peoples the national spirit.

The reading of Virgil serves to leaven the concept of a nation and, at the same time that it models its broad outlines, fills it with the content of city and fields, war and husbandry, the delights of private life and the generous enthusiasms of the forum, thus strongly shaping the inner architecture of the person educated in this poetry. With a copy of Virgil in his hand, a man may descend without fear to the lower regions. Our beachcomber was seeking in those Latin verses the subsoil of his own soul, rereading favorite passages or "finding new ones only less beautiful because they lacked the consecration of remembrance."

The consecration of remembrance! Familiar music is more musical and fills the presentient ear with double enjoyment. True love is to be found, rather than in the chance encounter, in the cultivation, the adaptation of the habits, in a studied seeking over the years, until act, expectation, and remembrance are all bathed in the same light. To incorporate a new force into the round of custom is to give it still more force. To bestow Virgil upon the young is to nourish them on lion's marrow. And, in addition to all this, it is our good fortune that the language of Virgil is the cornerstone of our own tongue, and that every word of his is linked, as by an axis or umbilical cord, to every word of ours, thus increasing the weight of its meaning, its powers of connotation, its calories of spiritual nourishment. Is it not this nourishment, this alimentary breath of etymology, this sustenance that comes from the roots of words—substratum of the mental experiences of an entire civilization, and the charge compressed as in cartridges of the spiritual history of a whole ethnic group—that Vico had already discovered in his *De antiquissima italorum sapientia;* that Fichte later on, inspired by Herder, too, proposed in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, as discipline and exercise of the national cult? It was this, this descent to the hidden wellsprings of our collective psychology, this im-

mersion in the communicating vessels of the subconscious, where every man is the synthesis of those who have gone before him and in which we all recognize, without abdicating our dignity as individuals, that we stem from the same trunk, as the leaves, the essential organ of the tree, know themselves inextricably bound to their tree.

Some years ago, on the terrace of Chapultepec, a President of Mexico was explaining to me the plan of the Central Schools of Agriculture, where the children of the Indian villages are assembled and, in a short time, trained for rural activities. I recalled then the two great agricultural enterprises the priest Hidalgo had hoped to establish in Mexico: wine and silk. The President, who had a first-hand knowledge of the country and its people, was instantly taken by the idea, and pointed out to me the possibility of planting grapevines in certain sections of the Republic where the climate is suitable, and how easy it would be to have the children studying in the agricultural schools look after the grapes, while their families, particularly the women, for whom this work seems more suitable, could care for the silkworms on the mulberry hedges that could be planted along the boundaries of the fields in cultivation. The President was outlining to me with complete objectivity a political idea that sprang from the needs of our country, not taken from books, but the fruit of experience; and, echoing a concern that was widespread, he insisted on the urgency of teaching our country folk the advantages and pleasures of the land, which had been stifled by the exclusive attention the Conquest devoted to the working of the mines, and blighted later by the system, practically amounting to slavery, that prevailed on the great haciendas. The last thing that entered his mind was that in what he was saying with regard to the most urgent aspects of the Mexican reality he was glossing the *Georgics* and entering by natural right upon the realm of the great Latin whose name—in significant continuity—another President has just evoked for the consideration of his fellow citizens. It is as though the spirit of Virgil throbbed in the

most living of Mexico's problems and informed our agrarian policies. It would not be inappropriate, as a further act of solidarity in these honors to Virgil, to recommend in the agricultural schools—and in a general manner, in all elementary schools—the reading of the *Georgics* to arouse in the minds of the children the vocation for the land, a vocation that today becomes almost synonymous with the vocation for our native country. Fortunately, we are not without versions, such as that of Ochoa, which would suffice for this purpose, especially if read with Herrasti's notes. And if we lacked them, Herrasti, Silva, and other Mexican Latinists are qualified to undertake the task. This reading could be supplemented by fragments from our own *Georgics*—that is to say, Landívar's *Rusticatio mexicana* (translated into prose by Loureda and into verse by Escobedo)—to bring home, in tangible fashion, the degree to which the classic spirit is meaningful for us, and even of national utility. Incidentally, I would recommend the literary anthology of agriculture collected by the Spanish professor Juan Dantín Cereceda. This could be the "reader" par excellence; it develops in the child, along with a feeling of love for work, the taste for good poetry and, even as it gives sound advice, cultivates the æsthetic sense. And, to propitiate the shade of the outraged poet, we could burn a copy of Niebuhr.

I cannot mention Father Hidalgo in connection with Virgil without pausing to point out the charm of the typically Virgilian hero I find in him. True, he was a man of letters, and gusts of the Jacobin winds blowing through the world reached even him. His friends referred to him as *el afrancesado*, which in those days was tantamount to what we now designate as advanced, Left-wing, "red." He was aware of the evils that were shaking Europe, and the Abbé Queipo was shocked to find one day on his desk several dangerous books, those which carried the corrupting new ideas of the old continent. But were not the shepherds of the *Eclogues* men who read too, and did not Damœtas and Menalcas mingle, with their simple rural observations, the name of the writer Pollio, the

worshipper of novelties, and satirical allusions to the poetasters whose gaze was fixed on the past, Bavius and Mævius? Aside from this, and in his intimacy, Hidalgo was a kindly parish priest, neither oversevere with his neighbor nor too exacting with human nature. In a word, a good Christian. He was a man who was good company, a village philosopher, conversationalist, scholar, full of intellectual curiosity and even of the spirit of enterprise, and, I believe, skillful with his hands as well, a sound soul in a sound body. The errors of the economic and juridical system that ruled the colony prevented him from carrying out his agricultural plans. In vain did he attempt to implant in Mexico the cultivation of vineyards, the production of wine, and the raising of silkworms. Perhaps the opposition he encountered on the part of the Spanish authorities gradually brought him to an awareness of the state of public ill-being, which, at bottom, was the quickening of the impulse toward self-rule. Thus we can imagine the father of his country putting his hand to the plow or the sword, like the heroes of Virgil. Let no one be deceived by his sweetness: an inner fire was burning in him that was soon to set the whole countryside ablaze. History, in one of her smiling moods, has placed on the altar of our national cult the image of this most engaging man, agile of act and thought, a lover of good books and of good fleeces, brave, gallant, poet and farmer, a simple neighbor in everyday life, a hero without peer in the hour of battle. Through the rolling paragraphs of Ignacio Ramírez, in which our youthful admiration first came to know him, we see him moving among the "vines that smiled upon him from the hillsides" and the "silkworms that bestowed upon him their regal attire"; or he appears before us in the golden episode of our Mexican *Æneid*, assembling to the tolling of the bells at midnight his flock of faithful, who gather, armed with axes and billhooks, providentially forewarned by a distinguished lady who had been put in prison, thus precipitating the action that was to carry him to death and glory.

This Virgilian union of agriculture and poetry—was that

not perhaps the dream of Hidalgo, the dream of the father of his country? We have not yet realized it. But in attempting to secure to the people the wine of justice and the silk of well-being we are doing what is in our power to make the earth a pleasanter dwelling-place for man.

We have been making a profession of historic Latinism, of evolutionary Latinism, and this obliges us to clarify our position.

What is the origin of this egolatry, of this geographic obsession with which we are all beset, and which gives rise to an exaggerated regard for the figures of latitude, longitude, and altitude, as though they fundamentally conditioned the manner of being of a people? It is easy to trace the history of these ideas in France, where a propitious atmosphere already existed for them. This geographic obsession probably goes back to the day when Michelet prefaced his *History* with the celebrated "*Tableau de la France*." Renan, as is well known, employed the method brilliantly; Taine carried it to complete fruition; and a sentimental politician, Barrès, put it at the service of his own desires and the ambitions of his country. Not a critic, not a statesman, says Grenier, but justifies his opinions today with a few topographical figures.

Along with this formula, that of the so-called psychology of nations came into play. Many ideas discarded as useless, ideas that seemed completely outmoded before the First World War, but into which new life was breathed at that moment to turn them into weapons, have recovered their ancient luster with interest. Down the broad highway that leads from Gobineau to Keyserling, through Frobenius and Spengler, the perspectivist philosophy took its path and began setting up its instruments to survey the land and measure the content of races and cultures. To this was joined the amazing vogue of ethnography, folklore, and archæology, which Ortega y Gasset, with his gift of penetration, regards as the newest arrivals in the family of fine arts. Anyone who denied that the human plant adapts itself in varying fashion to differences of soil

and climate would be blind and deaf. Anyone who denied the fundamental importance of this fact in connection with primitive and isolated peoples, cradles of civilizations, would be ignorant. But anyone who on the basis of this single vegetal factor attempts to work out a history of modern thought will fall into lamentable error. And his mistake would be even crasser if he set about founding a modern school of political thought—that is to say, a system of practical ideas based on geographic evolutions whose rhythm over the ages is so slow as completely to elude social utility. Aside from the fact that it is one of the characteristics of the animal we are to reduce, with increasing success, the importance of the purely and exclusively animal characteristics, educating them, and channeling them to determined ends that have not been imposed from without, but which have sprung from the centrifugal conscience. Even the determination of our human form, the result of the work and control of the delayed-action hormones upon the primitive matter of "Caliban," is, according to the authoritative theories of Bolk, the effect of an inward power that resides in the very genes, and not the result of changes effected by environment.

Human intercommunication is a fact of ever-increasing importance. Man grades geography, and it would seem that he had brought with him into the world the task of polishing and smoothing the billiard ball that is this earth. "The Pyrenees no longer exist" is a cry that comes out of our heart. The ideal of the human race is—etymologically speaking and without a trace of ecclesiastical intention—a catholic ideal—that is to say, universal in its aspiration. All aggroupments, differentiations, and frontiers seem to us necessities imposed by the laws of economy, by the specific gravity of the masses that compose society, by the powerful rule of the division of labor. As for the small popular industries and regional curiosities—sarapes, feather embroidery, eye-filling colors, and all that which an outspoken Mexican painter once called "painted jug-ism"—we are all willing to fortify the development of the local contributions, because, in the last analysis, they are pic-

turesque gewgaws with which a culture decks its breast. But when we turn our minds to the true ideals of a culture, who would venture to say that our concept of scientific truth differs from that of another people? What would Plato say of the Mexican who sought a variety of moral good applicable only to Mexico? Poetry, which is so close to the moods of the moment, does not achieve its full stature when it stops on the note of humorous differentiation. "What does posterity care about my blood-stained handkerchiefs?" asked Stevenson. The highest form of poetry is that which bends its attention most searchingly upon man in the abstract, and far more on the ideal we would be than upon the accident we are. And the plastic arts, of necessity dependent on the immediately apprehensible charm of the material, seek—hieroglyphically—through clay or marble, iron, cement, oil, and water, to awaken a satisfaction of a moral order: usefulness, pleasure, enthusiasm.

Thus when people speak of the hour of America—an hour in which I believe, but in the way I shall explain—we must not take it to mean that a wall has been raised in the middle of the ocean, on whose farther side Europe, moth-riddled by history, is fading, while on this side we are coming into bloom under the rain of virtues that Heaven, in its gracious bounty, has made to fall upon us. No, years ago such ingenuous ideas were the target of the satire of Juan Valera, when he put into the mouth of Pedro Lobo of *Genio y Figura* the most amusing speeches, compounded of ignorance and badly digested information, which might have been lifted from any number of contemporary essays. It is the hour of America because the cultural dimensions of America are just beginning to fit the framework of civilization into which Europe thrust it without warning; because we are only beginning to dominate the European tools. And the hour of America, moreover, because this moment coincides with an economic crisis in which our continent seems to have come off better, and fickle fortune fixes her favors on the champion who can offer her the greatest physical guarantees. But in order to be worthy of our hour, we must await

it in all awareness and humility. We must bear in mind that for centuries now civilizations have not sprung up, flourished, and died in isolation, but move about the world, seeking the most propitious spot, and are enriched and transformed as they go by the new nourishment they absorb in the course of their travels. There is far less risk of error and far greater comprehension on the part of those who see in Christianity the historical prolongation, the metamorphosis of paganism, than in those who see between these two conceptions of the world a kind of hiatus, a pause during which, as in the Flood, one race of men disappears to make way for the sudden emergence of another. Intercommunication, continuity, is the law of modern mankind.

The use of the terms "Orient" and "Occident" means only that the wine and water have begun to mix—that is to say, the leveling of the earth is finally being accomplished. And it must be recognized that it is the Occident that has interested itself in the Orient, has dug it out of the ruins in which it slumbered and has given it new vitality. To acquaint themselves with the Asiatic philosophies, the Asiatics go to Paris to study. Japan learned the use of modern arms in Europe. What would be our opinion of the historian who, confronted with the outburst of the Renaissance, had then prophecied the death of Europe merely because Europe was renewing itself, and were to state that Greece's day of glory had arrived, when we know that Greece was only a springboard. To be sure, there is justification now for considering Asia more than a springboard. All are affected in varying degrees by "the rising tide of color," the "dun hour of the half-breed," and other expressive phrases employed by journalists, which seem the offspring of the late Kaiser Wilhelm's warning of "the yellow peril." But this rising tide of dominated peoples, even though the process involves struggle, will be an incorporation. The conqueror will absorb the virtues of the dead enemy, as happened in the case of Rome with Greece, thus fulfilling the quaint superstition of the savage, the savage who has become as fashionable today as in the time of

Rousseau, although the spirit differs. I cannot see why we of America should insist on the division between East and West, Atlantic and Pacific, thus impairing our clarity of judgment to no end whatsoever, when these two great elements fortunately are fusing, for our American use and advantage, in a single compounded metal. The worst thing we can do is take sides. Vasconcelos's hope in a "cosmic race"; Waldo Frank's faith in "human culture" is much more legitimate. Let us adopt it in its entirety and try to resolve it. Those elements which are irreconcilable must be erroneous, and both Left and Right can dispense with them. There is as yet no valid criterion to guide this superhuman synthesis? True, and for that reason mankind must live in a state of crisis for more than a century. But there are already signs of fusion, and an outstanding example is Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience, a positive act that had nothing to do with contemplative Orientalism.

Time alone can solder the ingredients submitted to a fire it is not in our power to intensify. In the crucible of history a fabulous inheritance is being forged for America. But it will be on condition that we live alert, that we utilize and guard all our conquests, as I said in the beginning, and that we refrain from taking sides prematurely. It is worth while to proceed cautiously. On us, rather than on our successors, will depend whether history, for the ease of the phrase, can give it the name "American." To be able to wait is what counts. "To be a waiting man," as Gracián puts it. Where would a different attitude lead us? To follow the frivolities of fashion and, as the result of a stupid, sentimental confusion, to hate the Europe that "conquered us," and to aspire to make our countries Asiatic? And what does that mean? To learn the interpretation of Asia that Europe has attempted to give us? That would not be to make ourselves Asiatics, but to put ourselves in tune with the great culture of Europe, the Occidental. Or does the term imply imitating here, in hale and vital America, the withered contemplatives who drowse in meditation beside a river of leprosy? Never that! I will counsel the disarmament of Mexico

when all the nations of the world agree to disarm at the same time. I will preach to my people the advantages of pure meditation and folded arms when all the others fold theirs. And even then how turn a deaf ear on that inner voice that spurs us on to modify things, to wish to make them different from the way we found them, to try to correct them in keeping with our own ideas, to strain them through the human sieve, to humanize them? Shall we add to the melancholy and prostration of the Indian, whom it is our duty to arouse, to awaken to the joy of living he had forgotten, to incorporate into our world of ideas and aspirations, the sloth of Nirvana and the indolence of prayer as an end in itself? "Help thyself and I will help thee!" We have no desire to make of Mexico a nation of slaves. Men of good will, take warning! The ideal of victory must be held high, we must not let ourselves become accustomed to or vainglory in the vision of defeat. Virgil exhorts his native land: "Oh, Roman, remember that you have come to rule people with empire!" Let us remember—for the ideals of the great poet have been superseded, too—that we have come to embrace all peoples in a fruitful friendship. And there can be no friendship without strength, without health, and without hope.

Assuming the foregoing to be true, if our behavior as Americans lies in accepting all conquests, working them all into an amalgamated whole; if, thanks to our lighter ballast of history, and even to the fact that we were invited to the banquet of civilization after dinner had been served—which allows us to reach the feast in a more relaxed and somewhat better humor—we aspire to bring to the task the warmth, the physical possibility, that shall convert it in the end into a universal heritage, what is the meaning of speaking of Latin, Latinity, and Latinism? Every solution of elements requires a container. Our stream, as I have said, is Latin. There we have our origin. There we wait. There must be the center of all our explorations. This is our point of reference. There we pitch our tents so as not to lose ourselves in senseless meanderings. The Latin spirit has already given proofs to the world and demon-

strated its enduring quality as a continent of culture. Let it operate once more and submit itself, in our America, to the final proof; this is the formula, as encompassing as it is modest, that I have been seeking from the start. To discover it we have only to accept the simple, stern reality. Suppose that, in order to open a channel to new explorations, it were considered necessary to dam off a river and open another in a different direction, working against nature—that would be to forget history. The same Latin soul transported men from paganism to Christianity, and it is certain that tomorrow it will have transported them to another dream of happiness more complete. Do not destroy this precious instrument: you will be left disarmed in the midst of the transformation of the world. We are embarked on a seaworthy vessel; let the storms rage!

We all know what the city is and we all know what the country is, but if asked to define the difference between the two concepts, we become confused and attempt to substitute a prolix description for the clear idea. In the city the dominant relation is that between man and man; in the country, the relation between man and the land. There, the social act; here, the agricultural. The life of man is in continual reference to his natural setting, an endless journey between man and exterior nature. If on this journey you set up dikes and barriers that, so to speak, make the stream wind and drain itself on the way, your city flourishes. If you allow the journey the speed of the straight line and its full volume of waters, the country flourishes. When the journey is direct, the utilization nature makes of the traveler is greater, too. The classic example is to be found in immigration. Whereas immigrants to the city tend to huddle together, in streets, houses, and speech, forming political abcesses and minority groups, in the great silent spaces of the country they yield themselves up and are easily absorbed. The open air, the running water, and the bare, stark earth take charge of nationalizing them. In great national crises people, of their own accord, seek relief in the country. The balm of agriculture soothes

the wounds of politics. Over the regions lately torn by civil wars, like a noble sermon of peace, unity, and love of work, roll the heartening waves of the *Georgics*. Among us, too, after our intestinal struggles, there is urgent need of an agrarian policy to create new national wealth and return to the people their pleasure in the land. The reconstruction governments want the voice of Virgil heard: "the voice," said Columella, "which knows how to give agriculture all the vigor of poetry."

And to make him still more ours, Virgil is the poet of the small farmer, of the modest rural owner of the independent plot of land that he as a child saw his father cultivate. The landed proprietor, the great lord who owned not a farmhouse so much as a museum and pleasure palace in the midst of the country, the man who calls to our mind the fabulous wealth of Luis Terrazas and the high silver-heeled boots of our Francisco Velarde is rather Varro in his *De re rustica*. There are the villages of serfs, farmers, shepherds, fishermen, fowlers, and hunters. There the ponds of mullets and eels, the preserves of deer and wild boar, the rich dovecote of Cassino and the aviaries of thrushes that bring in a rich yearly income. There the pleasanced groves filled with nightingales and starlings, where banquets were held, and in the middle of the lake the island and its revolving table, which catered to the thirst and appetite of the guests with its varied offerings of wine and fruit. Not in Virgil, who, like the good patriot he was, feared the aberrations of luxury and the dangers of soft living. Throughout the *Georgics* there is not a single mention of a manager or a slave—what we would call overseer and peon—and thus we find in him only the image of the most poetic land, the land possessed by the one who cultivates it. The Utopia of the philosophers, the dream of the free man.

Virgil has carried me so far! Absence and distance teach us to view our native land in panorama. Those who live in it and work it know each day's trial and the hour-by-hour sorrow. If they, because of being so near, cannot see the wood for the trees, the

absent one runs the risk, in turn, of overlooking the many reefs and abysses. I have wanted only to honor Virgil with a crude image fashioned of Mexican clay. I wanted to offer him, as the best sacrifice, some of my national problems. I wanted to prove in myself that his memory is mine, too; mine the patrimony of his poetry and all the weight of culture it implies. Out of the depths of two thousand years arises the clangor of arms, alternating with the gentle murmur of tears and songs. Is not this murmur, this sound of men that flows from the Latin verses the same that comes to me through history? For all our joys and all our griefs we find in Virgil that gift of human sympathy which encompasses, in its immense orbit, the movement of the stars and the small fragrant life of the bees; and lays, in passing, a caressing hand on the beast stricken by the plague, with a compassion and melancholy that are already Christian. The wounds of Rome and the great agrarian optimism that comes to bind them up move us like something our very own. "Once again Philippi's fields saw Roman matched against Roman with equal darts, and the gods thought it well that for a second time our blood should enrich the broad cemetery. The day will come when the husbandman, as he turns the furrow, will hear his mattock ring upon the empty helmets, and his ploughshare grate on rusty javelins. And, bent over the open graves, he will gaze in wonder at the heroic remains. . . ."

Let us pause to celebrate this hour of work and harmony. Again, as in the opening verses of the *Æneid*, a hand of blessing has just closed the temple of Janus, and in Husbandry's triumphal procession marches War, his hands tied behind his back.

(1930; Tentativas y Orientaciones, 1944)

Glossary of Proper Names

ABREU GÓMEZ, ERMILO (*1894–*). Mexican writer and literary critic.

ALARCÓN Y MENDOZA, JUAN RUIZ DE (*1588?–1639*). Mexican dramatist, one of the great playwrights of the golden age of Spanish literature. His play *La Verdad sospechosa* was the source of Corneille's *Le Menteur*.

ALVA IXTLILXÓCHITL, FERNANDO DE (*1568?–1648*). Mexican historian, descendant of Netzahualcóyotl. His *Historia Chichimeca*, based largely on ancient codices, was an account of the kings of Texcoco, his forebears.

Amadis of Gaul. The most famous of Spanish novels of chivalry, written (or adapted from earlier versions) by García Rodríguez Montalvo in 1508.

ANÁHUAC, Aztec name for the valley of Mexico, and, by extension, for the whole central plateau.

ANONYMOUS CONQUISTADOR. Companion in arms of Cortés; his identity has never been ascertained. Author of one of the most interesting accounts of the life and customs of the natives of Mexico. The original in Spanish has been lost, but an Italian version was included in Giambattista Ramusio's *Delle Navigazioni e Viaggi.*

ARIAS, ALONSO. Author of criticism of plan for draining City of Mexico put forward by Enrico Martín (q.v.) in 1637.

BARREDA, GABINO (*1820–81*). Mexican educator who upheld the Positivism of Comte, with whom he had studied.

BELLO, ANDRÉS (*1781?–1865*). Venezuelan scholar, writer, and statesman. He was secretary to Simón Bolívar in England. After the American independence he went to Chile, where he drafted the Chilean Constitution. He is best known as the author of a Spanish grammar "for the use of Americans," which, revised and annotated by Rufino J. Cuervo, is the definitive work in its field.

BERRUGUETE, ALONSO (*1480?–1561*). Noted Spanish sculptor and painter.

BRINTON, DANIEL GARRISON (*1837–99*). North American archæologist and ethnologist.

CABRAL, PEDRO ÁLVARES DE (*1460?–1526?*). Portuguese navigator who, in 1500, took possession of Brazil in name of Portugal.

CABRERA, LUIS (*1876–*). Mexican politician and polemic writer.

CABRERA Y QUINTERO, CAYETANO DE (*?–1775*). Mexican priest, poet, and historian, author of voluminous history of Mexico, *Escudo de Armas de la ciudad de Mexico.*

CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA, PEDRO (*1600–81*). Spanish dramatist of the golden age, author of *Life Is a Dream, The Mayor of Zalamea,* and many other dramas and morality plays.

CARAMURU. Name given by Tupinamba Indians to Diogo Álvares Correia, one of the earliest colonizers of Brazil, who married an Indian woman and whose descendants are among the most distinguished families of Brazil.

CASTELAR, EMILIO (*1832–99*). Spanish writer, orator, and statesman, President of first Spanish Republic.

CASTELLANOS, JUAN DE (*1522–1606*). Spanish poet and historian, biographer in verse of noted Spaniards in the Indies.

CASTRO, AMÉRICO (*1885–*). Spanish philologist and literary historian.

CENTENNIAL. Mexico celebrated the anniversary of its first hundred years of independence in 1910.

CHÁVEZ, EZEQUIEL A. (*1868–*). Mexican writer, critic, professor of philosophy and psychology at University of Mexico.

COSA, JUAN DE LA (*1460?–1510*). Spanish navigator, master of the *Santa María* on Columbus's first voyage; in 1500 made first large map of New World.

DARÍO, RUBÉN (*1867–1916*). Nicaraguan, one of the greatest Spanish poets of all times.

DÍAZ, PORFIRIO (*1828–1915*). President of Mexico from 1873 to 1880, and from 1884 to 1911. He was overthrown by the Revolution of 1910, led by Francisco I. Madero.

DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, BERNAL (*1492–1581*). One of the Spaniards who accompanied Cortés in the conquest of Mexico and author of one of the most notable books describing the exploit, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España.*

DÍAZ MIRÓN, SALVADOR (*1853–1928*). Mexican poet.

DOM MANUEL. Manuel I ("the Great"), King of Portugal, *1469–1521.*

DURÁN, FRAY DIEGO (*1538?–88*). Spanish Dominican missionary, author of *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de tierra firme.*

ESCALANTE, JUAN DE (*?–1519*). Companion of Cortés in the conquest of Mexico; killed by the Indians.

ESCOBEDO, FEDERICO. Mexican priest, poet, and humanist. Translator of Landívar's *Rusticatio mexicana.*

FREEMAN, EDWARD AUGUSTUS (*1832–92*). English historian and Regius professor of Oxford University.

GARCILASO DE LA VEGA (*1503–36*). Spanish poet, one of the first to introduce influences of Italian Renaissance into Spanish poetry.

GARIBAY K., ÁNGEL MARÍA. Mexican literary critic, student of indigenous literature.

GÓMARA, FRANCISCO LÓPEZ DE (*1512–72?*). Chaplain to Hernán Cortés and author of *Historia de la conquista de Mexico.* It was in answer to Gómara's account of the conquest of Mexico, which made Cortés the hero of the exploit, that Bernal Díaz wrote his famous work, telling the story from the soldier's point of view, "that which I myself have seen and the fighting."

GÓNGORA, LUIS DE (*1561–1627*). Spanish lyric poet, author of many sonnets, odes, ballads, and several longer poems, of which the *Soledades* is considered the most important. Although his name has come to be associated with the tortuous, baroque style known as *gongorismo* or *culteranismo*, he was a writer of rare genius. It was in those who imitated the externalities of his style without possessing his gifts that it became ridiculous.

GRACIÁN, LORENZO (BALTASAR) (*1601–58*). Spanish Jesuit moralist, widely read throughout Europe in his day. Schopenhauer considered him one of world's greatest writers.

GUERRERO, GONZALO. Spaniard Cortés found in Mexico, who had been shipwrecked on an earlier expedition. He refused to join the Spaniards because he was unwilling to leave his Indian wife and children.

GUEVARA, JUAN DE. Seventeenth-century Mexican priest and poet who collaborated with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in play *Amor es más laberinto.*

GUTIÉRREZ NÁJERA, MANUEL (*1859–95*). Perhaps the greatest of modern Mexican poets, initiator of the *modernista* movement in Mexico.

GUYAU, JEAN-MARIE (*1854–88*). French philosopher who wrote on questions of æsthetics, ethics, and religious philosophy.

HENRÍQUEZ UREÑA, PEDRO (*1884–1946*). Scholar and critic of Santo Domingo, who spent a part of his life in Mexico.

HIDALGO Y COSTILLA, MIGUEL (*1753–1811*). Mexican priest who led the uprising that initiated Mexico's war of independence. He is regarded by Mexicans as the father of his country.

HUICHILOBOS-HUITZILOPOCHTLI. The chief divinity of the Aztecs, and also their god of war.

IBN-TOFAIL (*?–1185*). Arab physician and philosopher, born in Spain. His romance *Hayy ibn-Yaqzan* was one of the best-known works of the Middle Ages. It deals with a man, placed on a desert island from childhood, who discovers philosophy by sheer force of reason and step by step constructs a whole Moslem Neo-Platonic system for himself.

ICAZA, FRANCISCO (*1863–1925*). Mexican poet and Cervantes scholar, for many years Mexican Minister to Spain.

JOHN OF THE CROSS, ST. (JUAN DE YEPES Y ÁLVAREZ) (*1542–91*). Spanish friar, one of the greatest of mystic poets. He was St. Teresa's confessor.

JUANA, SOR (JUANA INÉS DE ASBAJE Y RAMÍREZ DE CANTILLANA) (*1651–95*). Mexican nun, known as the "Tenth Muse," famous for her poetry and erudition.

LANDÍVAR, RAFAEL (*1731–93*). Jesuit, born in Guatemala, who went to Mexico as a young man. Author of *Rusticatio mexicana*. Considered by critics the finest Latin poet of America. After expulsion of Jesuits from Spanish possessions, went to Italy.

LEÓN, FRAY LUIS DE (*1537–91*). One of the greatest of Spain's lyric poets.

LOUREDA, IGNACIO. Author of prose translation of Landívar's *Rusticatio mexicana* (*1924*).

MARINA (MALINCHE) (*?–1530*). Indian mistress of Hernán Cortés, mother of his son Martín. Her services as interpreter were invaluable to Cortés in his conquest of Mexico.

MARTÍN, ENRICO. Portuguese engineer who built, in the early 1600's, a tunnel to drain the flood waters from the Mexican plateau.

MARY OF EGYPT, ST., OR EGYPTIACA. Born *c.* 354 in northern Egypt. Lived life of wanton in Alexandria for seventeen years, and after conversion on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, spent the rest of her life in penance in the desert.

MAX MÜLLER, FRIEDRICH (*1823–1900*). British philologist of German birth, expert in comparative mythology and comparative religion.

MENÉNDEZ Y PELAYO, MARCELINO (*1856–1912*). Spanish historian and literary critic.

MORELOS Y PAVÓN, JOSÉ MARÍA (*1780–1815*). Hidalgo's successor as leader in the war for Mexican independence.

MUÑOZ CAMARGO, DIEGO (*1526?–9?*). Tlaxcalan half-breed, diligent student of antiquities of Mexico. Author of *Historia de Tlaxcala.*

NAVARRETE, MANUEL MARTÍNEZ DE (*1768–1809*). Mexican poet and friar of the Franciscan order. With Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, outstanding poet of colonial epoch of Mexico.

NETZAHUALCÓYOTL. Ruler of Texcoco before the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico. He was famed as a poet, and a few of his poems have been preserved.

OCAMPO, VICTORIA (*1893–*). Argentine writer, founder and director of magazine *Sur.*

OCHOA, ANASTASIO DE (*1783–1833*). Mexican humanist and humorous poet.

OROZCO Y BERRA, MANUEL (*1818–81*). Mexican historian, geographer, and encyclopedist.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, JOSÉ (*1883–*). Spanish philosopher and writer, author of *The Revolt of the Masses, Invertebrate Spain,* and other works.

ORTIZ, FERNANDO (*1881–*). Cuban ethnologist, anthropologist, and writer, author of *Cuban Counterpoint.*

OTERO, MARIANO (*1817–50*). Mexican politician and writer.

OTHÓN, MANUEL JOSÉ (*1858–1906*). Mexican poet.

PAREDES, TOMÁS ANTONIO MANRIQUE DE LA CERDA Y ARAGÓN, Count of Paredes. Viceroy of Mexico, *1680–6.*

PESADO, JOSÉ JOAQUIN (*1801–61*). Mexican poet, translator, and journalist.

PINZÓN. A family of Spanish navigators, of Palos in Andalusia, three members of which—Martín Alonso, Francisco, and Vicente Yáñez,

brothers—were associated with Columbus in the discovery of America.

PUERTOCARRERO, ALONSO HERNÁNDEZ. Companion of Cortés in conquest of Mexico.

RAMÍREZ, IGNACIO ("EL NIGROMANTE") (*1818–79*). Mexican journalist, politician, and polemist, leader of antireligious campaigns.

RAMUSIO, GIOVANNI BATTISTA (or GIAMBATTISTA) (*1485–1557*). Italian traveler and scholar; published three-volume *Delle Navigazioni e Viaggi*, a collection of travelers' and explorers' accounts.

RANGEL, NICOLÁS (*?–1935*). Mexican scholar and professor.

RAYNAUD, GEORGES. French scholar of American antiquities, translator into French of the *Popol-Vuh*.

RECINOS ADRIÁN (*1875–*). Guatemalan scholar and diplomat.

ROCHA, SOSTÉNES. General faithful to Juárez in the rebellion that followed his re-election in 1871.

RODÓ, JOSÉ ENRIQUE (*1872–1918*). Uruguayan essayist, one of the outstanding figures of modern Spanish-American literature and thought.

ROMERO, FRANCISCO (*1891–*). Argentine philosopher and professor.

SAHAGÚN, BERNARDINO DE (*1499?–?*). One of the earliest Franciscan missionaries in Mexico, author of important works on history and ethnology.

SANTOS-DUMONT, ALBERTO (*1873–1932*). Brazilian aeronaut, who designed and operated a balloon with gasoline engine in 1898, and flew 715 feet in an airplane in 1906.

SARMIENTO, DOMINGO FAUSTINO (*1811–88*). Argentine educator, statesman, and writer, author of one of the most famous works of South American literature, *Facundo, or Civilization and Barbarism in the Argentine Republic*, which was translated into English by his friend Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann. He was President of his country from 1868 to 1874, and modern Argentina may be considered his creation.

SCHELER, MAX (*1874–1928*). German philosopher and educator.

SIERRA, JUSTO (*1848–1912*). Mexican statesman and historian.

SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, CARLOS DE (*1645–1700*). Mexican Jesuit philosopher, mathematician, scientist, and historian, outstanding savant of colonial Mexico.

SOLÍS Y RIBADENEYRA, ANTONIO DE (*1610–86*). Spanish historian and dramatist, author of *La Conquista de Mexico* (*1684*).

TARDE, GABRIEL (*1843–1904*). French criminologist, philosopher, and sociologist.

TERESA, ST. (TERESA DE CEPEDA Y AHUMADA) (*1515–82*). Spanish nun, reformer of the Carmelite order. Author of *The Way of Perfection* and other notable works of mystic literature.

TERRAZAS, FRANCISCO DE (*?–1600?*). Mexican poet mentioned by Cervantes in his *Voyage to Parnassus.*

TORQUEMADA, JUAN DE (*1545?–1618?*). Spanish Franciscan friar, author of a history of Mexico (*1615*).

TOUSSAINT, MANUEL (*1890–*). Mexican scholar and art critic.

VALDÉS, JUAN DE (*1490?–1541*). Spanish courtier, humanist, and religious reformer, author of *Diálogo de la lengua.*

VALENZUELA, JESÚS E. (*1856–1911*). Mexican poet, founder and director of *Revista Moderna.*

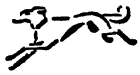
VALERA, JUAN (*1824–1905*). Spanish novelist and critic.

VASCONCELOS, José (*1881–*). Mexican writer, educator, and politician.

VELASCO, LUIS DE (*1539–1617*). Viceroy of Mexico from 1590 to 1595 and again from 1601 to 1611.

VILLA RICA-VERA CRUZ. Founding name, Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz.

VIGÍL, JOSÉ MARÍA (*1829–1909*). Mexican critic and scholar.



A Note on the Type

The text of this book was set on the Monotype in Bodoni, so called after Giambattista Bodoni (1740–1813), son of a printer of Piedmont. After gaining experience and fame as superintendent of the Press of the Propaganda in Rome, Bodoni became in 1768 the head of the ducal printing house at Parma, which he soon made the foremost of its kind in Europe. His Manuale Tipografico, *completed by his widow in 1818, contains 279 pages of specimens of types, including alphabets of about thirty languages. His editions of Greek, Latin, Italian, and French classics are celebrated for their typography. In type-designing he was an innovator, making his new faces rounder, wider, and lighter, with greater openness and delicacy.*

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Designed by HARRY FORD.