

**Orinoco Flow:  
Culture, Narrative, and the Political  
Economy of Information**

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## Preface

The defining moment for this book came in 1992, when I was sitting in my room of the Caracas Hotel Presidente reading Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*. I was reading the scene where the protagonist is in a hotel in a Latin American when suddenly gunfire breaks out and a revolution begins. At the same time, out my window, a group of uniformed men with guns began to march around the plaza in support of Hugo Chavez' attempt to overthrow the government of President Carlos Andres Perez.

It was at this moment that I began to have a much deeper understanding of magical realism in Latin American fiction and began to think seriously about the relationship of fiction, historical narrative, and the social and political development of Latin America. Negotiating the tension in the representation of reality in Western literature between straightforward exposition of externalized description, on the one hand, and the necessity for interpretation of multiple layers of meaning on the other has been a critical enterprise since Auerbach's *Mimesis*. That fiction may be a form of theory as productive as any other was a revelation that has quietly guided the development of this project.

In a political climate that has produced a backlash against multivocality, and reduces to "relativism" the self-reflection that is necessary for understanding one's appropriate role in a global society, it has been my good fortune to have had advice from a remarkable group of people: Grant Olson, David Zurick, Majid Tehranian, Wimal Dissanayake, Julio Ramos, Tom Fricke, Clara Mucci, and Gray Kocchar-Lindgren, and Walter Adamson. I would especially like to thank Allen Tullos, for his unwavering support, confidence, and ability to see the human stories locked up by theory, and the theory bound up with human stories. Special thanks are also due to Walter Reed for his constructive criticism and thoughtful readings. His depth of both knowledge and humanity shows the value of that uncommon combination. Ricardo Gutiérrez-Mouat opened the literary and cultural world of Latin America to a stranger, showed me my errors in a good-natured atmosphere of sharing, and also revealed his enjoyment

of my rare understanding. I would also like to acknowledge the Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts at Emory University, whose Theories of Interpretation Fellowship supported the fieldwork for this project, as well as the School of Information Studies of Florida State University for providing administrative support.

And to my wife, Maria Longa, for time and the river, and the journey through both.

## Chapter 1

# Culture, Space, and World Systems

To comprehend temporal succession means to think of it in both directions at once, and then time is no longer the river which bears us along but the river in aerial view, upstream and downstream seen in a single survey.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest references to the Orinoco are also the earliest references to the American continent. As Alfonso Reyes, Edmundo O’Gorman and others have demonstrated, projections of the characteristics of the newly discovered continent predate its actual discovery; i.e., there was already a considerable archive of cultural narrative about a continent to the west. By the early sixteenth century, the Orinoco already existed as a *topos* that could be capitalized upon by image-conscious entrepreneurs. By examining the production of images of the Orinoco region, I hope to show that these images are both separate from and integrally related to the “real” space of the Orinoco region as it has developed. By concentrating on how images of the region have changed over time, I hope to demonstrate some ways in which the cultural production of images and the economic production of regional space are related.

The broad question that I am attempting to answer in what follows is “What are the narrative relationships among the development of capitalism, culture, and regional space?” These three spheres, rather than being more or less autonomous systems that have interacted only when they have directly intersected, have developed together. With the dramatic expansion of capitalism from the fifteenth century to the present, these three spheres have “co-evolved” and together constitute a global political economy that has three major components: the international division of labor, the production of spaces, and the production of knowledge about these spaces and their inhabitants. Although Castells locates the importance of “symbol mobilizers” who “act

on the culture of real virtuality that frames communication” in an emerging “network society,”<sup>2</sup> this culture of “real virtuality” with its symbolic activity has been part and parcel of global capital since its inception.

The production of a regional space in a world economy and the production of knowledge about that space are the results of the interaction of a literary system of scientific, academic and novelistic narratives with global systemic capitalism. These interactions worked to produce and distribute knowledge about that system’s periphery. The distribution of this knowledge—a process intimately associated with the extension of concepts of modernity and development—has over time produced an historically layered and sometimes contradictory archive of information. Narratives within this archive that refer to specific regions and places provide raw data that helps to form the *topos* (imaginary cultural image) of a place. The historical layers and inconsistencies produce the cultural capability for acts of “displacement” — ideologically distorted and mystifying descriptions of space, place, and the site of the production of modernity itself. The archive as a material reality (that is, actual access to historical data) becomes a source of information for cultural elites, while related components are “packaged” as *topoi* and disseminated more widely.

As a focus, I will examine the history of the Orinoco River region of Venezuela, both as a spatial site for economic activity and as a narratively produced *topos*. There are two points that I hope will be clear when I finish. First, that the Orinoco *topos* is a place-specific result of the process of spatial production generated when European capitalism creates and expands into its periphery. The recent work of Enrique Dussel presents the provocative notion that European modernity begins with the discovery of America, a discovery that allowed the cultural work of the European philosophical appropriation of modernity to begin.<sup>3</sup> The phrase “the production of space” comes from Henri Lefebvre’s book of that title.<sup>4</sup> Lefebvre introduces the useful notions that the spaces in which we live are both a product and process of economic history. The production of these spaces can be the object of a spatial history that incorporates both culture and economics. Lefebvre’s model of “the production of space” explains how

“imaginary” spaces have interacted with place in the history of the global economy since Columbus.<sup>5</sup>

Manuel Castells observes that “the informational economy tends to be, in its essence, a global economy; and its structure and logic define, within the emerging world order, a new international division of labor.”<sup>6</sup> Although Castells is arguing that the concept “information economy” should be applied to the integration of technology and globalization that has taken place since the second World War, I will claim (without, I think, contradicting his basic usage), that the production and reproduction of this global information economy has been a major strategy of global capital since the fifteenth century. Thus the second point I would like to make is that, contrary to recent “cultural imperialism” perspectives, which tend to emphasize the predominant role of the post-WWII transnational corporate system in world culture, the “information economy” in a broad sense has always been a necessary component of global capitalism. The global expansion of capital that has only recently become to be seen as “completed” on the ground *required* the cultural production of a realm of the other from its beginnings. Although the practical spatial completion of the global expansion of capital (always an asymptotic project) may now be increasing the importance of information exchange within the economy, and that increase of degree may be bringing about a new kind of economy and new kinds of spatial relationships, I will argue that this change is due to the asymptotic completion of this spatial project and not its cause. The energy of the physical spatial expansion of capital becomes directed toward the life-world, and the emerging information spaces work more and more within that realm.

There is obviously a chronology in the order that I discuss the discourses of discovery, mercantilism, romanticism, modernism, and globalism; each is epistemically dominant during its time. Nevertheless, for the Orinoco region, each also has become a component of an archive that is used as an informational strategy of global capitalism. Global capital and information, rather than being new partners, as recent “information economy” arguments would have it, have been tightly integrated since the major expansions of capitalism in the sixteenth century. The

New World archive that was formed is not most precisely seen as a component of state ideology; the rise of the printing press was utilized by the newly emerging global system of capital to create an “information economy” that served the interests of a new class of global entrepreneurs. As the Orinoco region’s position in the world economy changed, the structure and flow of information about the region changed as well. These apparatuses over time affect both the subsequent structure of information and the specific spatial region in which they operate.

### *The Literary History of the Orinoco*

Modernity is, in a fundamental way, the emergence of “alterity” as a permanent condition of existence.<sup>7</sup>

I trace the formation and distribution of the Orinocan archive from its fifteenth century inception with Columbus and Vespucci, through the first New World priests and ethnographers, through its conscription into the plantation system, through the age of scientific exploration, to the post WWII era of anthropology and development, at which point I take an extended look at the development of Ciudad Guayana as an example of how the archive and the production of space have functioned in the recent past. The final chapter examines the implications of cultural narratives within a contest of economic and cultural globalization. Each chapter is an examination of a synchronic slice through the archive, examining the context and content of the archive and its contemporary associated “structures of feeling,” to use Raymond Williams term—exploration (Chapter 1), mercantilism (Chapter 2), romanticism (Chapter 3), modernism (Chapter 4), and globalism (Chapter 5). The archive itself is, to use Claudio Guillen’s terminology, a “diachronic and supranational structure” that changes over time as a result of accumulated and interacting synchronic change.<sup>8</sup>

For each of these synchronic slices through the archive, I examine three uses of the archive during the period: discourse formation, knowledge dissemination, and spatial production.



Each of these periods are associated with structures of literary institutions—style, genre, and methods of production and dissemination. There is also an ever more conscious use of the archive in literary forms, from an early use as a naive source of knowledge, to a source of legitimation through citation, to an empirical testing and re-evaluation, to the modernist inventory and parodic use of previous forms. Finally, there is the current transition from the archive as a conceptual aggregate of a distributed set of set of references to an actual material resource—a “real” repository (or at least one commercially available on-line).

In Chapters One and Five, especially, I try to develop the idea that the very foundation and structure of European modernity is based on the capacity, deployed through an information economy, to construct an “Other” that enables both modernity and capitalism to expand. Castells is concerned with the current reintegration of technology, information, and capital, and the cultural consequences of that reintegration, whereas I will outline the history of the various configurations of the information economy from its development within the nation-state and mercantilist systems through its current major adjustment, an adjustment brought about by the “completion” of a global process of spatial production. Modernity is in crisis, I will argue, because its project as historically formulated has required an external other as an object to be developed. With the emergence of the global economy in the late twentieth century, and the integration of world markets, the spatial project of capital becomes asymptotic, the external other irrupts into the system from within, and the efforts of global capital are directed more toward colonization of the lifeworld than to colonization of spatial frontiers.

### *Archive, Topos, and Displacement*

Whereupon the first problem: to find the single space or set of operators by which these spatial varieties in impractical, inconceivable vicinity will be joined together. To open the route, way, track, path in this incoherent chaos, this tattered cloud, whose dichotomic thicket is reformulated in the common space

of transport when it is reconstructed . . . and thus one must find first, find conditionally, a word, a logos, that has already worked to connect the crevices which run across the spatial chaos of disconnected varieties. One must find the Weaver, the proto-worker of space, the prosopopeia of topology and nodes, the weaver who works locally to join worlds that are separated . . . He is a worker of the single space, the space of measure and transport, the Euclidean space of every possible displacement without change of state, royally substituted one fine day in place of the proliferating multiplicities of unlinked morphologies. — Michel Serres

Given the contradiction that capitalism produces increasingly fragmented space while developing means to manipulate it more and more as a whole, how do we begin to analyze how that space is produced? What are the ways in which the archive, the *topoi* constructed from it, and a particular place interact in an evolving global economy? Framing the questions in this way gives four analytical concepts: the archive, the *topos*, place, and the global economy. It is from the interrelationships of these four elements that space is produced, both as an imaginary product and as a regional space within the global economy.

The methodology I have chosen is to examine the spatial history of the development of a region through narrative particular to that region—the Orinoco River area of Venezuela. Throughout I will be using the terms “global economy” and “world system” to refer to the ideas of Wallerstein and others that since the fifteenth century a world economy has existed wherein economically powerful “core” nations have both defined and exploited regions at the “periphery” of this core, while also defining themselves as “center.” Generally, peripheral regions have been used as sources of raw materials and cheap labor and been placed in a position of dependence on the core such that they cannot respond to the flow of capital in a coherent or unified fashion, with the result being that capital can take relatively rapid advantage of marginal differences in labor costs in the periphery in order to both maximize profits and to reinforce core-periphery relationships. In addition, in Chapter Five I will be using Enrique Dussel’s work on the history of modernity to question the

developmentalism that accompanies modernity and is applied to the periphery as a rationale for exploitation.

Although the historical and economic aspects of this world economic system have now been studied extensively, the relationship between the dissemination of information and the history of the global economy have not. The global economy as the context for information dissemination has been studied as a relatively recent phenomenon since the advent of computers and high-speed electronic networks. I propose that rather than the “information economy” being a late product of global capitalism, it has been a primary component and strategy of that economic system for its four hundred years of existence. The current emphasis on global information exchange, I will argue, is a result of spatial changes in the economy rather a cause of them.

Clarifying the relationship between the flows of cultural information and economic activity will also provide a means to re-address the stereotyping and oversimplifications that can occur through applying a core-periphery model that does not include cultural information flows. What Wallerstein fails to do in any substantial way is to integrate the cultural field into his analysis. If the world economy is the context for information distribution, its material source is the cumulative archive of information about regional spaces.

## **Archive**

The idea of the archive that I will be developing here is that of a chronologically layered set of notions about the world, each succeeding layer becoming dominant for a time, not superseding those beneath it but rather adding another layer of world interpretation to the archive as a whole. I will be analyzing the archive as, in Claudio Guillén’s terminology, a “diachronic and supranational structure”:

Once we identify a genre, form, or theme that seems to be a supranational diachronic structure, we must of necessity investigate those options, relations, semantic, and formal spaces that encompass or link different periods and places: the structures that without coinciding entirely with a period or place—with some term of an option, some outstanding component of a re-

lation—subsume, or better yet, sum up the multiplicity of facts.<sup>9</sup>

Guillén's formulation allows an analysis of historical change similar to that in linguistics, where the synchronic system evolves on top of existing historical strata. The operational categories of discourse formation, knowledge dissemination, and spatial production, discussed below, become the components of the synchronic archival relations that "sum up the multiplicity of facts."

González Echevarría's short definition of archive, a "repository of stories and myths," is deceptively simple.<sup>10</sup> I will continue to follow his use of the term, but also note that his use is much more complex than he explicitly states. His definition is an obvious reduction of Foucault's usage, but the two are not irreconcilable, especially if González Echevarría's usage, rather than his definition, is followed. The archive, for Foucault, is the ground of discourse, the pre-systematic substrate that both defines and limits the range of possible utterances. It is similar, perhaps not accidentally, to René Thom's idea of "morphogenetic field," a phrase that, with its roots meaning "genesis of form," is indicative of the meaning I would like to convey.<sup>11</sup>

Foucault and Thom are also similar in their assumption that this pre-systematic substrate, although the informational base from which systematic knowledge is produced, is either axiomatic or unanalyzable. As noted above, I will argue instead that the context for the archive as I will examine it is the world economy, and that economic system and its related cultural institutions become the substrate which defines and limits the range of possible utterances about specific regions. Although I would not disagree with Foucault that epistemic breaks do occur, I would argue that a historical linguistic model allows for gradual shifts between breaks.

While it is obvious that the history of a particular space as a concrete, geographic place affects its present situation in many ways, the ways that the history of its *topos* affects its present may not be. I will investigate five major intersections of culture and economy in the history of the Orinoco region: the period of discovery and exploration, the mercantile period of plantation capi-

talism, the period of the rediscovery of the tropics by scientists that coincided with Romanticism, twentieth-century urban modernization, and finally the current period of globalization of culture and capital. Although periodizing the region's history in this way implies discontinuities at the period boundaries, I will argue that these discontinuities are less apparent in the cultural realm than they are in the economic, and furthermore that the cultural continuities, expressed through the *topos*, enable and reinforce the economic ruptures.

If fifteenth and sixteenth-century early explorers' narratives formed the foundations of the Orinocan archive and its *topos*, then the literary and scientific narratives and artists' representations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fleshed out the body of the *topos* and articulated the maze of the Orinocan archive. Several systems of classification—visual, linguistic, economic, biological, anthropological—developed not altogether independently, but also not as an integrated classification system. The intersections, overlaps, and interstices of these various classificatory systems allowed the archive to be built up as an inconsistent repository of sometimes contradictory information ripe for ideological use and misuse. Bits could be taken from here and there to construct 'topical' views constructed by various interests.

As González Echevarría notes, "The combination of economic interest, scientific inquisitiveness, and desire for adventure characterized the travels of European scientists for nearly two centuries."<sup>12</sup> The triad of the site of paradise, site of economic opportunity, and scientific wonderland were established as the main subject headings of the archive. Each component of this triadic archive develops its own vocabulary and system of referents, but each also implicitly includes the referents of the other two. Without a conscious archivist developing an internal system of cross references, an "uncontrolled vocabulary" developed, with overlapping, contingent, and at times contradictory categories.

Early narratives about Latin America formed a model of discourse that influence and direct current constructions of the region. I will argue that this discourse model provided a set of

rules for approaching and appropriating the exotic other—both land and people—as a way of bringing what was seen as raw nature, but also paradise, under control. These rules established the early means for approaching the feminine exotic, but were amplified and superseded, as González Echevarría persuasively argues, by “the second discovery of America” of the nineteenth-century scientist explorers, who expanded the appropriation to include new classificatory systems for the flora and fauna they found.<sup>13</sup> The interrelationships among the classificatory schemes of the naturalists, the images produced by landscape painters, and literary images from novels formed the basis for the Orinocan *topos*.<sup>14</sup> Throughout I will be concerned with the relationship of the archive and its cultural/spatial manifestation—the *topos*—to the evolving global economy.

### *Topos*

To the question of whether the world *is* a text versus looking at the world *as* text Jameson proposes the following “reformulation” as a ground for interpretation:

that history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious.<sup>15</sup>

Visual and textual images of the Orinoco formed both an “archive” of regional images and a *topos* that has served as an imaginary “place-marker” for the region.<sup>16</sup> The archive thus becomes a repository of images about the region and the *topos* becomes the cultural site of those images when they are projected onto geographical place. The *topos*, constructed through narratives and images that circulate within the cultural sphere of capital, is an ideal representation of a place—a fantastic place, but a place none-the-less. The Orinocan *topos* develops as an imaginary geography that exists alongside the real. It can be developed systematically from archival elements, but still have no “real” referent. Using different sets of elements, different *topoi* may be constructed around a place, and form different “filters”

for how that place is projected and perceived. The *topos*, abstract and imaginary, becomes, in Jameson's formulation, the narrativization of that imaginary geography in the political unconscious.

The accumulated utterances for a specific region become its archive, which is a diachronic repository of stories, myths, and other images, and which also becomes a source for the construction of regional *topoi*. Over time the archive accumulates images, which are then "unfolded" or developed into specific regional *topoi*. The range of possible *topoi* becomes broader, and it becomes the task of the cultural components of capital to construct, deploy, and reconstruct those *topoi* in ways that fulfill their interests. Thus in the age of exploration the Orinoco was an exotic paradise that seduced men, in the plantation era it was land to be tamed and controlled, and in the age of scientific exploration it became the primitive ground for systems of classification and development. Rather than discontinuous ruptures, however, these various *topoi* have succeeded one another in layers, and if there be profit in them once again, the culture of capital reconstructs and redeploys them.<sup>17</sup>

The *topos* becomes a "nonlogical" or "nonverbal" idealization of a regional space that is stored in the cultural archive. This nonlogical, nonverbal nature of the *topos* becomes very important in that it adds a nontextual and nonrational dimension to the archive that is only implied in González Echevarría's inclusion of "myth." Fictional narratives, images, as well as narratives of discovery and scientific and social-scientific narratives, are not corollary to the emergence and expansion of European modernity, but basic to its formation. When a particular geographic area is analyzed through these narratives, they show the interplay of cultural fantasy and the real lives of people in specific places. The *topos*—an imaginary realm of signification—becomes the place where the desires of capital are diffused in a playful manner. This play is then taken for the real in cultural dialogue, and obscures the actual effects of capital "on the ground."<sup>18</sup>

## Displacement

One startling commonality of many early accounts of the Orinoco share is some type of spatial displacement: in addition to Columbus's displacement of the Garden of Eden to the Orinoco, in 1595 Walter Raleigh went to the mouth of the Orinoco and to the "Guianas," and persisted, for his own political reasons, in the notion that El Dorado was located near the Orinoco; the Orinoco was valuable to Raleigh because it was assumed to be the site of an imaginary place. In 1688 Aphra Behn published her novel *Oroonoko*. Behn had lived for a short time on a plantation on the Guiana coast and wrote her novel years later. What occurs in the novel is not exactly a spatial displacement—Behn's gives her hero, an African prince who has been taken in slavery to South America, the name Oroonoko—instead, the space is displaced onto a person whose characteristics are a model of those ascribed to the New World landscape. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719; he supposedly models Crusoe's experiences on Alexander Selkirk's experiences on the island of Juan de Fernandez on the northwest coast of South America. Defoe chooses to move the site of the novel to an island in the mouth of the Orinoco. In his introduction to the book, Defoe writes that this move is for "greater verisimilitude." In 1857, Louis Mignot, a landscape painter from South Carolina, makes a trip to Ecuador, and paints a series of 'tropical' works with lazy rivers and palm trees called *Life on the Orinoco*, never having been to the east coast of South America.

Another form of displacement is what Michel de Certeau calls the construction of the break between the "over here" and the "over there". Like Behn's writing her novel years later while living in England, the actual writing of Orinoco accounts often has taken place in a different world from the experiences of which they are accounts. For example, several of the accounts of the Orinoco that were a source of imagery for later explorers and were written by Creole Jesuits exiled to Italy; Alexander von Humboldt's "personal narrative" of his travels on the Orinoco was published, in the form of a reconstructed diary, twelve years



after his return to Europe; Defoe of course, reconstructs Crusoe's journal without ever having been in the New World at all.

Certeau notes that "this operation will be repeated hundreds of times . . . we see it [as] the staging of the primitive world, through a division between *Nature*, whose uncanniness is exteriority, and *civil* society, in which a truth of man is always legible. The break between over here and over there is transformed into a rift between nature and culture."<sup>19</sup> Behn's noble savage, Defoe's introduction of the economy of control into Crusoe's wild island, Humboldt's inscription of native flora and fauna into the categories of botany and zoology, each transforms its object from nature to culture, from an exotic and erotic abundance to a grid of abstraction, and as Certeau notes, this process "goes hand in hand with the formation of an ethics of production." What I derive from these "displacements" is that the Orinoco from the times of the earliest discoverers acquired certain "imaginary" qualities; even as it was being converted to plantations, it also became an imaginary place within an imaginary space. This process may also include the displacement I am doing, stitching together these conceptual domains, moving from place to place and time to time, I am also exploring, mapping, and appropriating, retracing earlier displacements. And this act of writing may also graph out the image of a labyrinthine river.

### *The Layered Archive: Discourse Formation, Knowledge Dissemination, and Spatial Production*

Process, which I here counterpose to system and structure, seeks to grasp existence in the very act of its constitution, definition, and deterritorialization; it is a process of 'setting into being', instituted by sub-sets of expressive ensembles which break with the totalizing frame and set to work on their own account, gradually superseding the referential totality from which they emerge, and manifesting themselves finally as their own existential index, processual lines of flight . . .<sup>20</sup>

Felix Guattari argues that for any methodology to be viable in the present it must enable us “to recognize within [the past] the presence . . . of problems that are ours.” Guattari argues that the construction of such a method necessarily entails a “reconstitution of social and individual practices under three complementary headings: social ecology, mental ecology, and environmental ecology.”<sup>21</sup>

Applying Guattari’s perspective to an analysis of the Orinoco enables a coherent approach to analyzing the mental, social, and environmental history of this area in a productive way. The basic relationship I will examine is how the *topos* of this place has interacted with the production of knowledge about it and with its production as a regional space. The challenge is to develop a coherent way of analyzing the relevant “sub-sets of expressive ensembles” at a concrete level. Therefore, I will examine three specific components of the production of the Orinocan archive and its corresponding *topos* and how these are implicated in the production of regional space: *discourse formation, knowledge dissemination, and spatial production.*

These three components I derive by particularizing Bourdieu’s “three operations” and applying them to the cultural production and products of the Orinocan archive:

The science of cultural works presupposes three operations which are as necessary and necessarily linked as the three levels of social reality that they apprehend. First, one must analyse the position of the literary (etc.) field within the field of power, and its evolution in time. Second, one must analyse the internal structure of the literary (etc.) field, a universe obeying its own laws of functioning and transformation, meaning the structure of objective relations between positions occupied by individuals and groups placed in a situation of competition for legitimacy. And finally, the analysis involves the genesis of the habitus of occupants of these positions, that is, the systems of dispositions which, being the product of a social trajectory and of a position within the literary (etc.) field, find in this position a more or less favourable opportunity to be realized . . .<sup>22</sup>

By “discourse formation” I intend the relation of the literary field under consideration to the general field of power at the time, such as the relation of the literary field to the cultural pow-

ers that set the agenda for modernization. By 'knowledge dissemination' I mean the internal structure of the field of the dissemination of cultural products, such as the publishing industry at a particular time. By "spatial production" I mean the capacity for realizing spatial products, "the genesis of the habitus," both as *topoi* and as physical spaces such as cities. Each chapter will address all of these operations for the specific context being considered.

Engaging in such a project presents narrative complications. As George Marcus notes regarding ethnographers' recent attempts to integrate observations of particular localities with global processes, "the descriptive space of ethnographies itself has not seemed an appropriate context for working through conceptual problems of this larger order [of change, history, and political economy]. The world of larger systems and events has thus often been seen as externally impinging on and bounding little worlds, but not as integral to them."<sup>23</sup> What I would like to accomplish in this narrative is not a regional history as such, nor a literary history of a region, but rather an illustration of how "descriptive space" and the economic processes of what has traditionally been seen as a larger world external to that space work together to produce a region that has been "scripted" rather than merely described.

### **Narrative Considerations**

Space is a complex cultural product, and consists not only of the modern idea of a Cartesian expanse, of an economic space of natural resources and variables of production and distribution, nor simply of the space of nature as modified by human activity. It consists of all these, but in addition is a contested region of multiple descriptions, projections, and fantasies, all of which are culturally inscribed into a particular region. The narrative problems stem from the close but problematic resemblance that develops between a text, the *topos*, and the object of their representation. My procedure will be to let the fragmentary, prismatic, and holographic relationships between the cultural representations of the Orinoco and its world system context become the

model for my textual presentation of those relationships. Aside from the formal problem of how to present those relationships in a coherent manner, the hermeneutic problems raised by discussing the ways that representations of the world are affected by and effect the world seem to necessarily lead to textual convolutions. The role of the narrator raised by Marcus, and evoked so well by Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques*, along with my own narrative entanglements, will be discussed specifically in Chapter Four.

My approach throughout draws from Paul Ricouer's discussion of "meaningful action considered as text"; the meaningful action here being the production of that particular space within the world that has become the Orinoco, and the relevant text(s) being those that have played a part in that production.<sup>24</sup> The convolutions arise at those points (and there are many) when it becomes difficult to distinguish the role that texts play in the production of space from the role that space plays in the production of texts. Ricouer's "meaningful action considered as text" must be open to the complementary "text considered as meaningful action." As Paul Carter observes, "The discoverers, explorers and settlers . . . were making spatial history. They were choosing directions, applying names, imagining goals, inhabiting the country." However, he continues,

no history of these processes exists. We . . . take it for granted that the newcomers travelled and settled a land *which was already there*. Geomorphologically, this was perhaps so—although even the science of landforms evolved as a result of crossing the country—but historically that country remained to be described. The diorama model show us the river on the hill's far side; it shows us hills. But it was precisely such features that spatial history had to constitute.<sup>25</sup>

This dialectic between the description of a place and its production as a space for human action thus becomes the my focus, and so my subject, like Carter's, "is not a physical object, but a cultural one. It is not the geographer's space, although that comes into it. What is evoked here are the spatial forms and fantasies through which a culture declares its presence. It is spatiality as a form of non-linear writing; as a form of history."<sup>26</sup> However, the terminology used in those fields that may be concerned

with such “spatial histories” – international development, regional planning, applied anthropology, rural sociology, geography, among others – demonstrates the power of plot and narrative (the plot of exploration, discovery, colonization, revolution, independence, and the subsequent proliferation of ideologically-charged branchings including interdependence, neo-colonialism, post-colonialism, and de-colonization) for interpretations of political, economic, and moral relationships.

The terms used in describing and interpreting positions within the political economy of the world system are subsumed by the narratives that produced them – the narratives of history, of development, of the Other, and their various interpolations. As Frederic Jameson has suggested,

if interpretation in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them; such allegorical narrative signifieds are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about reality and history.<sup>27</sup>

The narrative that I will construct in what follows will be in the form of a map for an exploration of the development of these narrative terms of spatiality in history, along with an analysis of their interdependence. In the conclusion of this study, I will look at the implications this breakdown has for culture and capital, and the narratives that are used to make sense of them. The expansion of capitalism and its relations to patriarchy will be treated as an underlying continuity of the modern period. Given these two continuities, information about (and knowledge of) areas into which capitalism was expanding and information about (and knowledge of) cultural Others, space-to-be-penetrated and people to be conquered and incorporated, are necessarily related. The long-term historical schematic is that capitalism expands into the space of the Other, but, in the twentieth century, that space is “filled” and spatial and cultural dynamics change radically. Expansion into the space of the Other is increasingly displaced by the expansion of mediated images of the Other into

the lifeworld, the cultures “covered” by capitalist expansion “pop up” again in a sort of geographic return of the repressed, and the relationship between capital and the international division of labor becomes highly flexible and dynamic, shifting rapidly through geographic space. This is the “postmodern” and it is a result of the approaching spatial completion of global capitalism.<sup>28</sup>

### Notes

1. Louis Mink, “History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension,” in *Historical Understanding*, ed. B. Fay, E. Golob, and R. Vann, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 57.
2. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*. (London: Blackwell, 1997), 360-61.
3. Enrique Dussel. *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the Other and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995).
4. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 129.
5. “History emerges on a world level and therefore it produces a space at this level: the formation of a world market, an international generalization of the state and its problems, new relations between society and space. World space is the *field in which our epoch is created*.” Henri Lefebvre, “Space: social product and use value,” in *Critical Sociology: European Perspectives*, ed. J.W. Freiberg (New York, Halsted Press, 1979), 288-89.
6. Manuel Castells, “The Informational Economy and the New International Division of Labor,” in *The New Global Economy in the Information Age: Reflections on Our Changing World*, ed. M. Carnoy, M. Castells, S. Cohen, and F. Cardoso (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 20.
7. Jonathan Friedman, “The Implosion of Modernity.” in *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*, ed. Michael J. Shapiro (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996), 248.
8. Claudio Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 321-22.
9. Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 321-2.
10. Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 144.
11. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. (New York: Pantheon, 1972). René Thom, *Mathematical Models of Morphogenesis*, trans. W.M. Brookes, D. Rand (New York: Halstead, 1983).
12. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 101.
13. One of the problems in this project is determining the relationships between two historiographic traditions (but not two archives) of the New World, the Hispano-Latino tradition of the early conquest and the Northern European tradition. These two traditions correspond to

the distinction Dussel makes between "two modernities": one "Hispanic, humanist, Renaissance," the other "Anglo-Germanic" which came to be constructed as "the *only* modernity" (Enrique Dussel, "Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity," in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. F. Jameson and M. Miyoshi [Durham: Duke University Press, 1998], 13). The early Spanish narratives served as literary sources for the scientists' narratives, but were filtered through a cultural complex that included reinstituting those sources within a constructed "Black Legend" of Spanish domination. What I hope to develop is the argument that each of these historiographic traditions compete for dominance within the world economy and each one's relative importance in any particular period is a function of its utility for the expansion of that economic system.

14. The archive of González Echevarría is more straightforward than that of Foucault, and has much to recommend it. However, I will attempt in what follows to synthesize the two as both being examples of what René Thom calls a "morphogenetic field."

15. Frederic Jameson. *The Political Unconscious*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 35.

16. "*Topos*" has both rhetorical and spatial connotations, and I will use it to describe the rhetorical representation of a place that has become a projective screen for images and associations from a cultural archive.

17. I am expanding the traditional use of '*topos*' from a mnemonic rhetorical device used by an individual as an aid to memory to a mnemonic rhetorical device used in the dissemination of information in a global economy. As Daniel Stempel notes, in classical oratory, "Instead of opening logical space, it [the *topos*] occupies and marks a space in a nonlogical or even nonverbal structure, a semiotic template that encodes a message from the orator to himself. In this process a curious shift takes place. The metaphorical use of *topos* or locus as logical space becomes an actual, though purely mental, location where images are placed so that they can be recalled in the order of the mnemonic structure." (Daniel Stempel, "The Economics of the Literary Text," *Bucknell Review* 28, no.2: 100.)

18. I choose to maintain the italicization of the word *topos* in order to defamiliarize it.

19. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 219-20.

20. Félix Guattari, "The Three Ecologies," *New Formations* 8 (Summer 1989): 136.

21. Guattari, "The Three Ecologies," 134.

22. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 214.

23. George E. Marcus, "Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System," in *Writing culture : the poetics and politics of ethnography*, ed. James Clifford George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 166. In a note, Marcus outlines three ways that "macro processes can be brought back into accounts of microsituations and processes." One, "the macrosystem may be portrayed as the mere summation of microsituations or processes"; two, "the macro may be represented as a result of the totality of unintended consequences ema-

nating form the multitude of microsituations"; three, "Macrosystems may be represented as they are subtly imagined or registered within the ongoing life processes of an intensely studied and interpreted microsituation" (Marcus, "Contemporary Problems," 169).

24. Paul Ricoeur, "The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text," Chapter 8 of his *Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

25. Paul Carter, *An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988), xxi.

26. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, xii.

27. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 34.

28. "Postmodernism then signals nothing more than a logical extension of the power of the market over the whole range of cultural production." David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 62.



## Chapter 2

# Foundations: Discovery and Description

The spatiotemporal horizon was shattered once and for all by the bow of the *Santa Maria*.<sup>1</sup>

Space . . . unleashes desire. It presents desire with a “transparency” which encourages it to surge forth in an attempt to lay claim to an apparently clear field.<sup>2</sup>

I have seen the map of the earth and the mariner’s chart, which seem to me the most beautiful things in the world. – Tenor part to a mass by Johannes Cornago, circa 1475

The recent criticism occasioned by the quincentennial of the European discovery of America has been accompanied by a corresponding outpouring of writing that re-examines colonial narratives and travel writing. For the most part these two critical genres, while not unrelated to one another, treat their respective subject matter as quite distinct. The discovery is seen as a critical moment producing a shock and rupture in Old World perspectives of its place in the scheme of things, while colonization is seen as a long process that comes after the shock of discovery has given way to inland exploration and travel into “interiors.”<sup>3</sup> What I would like to show in this chapter is how early narratives of the discovery form a patriarchal substratum upon which later narratives draw. In what follows, I will examine the sources of initial conceptions of the New World, how they were disseminated and became part of the Orinoco archive, and how they influenced the production of the Orinoco as *topos* and as regional space.

It is perhaps a commonplace to note that the revelation of the New World created a revolution in European self-understanding. Columbus’s near discovery of the American

mainland on his third voyage, a voyage that took him near the mouth of the Orinoco, together with his misconception that he was on the periphery of the mysterious and exotic Orient, may be seen in retrospect as an ironic representation of the Christian West's projection of paradise as always just beyond this world. Amerigo Vespucci's discovery that there was in fact another world co-present with Europe and Asia was an ontological shock that breached the barrier to the beyond, rearranging European conceptions of self and other.

As Columbus's description of the islands he found as "the earthly paradise" indicates, initially there was a conflation of the beyond of paradise and the beyond of the as yet unexplored New World.<sup>4</sup> Columbus's descriptions are remarkable in that he thought he had literally found the Garden of Eden. This image forms the foundational image of the region, and perhaps of many subsequent images of the New World tropics.

Columbus, perhaps because of a mistake in his measurement of altitude, came to believe that earth was not spherical but rather "the shape of a pear which is everywhere very round except where the stalk is, for there it is very prominent, or that it is like a very round ball, and on one part of it is placed something like a woman's nipple, and that this part, where this protuberance is found, is the highest and nearest to the sky, and it is beneath the equinoctial line and in this Ocean sea at the end of the East. I call that "the end of the East," where end all land and islands." Further in this letter reporting to Isabella and Ferdinand on his third voyage, Columbus continues:

I do not hold that the earthly paradise is in the form of a rugged mountain, as its description declares to us, but that it is at the summit, there where I have said that the shape of the stalk of the pear is, and that, going towards it from a distance, there is a gradual ascent to it. And I believe that no one could reach the summit as I have said, and I believe that this water may originate from there, though it be far away and may come to collect there where I came and may form this lake. These are great indications of the earthly paradise, for the situation agrees with the opinion of those holy and wise theologians, and also the signs are very much in accord with this idea, for I have never read or heard of so great a quantity of fresh water

so coming into and near the salt. And the very mild climate there also supports this view, and if it does not come from there, from paradise, it seems to be a still greater marvel, for I do not believe that there is known in the world a river so great and so deep.<sup>5</sup>

By most accounts Columbus is describing the outflow of the Orinoco into the Gulf of Paria. By continuing and elaborating on the idea that the Garden of Eden being located in "the East," that it had the actual form of a woman's breast, that the "lake" he was in has its source in the Garden itself, Columbus places paradise on the periphery of the earth and in the partial form of a woman. What form Columbus assumes that partiality to be is significant, since, as Tiffany and Adams note regarding this quote, "If the earth was like a woman's body, then the regions yet to be discovered were her sexual parts."<sup>6</sup>

"In the beginning all the world was America," wrote John Locke in 1690.<sup>7</sup> What had happened to the rest of the world to make it not America, and what were the characteristics of America that made it both a remnant and an origin? All the world was once America because all the world had once been undiscovered—all was potential, to be "discovered," from the ecclesiastical Latin 'disco-operio', meaning to uncover, to reveal, to expose to the gaze.<sup>8</sup> As America was about to begin "her" second century, Locke's statement says much about how the image of America had already been consolidated into existing attitudes about the history of space. The original garden had been revealed and brought into the realm of knowledge, and in the process that garden was destroyed, or more accurately, displaced. It had been displaced in to that realm outside reason and progress, exterior to knowing, into the realm of the Other, which included the world of women, of nature, and the irrational.

In the act of discovering America, Columbus continued the myth of the Garden; even after it became apparent that the new garden was not in the East, where tradition had placed it, the garden remained. It remained there because it was accessible, though constantly deferred. It remained there because patriarchal reasoning depends upon the Other being "outside," out of bounds. When that patriarchal reasoning becomes a major component of the new economy of capitalism, that which is outside

becomes the object of enterprise, the space to be penetrated and brought into the realm of rational thought. Immediately after Columbus, at the beginning of the discovery, all of the American continent, to European eyes, was the Orinoco and its outfall, the Gulf of Paria. The new continent was female; the attraction of her dangerous embrace would be a major subject of the new presses in Europe, inciting desire both through narrative and through graphic imagery; these images would invite men first to gaze upon her coastlines, then to penetrate the wild interior and finally to domesticate what they could control by bringing nature into the realm of culture through the founding of cities in the wild. From the very first descriptions of America, it was constructed as a tangled space where sensuality, watchful objectivity, interrogatory ethnography, and mistrust coexisted.

If the archive is looked upon as a layered system of chronologic strata, later layers interacting with previous ones, then patriarchy forms one of the innermost layers, the foundation upon which subsequent components are placed. Therefore, as I will make clear below, the initial conflation of the New World tropics with older European notions of paradise, otherness, and exotica did not simply disappear with the spread of rationalism that Arciniegas, for example, attributes to the discovery of America.<sup>9</sup> Rather the New World, because of pre-existing European patriarchal ideas, was founded as a female space, and that engendering interacted with economic ideas in such a way that economics and erotics became conflated in complex ways. Instead of the New World becoming one of the first objects of a new European rationality, erotics and economics, projected toward the New World, became the semiotic foundation of meanings associated with it.

### *Foundational Images of the Orinoco: The Conception of the New World as Female*

To change the world, one has to change the ways of making the world, that is, the vision of the world and the practical

operations by which groups are produced and reproduced. Symbolic power, whose most exemplary form is seen in the power to produce groups ... is based on two conditions. Firstly, like every form of performative discourse, symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. The power of imposing on other minds a vision, old or new, of social divisions depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles. Symbolic capital is a credit, it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition ...<sup>10</sup>

The dream world about women in exotic other worlds, where the imagined comes true, is seen through men's eyes. Men use remote places as playgrounds for their psyches. They enjoy experiences in a reality they have created far from home, while women in these male-defined worlds are rendered silent and impassive.<sup>11</sup>

Although they did not have wide readership initially, the first descriptions of the Gulf of Paria and the Orinoco (which are also the first descriptions of continental America) by Columbus and Vespucci must have been exciting reading for their limited audience. Columbus, on his third voyage, still intent on finding a route to the Great Khan, sends out a small caravel to reconnoiter the Gulf. When his men return to report finding four freshwater gulfs and four rivers associated with them, Las Casas writes:

The Admiral longed to find the key to this mystery: the cause of there being a gulf like this, forty leagues long and twenty-six wide, of fresh water, was he says, a matter for wonder. He burned to penetrate the secrets of those lands, for he was sure that they must contain things of value, things not to be had in the Indies, especially since he had found there evidence of gold and pearls, and had news of them, and had discovered such lands and so many people living there, from which the products and wealth of the land could easily be imagined...

Finally, he decided to follow the safest course and come to this island and send money thence to Castille to bring provisions and hire people, and, as soon as he was able, to send his brother, the *Adelantado*, to continue his discovery and to find important things such as he hoped would be found, in order to serve Our Lord and the Sovereigns.<sup>12</sup>

Not trusting the judgments of his own crew, Columbus decides to sail west to see if he can find a way around the land before him, and declares that he has found not an island but a continent:

. . . and, as if addressing the Sovereigns, he speaks thus:  
 "I have come to believe that this is a mighty continent that was hitherto unknown. I am strongly supported in this view by reason of this great river, and by this sea which is fresh, and I am also supported by the statement of Esdras in Book 2, Chapter 6, which says that six parts of the world consist of dry land, and one part of water. This work was approved by St. Augustine in his commentary on the passage *Marietur filius meus Christus*, as cited by Francisco de Mavrones. Moreover I am supported by the statements of several cannibal Indians, whom I captured on other occasions and who declared that there was mainland to the west of them."<sup>13</sup>

Columbus in this passage proves to himself and to his sponsors that he is a great geographer, ethnographic inquisitor, and medieval bibliographer, and thus discovers an "Other World" as he describes it.<sup>14</sup> He is also able to read and interpret scripture in ways that authorize his empirical observations. From its beginnings in Western description, the Orinoco is out of place, a marvel that must be tested by one's own empirical observations, a tangle of waters where one cannot trust secondhand observation, but, by first-hand observation, one may find the key to a mystery.

It remains for Vespucci two years later to recognize what he sees as a New World, not simply an "other" one. His first account of the Orinoco presents a very generous place:

We made sail and put into a gulf which is called the Gulf of Paria. We rode at anchor at the mouth of a very large river, which causes the water of this gulf to be fresh. We saw a large village close to the sea, where there were so many people that we were astonished. All were unarmed. In token of peace, we went ashore in the boats, and they received us with great display of affection... There they gave us three rations of wine to drink, made not of grapes but of fruit, like old-fashioned beer, and it was extremely good. There we ate many fresh prunelike fruits, a very peculiar sort of fruit. They gave us many other fruits all different from ours and very good to taste, and all

having aromatic flavor and odor. They gave us some small pearls and eleven large ones, and they told us by signs that if we would wait several days they would go fishing and bring us many of them. Not caring to delay, we departed with many parrots of various colors and with good friendly feeling.<sup>15</sup>

Vespucci's narrative is almost sensual: peaceful people, fruit, wine, colored birds (he had earlier on this voyage made the first European description of a toucan while anchored in the coastal river between the Amazon and the Orinoco). Together these two original descriptions form a tangled mosaic of distrust, marvel, sensuality, and easy profit: motifs that are to be repeated throughout the history of the region.

Peter Mason argues convincingly that the eroticization of the New World is based on an already existing archive of European interpretations of classic works. Mason observes that, even in Columbus's initial contacts with the people of the New World, erotics and economics become conflated: "The nakedness of the Indians conjures up a vision of Paradise for Columbus, fortified by the seductive qualities of the American fauna and flora in his eyes. The body of the other is erotised;" this "siren-like hold which the natural world of America exerts on Columbus can be shaken off only by the process of disenchantment, by which Columbus transforms the wealth of natural beauty into a commodity." This conflation becomes complete when "Columbus comes to see in the well-proportioned bodies of the natives a source of economic profits to be derived from the slave trade."<sup>16</sup>

In the chapter of her *Reading Columbus* entitled "Gender and Discovery," Margarita Zamora discusses this sexual economy in "the specific discursive context from which it arose—the textual dialogue between the Crown and Columbus regarding the projection of the economic and political will of Castile and Aragon "plus ultra," that is, ever beyond the expanding borders of Spain at the close of the fifteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Zamora constructs a congruence between Jan Van der Straet's iconic image of America as a reclining woman (See Figure 1) and Columbus's commission to "discover, take possession, govern, and trade."

Zamora claims that Columbus's New World-as-breast passage, is, for him, "the culmination the process of feminization—in this case, even eroticization—of the sign 'Indies'" that she

finds initially in Columbus's diaries of his earlier voyages, ideas which have their origins in Columbus's readings of "popular treatments of the paradise literature in the context of mercantile and conquest literature," specifically Marco Polo's *Travels*, in which Polo "establishes the link between commerce, desire, and paradise in describing the ancient Chinese city of Kin-Sai, or Qinsay (Hangzhou)." Zamora notes that "Kin-sai is precisely the city mentioned by Columbus as his destination in the *Diario* and in a letter of the second voyage, where he hoped to find the Grand Khan."<sup>18</sup>

Zamora continues her analysis by noting that the idea of the "Indies," in a culture "where the masculine is valued above the feminine, eroticization of the subordinate feminine implies both desire and disdain." The Indies in the time of Columbus is simultaneously idealized and denigrated, an attitude that allows "the feminized object to inhabit the same discursive space without disjunction or contradiction. The surface contradiction—the oscillation between the romantic and vilified visions of the Indies—now reveals itself as a complementarity ..."<sup>19</sup>

As Wilcomb Washburn notes, Columbus has often been "twitted" for this terrestrial paradise passage, either for being an out-of-step medieval man in Renaissance times or for simply being idiosyncratic or eccentric.<sup>20</sup> However, rather than being simple projections of Old World myths or idiosyncratic vision onto the New World, Columbus's images are founding images, and their sexual nature is significant.

As Gerda Lerner writes in her summary of the history of patriarchy: "We have seen, finally, how the very metaphors for gender have expressed the male as the norm and the female as deviant; the male as whole and powerful, the female as unfinished, mutilated, and lacking in autonomy."<sup>21</sup> Even in Columbus's foundational images, the New World is projected as incomplete and female; this powerful image continues into the present, as the "Third World" remains an incomplete place that needs to be developed.

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner's essay, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" has had a tremendous impact on feminist discussions of the ways that the (assumed) properties of nature are projected onto women in patriarchal societies.<sup>22</sup> Ortner as-



serts “that we find women subordinated to men in every known society. The search for a genuinely egalitarian, let alone matriarchal, culture, has proved fruitless.”<sup>23</sup> “Woman,” Ortner observes, “is being identified with—or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of—something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself.”<sup>24</sup> Through association with childbearing and domestic activities, women come to be seen as “closer” to nature than are men; conversely men are seen as being closer to “culture.” The result of this is that, universally, women are “naturalized” and nature becomes “feminized.” Woman, Ortner argues, mediates between nature and culture, and this “intermediate position may have the implication of greater symbolic ambiguity.”<sup>25</sup> The significance of this cultural mapping for women and their role in society has been the subject of much discussion.<sup>26</sup> Its significance for a cultural semiotics of space has been less obvious, but Ortner schematizes it thus:

... we may envision culture in this case as a small clearing within the forest of the larger natural system. From this point of view, that which is intermediate between culture and nature is located on the continuous periphery of culture’s clearing; and though it may thus appear to stand both above and below (and beside) culture, it is simply outside and around it. We can begin to understand then how a single system of cultural thought can often assign to woman completely polarized and apparently contradictory meanings, since extremes, as we say, meet.<sup>27</sup>

This analogical relationship forms a continuity in history that has had a profound influence on global culture with the advent of expansionary capitalism. When these patriarchal relationships become a part of a capitalism that is expanding into its own periphery, Ortner’s mapping becomes more than a metaphor and results in a conflation of erotics and economics, a conflation that has had a profound effect on Western images of subaltern spaces. For later explorers, “Columbus’s ‘Indies’—a feminized and ultimately eroticized sign, desired and reviled—was inscribed into the Columbian exchange as a feminine value, intended for consumption in a cultural economy where discovery means

gaining an advantage by uncovering a weakness, and femininity is synonymous with exploitability."<sup>28</sup>

As Certeau notes, "eroticizing of the other's body ... goes hand in hand with the formation of an ethics of production. At the same time that it creates a profit, the voyage creates a lost paradise relative to a body-object, to an erotic body."<sup>29</sup> With Columbus's quick subordination of the erotic to the economic, what Lefebvre calls "the production of space" commences. The erotics of America as woman are subordinated to America as a site for production. As I will argue in Chapter 5, it also becomes the site for the reproduction of European ideas of modernity.

However, the erotic component does not disappear; instead "the profit 'brought back' ... appears to delimit a 'remainder' which will define the primitive. The trace of this remainder is pleasure."<sup>30</sup> The moment this begins to occur, a capitalism based on a relationship between desire and production begins in the New World where "Production as process overtakes all idealistic categories and constitutes a cycle whose relationship to desire is that of an immanent principle."<sup>31</sup> The subsumption of the erotic into the economic, on one hand, reduces desire to a general principle, thus conflating the conquest of land with the exploitation of the feminized other, while at the same time it obscures the erotic components of discovery, cultural contact, and exploration as an economistic discourse begins to emerge. On the other hand, the "trace" of pleasure continually reappears as a depiction of and an incentive to encounter the primitive in texts *as the places where desire is produced, while at the same time the actual site of the potential experience of those pleasures is continuously deferred to some place that lies "outside" of the productive system.*

### *Circuits of Discovery*

The initial reports from the voyages of Columbus and Vespucci formed the image of the New World for both the public and the literati. A common response to this new information was to try to place it in existing world schemas, both factual and fictional; until Vespucci became certain that it was a new continent

that had been found it is hard to imagine what else could have been done with this information. After these initial reports, however, anthologies and interpretations of Columbus, Vespucci, and subsequent sixteenth-century explorers appeared relatively quickly. In this section I will examine the first century of publication, dissemination and reception of the first reports of the New World. The writings of Walter Raleigh became the most significant first-hand accounts of northeastern South America in England. Between 1600 and the mid-eighteenth century, first-hand narratives of the Orinoco region become more confined to ecclesiastical sources, as the Spanish missionaries established their control over the inland waterways.

From 1600 to the explosion of scientific travel in the eighteenth century, increasing Spanish control over travel to South America forced Northern Europe for the most part to rely on translation of Spanish and ecclesiastical sources for information about the region. There was certainly no paucity of incoming information about the New World, however. As Elizabeth Eisenstein shows, by the early sixteenth century, Amsterdam, because of its trade and shipping activities, had become not only the financial center of global capital but also "the central city for data collection on a truly worldwide scale."<sup>32</sup>

The Northern European location of the centers of capital and information in the sixteenth century, when combined with the Spanish control over the Orinoco region, led to narrative convolutions, factual distortions, and such political manipulation of information about the region as the construction of the Black Legend. In what follows I initially focus on the publication and republication of Spanish and church sources and their interpretation in centers of capital is the initial focus for what follows, and I conclude with a discussion of the significance of Raleigh for Northern Europe's image of the Orinoco.

### **The Columbian Exchange: Columbus, Vespucci and the Relationship between Popular and Scholarly Images of the New World**

Zamora uses the phrase “Columbian writing” to address the problem of authorship in the Columbian corpus, emphasizing that the authorship of even his diaries is diffused through others (Las Casas as editor, e.g.): “the very signature ‘Columbus’s must be seen as an aggregate, a corporate author as it were.”<sup>33</sup> Her main concern is not to establish how representative Columbus was of his contemporaries, but how the entire corpus of texts attributed to him established a “discourse of Discovery.” As described above, her model is the contractual agreement, the textual dialogue, between Columbus and the Crown. The dialogical analogy, she says, “helps to underscore that the Discovery was a dynamic process constituted not by persons acting and speaking autonomously, but in formal official exchanges in the public sphere, situations that were inherently contractual—that is, dialogical in a figurative sense.”<sup>34</sup>

Zamora’s argument is a welcome change from earlier commentators who had tended to look at Columbus the man, which in turn led to the “twitting” referred to earlier about his idiosyncratic and bizarre personal beliefs. In addition, given the rather small audience that Rudolf Hirsch projects for the initial letters of Columbus, a challenge that remains is to establish how those “dialogs” that Zamora reveals became a part of a broader culture.

Hirsch’s survey of reports of New World discoveries from the publication of Columbus’s first letter in 1493 to publication of Cortes’ accounts through the 1530s shows that between 1493 and 1522 the letters of Columbus were published in twenty-two editions over all of Europe; eighteen of these were published between 1493–1497; ten of the eighteen were published in Latin, five in Italian, two in Spanish (probably a private printing, as only one copy of each exists), and one in German. Of the total 22, eleven were of the first Columbus letter, one was of the second. Not until 1497 was the report of the fourth voyage published, and then only once.<sup>35</sup> Hirsch notes that initially, the popularity of accounts of Columbus voyages “was confined to limited groups of readers,” because his activities were not seen as anything more than an extension of Portuguese explorations of Old World routes.<sup>36</sup>

The Columbus description of the New World as earthly paradise and breast in the letter from his third voyage was never widely printed in his lifetime.<sup>37</sup> This helps to establish two things: that, as Zamora argues, the Columbian texts should be looked at as a dialogue between himself and the Crown; and that, for initial popular imagery of the New World as female-in-paradise, this passage from the third voyage must be discounted, and the contents of the first letter become more important.

Hirsch assumes that the Vespucci voyages had more direct public impact than did the accounts of Columbus, as sixty items directly related to Vespucci voyages (mostly the *Mundus Novus*) were published during 1502–1529, of which thirty-seven were printed in vernacular languages.<sup>38</sup> This popularity occurred because “whilst Columbus’s letters and reports were written for a chaste queen whom he did not wish to offend, Vespucci went in detail into native sexual customs that appealed to the public in the early sixteenth century—as they do in the late twentieth.”<sup>39</sup> Peter Mason argues “the sexual aspect comes even more to the fore” in Vespucci and he describes Vespucci’s account of the women he encountered as “a voyeur’s paradise.” The Vespucci passage that Mason is referring to reads, “The women, as I have said, go about naked and seductively, but their bodies are attractive and clean enough. Nor are they as shameless as one might perhaps suppose, because the fact of their being well filled out makes their shamelessness less apparent, since it is covered for the most part by their excellent bodily structure.”<sup>40</sup> “Vespucci’s account lays the emphasis on a visual code,” Mason argues. “The representation of the world is no longer seen as a question of contiguity and measurement, as in the Herodotean map. The world is now a terrain waiting to be perused, scrutinised and penetrated. The nude women, often depicted in early illustrations ... were both a symbol of this world that was to be appropriated and a part of it—both metaphor and metonym.”<sup>41</sup>

Does the more explicit and “voyeuristic” nature of Vespucci’s narrative account for its popularity? Or is the rise in popularity between Columbus’s initial voyage and Vespucci’s simply a matter of a growing interest in the New World? Probably each element affected the other. David Quinn asserts that “the wide

publicity which Vespucci received led his publishers and readers to think in more visual terms of the people of the new lands than Columbus did," and thus publications of his accounts began to be illustrated very early.<sup>42</sup> Quinn's assumption that popular accounts of the New World would be more visual than would those for elite audiences is interesting in itself. Even if that proves to be an exaggeration, that there seems to be already by 1520 a distinction between popular and elite accounts of the discovery is significant. Columbus for the literati, Vespucci for the less educated; the Columbian textual and contractual subordination of the New World feminine for those in the Latin worlds of law and scholarship, the visual and sexual appropriation for those in the commerce of the street. The "apocryphal" nature of the most printed Vespucci material (most scholars think that the *Mundus Novus* and the letter to Pier Soderini, printed many times as the *Quatuor Navigationes*, were not written by Vespucci)<sup>43</sup>, gives more credence to this view. Vespucci, or at least the image of Vespucci, was popular enough to be plagiarized and forged for the popular imagination, whereas Columbus was not.<sup>44</sup>

The construction of a global archive of New World information continues with the work of Peter Martyr, who by 1520 had superseded Vespucci in the public mind.<sup>45</sup> With the publication of Martyr's *Opera* in 1511, Vespucci as the popular figure of the New World discoveries began to be reevaluated. According to Quinn, "a new period of fuller and more reliable narratives was beginning," and the figure of Columbus was "rehabilitated."<sup>46</sup> Martyr "helped to form a climate of opinion in which acceptance of the distinctness of America became possible. Lacking first-hand experience, however, in his *Decades* he was better at telling a story than in building up a physical or topographical picture."<sup>47</sup>

As the first great integrator of New World narratives (to be followed by Oviedo with his *Sumario* in 1526 and *Historia* in 1535), Martyr's "storytelling" capabilities perhaps helped also to reintegrate the earlier class-distinct dissemination of New World narratives. For the first time here was a vernacular integration of all the discoveries so far. The *Decades*, written as letters beginning in 1493, were published individually as early as 1511 and

collected and published beginning in 1516. *Decade I* was actually summarized and printed in Italian in 1504 (without permission) before the publication of the original Latin). With the author's permission, the first three *Decades* rapidly spread across Europe, having been published in Basel, Paris, Cologne, Strasbourg, Antwerp, and London by 1555.<sup>48</sup>

Gerbi observes that Martyr wrote not to "make dry 'history' but to give pleasure to his correspondents, to provoke their wonder and joy"<sup>49</sup> and was read out loud for after-dinner entertainment by Pope Leo X to his sister and "numerous cardinals."<sup>50</sup> Martyr's synopses thus helped form the New World archive and were also used as an instrument for forming the Orinocan topos as his images were disseminated through the popular imagination. Martyr's distillation of the explorer's raw reports into an archive for elites, and their subsequent oral re-telling for public pleasure, presents in a nutshell the pattern of circulation where reports that have basic economic purposes become tied in the popular imagination to experiences of pleasure.

Symbolic power, writes Pierre Bourdieu, is the "power of showing things and making people believe in them, of revealing, in an explicit, objectified way the more or less confused, vague, unformulated experiences of the natural world and the social world, and of thereby bringing them into existence."<sup>51</sup> In a separate essay, Bourdieu refines the concept of "cultural production" by hypothesizing two different "fields": the "field of large-scale production" (production "for the public at large") and the "field of restricted production" (objects and ideas "destined for a public of producers of cultural goods").<sup>52</sup> Bourdieu would thus make a distinction between those materials "destined" for producers of cultural goods, in my example the "raw" reports of Columbus and Vespucci, and those materials directed toward consumers, that is, the published reports, with illustration, typographic and other design decisions having been made by those working in the "restricted" field. By the time some cultural object is disseminated, many decisions (and assumptions) will have already been made about what the significance of an item is and who the audience should be.

In my example of the different receptions given to the Columbus and Vespucci materials, printers and publishers somehow assumed that the Columbian material would be more significant for the literati, and that the Vespucci material would be more marketable to a broad audience. These publishers made decisions about “showing things” to particular audiences about the New World, “making people believe in them,” and “thereby bringing [it] into existence” as a new space in the world.

### *Finding El Dorado, Founding Santo Tomé: Amazons, Gold, and the Production of Cities*

The literary archive of the New World had already begun to form, had already begun to feed popular literature, and had already helped in the conceptual founding of Latin America. From the end of the fifteenth century forward, popular narrative and history began to be interwoven in complex ways brought about both by imaginative projections toward the New World and the invention of the printing press. As González Echevarría observes:

The Archive and the novel appear at the same time and are part of the same discourse as the modern state. Latin America became a historical entity as a result of the development of the printing press, not merely by being “discovered” by Columbus. Latin America, like the novel, was created in the Archive.<sup>53</sup>

Although the relationship between the novel and the archive will be explored in detail in the next chapter, the relationship between the New World archive and the dissemination of narratives began to effect the actual production of the regional space of the Orinoco by the mid-sixteenth century.

In addition to the “Columbian exchanges” that were taking place in Latin and in private (as in Martyr’s interviews with returning explorers) between the explorers and their institutional sponsors, stories also began to be told in the languages of the people. Along with vernacular reports of the discoveries, oral



communication about the discoveries was occurring; however, even these tales told by sailors had definite connections to the tales told by elites. For example, although Orellana's "encounter" with Amazon women on what was then called the river Marañón (Spanish for "thicket, tangle") was not to take place until 1542, by 1533 a diplomatic officer was already able to write to a secretary to Charles V, relating tales of warrior women in the New World that were being told on the docks of Spain:

And so that you may have something to laugh about I'll inform you concerning an item of news which turned up here and was deemed authentic and reliable among educated and other people of repute... I can hardly exaggerate how much credence has been given the report that seventy large ships had come into the harbors of Santander and Laredo, bringing ten thousand Amazon women who had come to mate with Spaniards because of the reputation for valor and virility of our men. The arrangement was that any Amazon who became pregnant would give fifteen ducats to the man concerned for his work, and she would remain to give birth. If the offspring were males, the Amazons would leave them here; if female, they would carry them away. This report caused the rates of the local "ladies of pleasure" to drop because of such a large and wealthy competition, and because their men customers are so well remunerated for their trouble. And rest assured that this news has been considered so well founded here that nothing else has been or is talked about. These things are noted down as worthy of report in view of the general gullibility of the people.<sup>54</sup>

Leonard ascribes this particular anticipation of the Amazons to Montalvo's picaresque novel of 1510, *Sergas de Esplandián*, in which the hero meets Queen Calafia, warrior queen of the island of "California."

Montalvo's inspiration came, in turn, from Columbus's relation of an island of women without men that he was told of on his first voyage.<sup>55</sup> The Columbus reference is from the Las Casas diary entry of January 16, 1493, where Columbus had been told by the natives that he would find an island "peopled by women without men," and which Columbus desires to visit "in order, as he says, to take to the Sovereigns five or six of them . . ." <sup>56</sup>

The Amazons themselves become the prime example of Certeau's "trace of the remainder" of economic life—pleasure—and provide one of the best examples of the continuity of the conflation of erotics and economics in Latin American historiography (or mythography). In this section, I will examine the use of the Amazon myth by Sir Walter Raleigh, their relationship to his use of the myth of El Dorado, and how both these myths, each aspects of the Orinocoan topos, were instrumental in the early settlement and development of the region.

The Amazons, a myth that was used to attract men to the New World and helped form its initial image as a place of female power that needed to be tamed, ironically led those men to use that myth as a rationale for both conquering that land and fighting among themselves. In the process the land that they fought over was brought under traditional patriarchal systems of control and the wild female spaces retreated ever farther into the interior.

### **The Orinoco-Guayana Region as the Site of El Dorado**

Between the third voyage of Columbus and the last years of the sixteenth century, the Orinoco-Amazon region was the object of intense, if not very productive, exploration.<sup>57</sup> The major reason for this effort was that the Spanish explorers became convinced that the large area between the Orinoco and the Amazon, which includes present-day Guyana, the Guayana highlands<sup>58</sup> of Venezuela, and the upper Orinoco watershed, was where they would find El Dorado, the native king who was anointed in powdered gold which was washed off into a giant inland lake. Having found advanced civilizations in the interiors of Mexico and Peru, it seemed only natural that more gold should be found in the unknown interior between the two great rivers.

The wetter regions of the tropics were a different challenge altogether than the highlands of Mexico and Peru, exploration took much longer, and thus the myth of a rich land in the interior could survive.<sup>59</sup> By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, the great rivers, the Amazon and the Río de la Plata, "had

been navigated along their main streams almost from end to end" with few signs of the fabled El Dorado.<sup>60</sup> This left the Orinoco as the last possibility for an El Dorado, and Spain began an intense campaign to find it. The campaign began in the 1530s with the expeditions of Diego de Ordaz and Antonio Sedeño, which resulted in frustration, in-fighting and death, and a thirty-year hiatus in Orinoco exploration.

During the period 1568–1575, internecine fighting was less of a factor, but resistance from the local people frustrated Spanish attempts at conquering the Orinoco. Diego Fernández de Serpa, who received a capitulation for "the conquest of Guayana and Guara, with three hundred additional leagues of jurisdiction, the territory to be named Nueva Andalucía."<sup>61</sup> Pedro Malaver de Silva was granted his capitulation on the same day as Serpa and was appointed "adelantado of the lands of the Omeguas and Quinacos for a distance of three hundred leagues, the territory to be called Nueva Estremadura."<sup>62</sup> Presumably to avoid conflicts such as between Sedeño and Ordaz, "the Council declared that the three hundred leagues conceded to Diego de Serpa should begin at Boca de los Dragos and go south along the Orinoco River, and that where these lands ended those of Pedro de Silva should begin."<sup>63</sup> Silva led one disastrous expedition South from Valencia through the Venezuelan llanos, during which most of his men deserted. He returned to Spain in 1570, outfitted a new ship, and in 1584 began to explore the coast between the Amazon and the Orinoco.

"There," according to Oviedo, "all perished, some from illness caused by the severe weather, and others including Don Pedro and two of his young daughters, at the hands of Carib Indians. Only one soldier, Juan Martín de Albújar, was spared their ferocity, to relate the circumstances later."<sup>64</sup> Upon his return to civilization, and on his deathbed, Juan Martín gave the deposition of how his Carib captors had taken him to Manoa, the city of gold. This deposition, cunningly manipulated by Antonio de Berrío, the next major El Dorado explorer, later became the source of Raleigh's fantasies of El Dorado.

With the deaths of Serpa and Silva, four decades of search had come to nought; the only place left for the search was

Guayana highlands. El Dorado had now retreated as far into the interior of the continent as was possible. The remainder of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the next would be spent with two men and two countries fighting for access to its supposed remove in the Guayana highlands.



*Figure 2.1. The rapids of the Caroní.*

### **Berrío, Raleigh, and Tales of El Dorado**

Antonio de Berrío was sixty years old, and had had a long and distinguished military career when he left Spain for the New World in 1580. He had married Doña Maria Oruña, the niece and heiress of the conquistador Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, who until his death had been searching for El Dorado in New Granada. Upon Quesada's death, Berrío discovered that his father-in-law had left him his holdings in New Granada. Upon his arrival in 1580, "Berrío discovered that Don Gonzalo Jiménez had inserted a clause in his will requiring him to devote himself and

the fortune to a continuance of the quest for El Dorado, to which he had devoted his own last years.”<sup>65</sup>

Berrío accepted the gift of this patrimonial fantasy gracefully, and by 1584 had descended from Bogotá into the plains between the Meta and Vichada Rivers in search of El Dorado. From here he could see the mountains to the east of the Orinoco, which had been “sought in vain for over seventy years... Berrío’s rediscovery was to lay the foundation of the legend of El Dorado in Guiana.”<sup>66</sup> Berrío captured several Indians and, in a letter to the king upon his return, Berrío claims that they told him “that there was a very large lake in the cordillera on the shores of which were many towns and numerous people with great riches of gold and jewels.”<sup>67</sup> In a postscript to this same letter, Berrío summarizes the recent history of the search for El Dorado and his strategy for its settlement, which as Harlow notes, would be adopted by Raleigh “*in toto*”:<sup>68</sup>

I beg your Majesty to remember that in the last sixteen years, three expeditions have been made. The first was by Captain Serpa who started through Nueva Andalucia. The second was by Don Pedro de Silva who also sought this country through Nueva Andalucia. The third was by my predecessor, the Adelantado [i.e., Quesada], who sought it by way of El Dorado and all these three have been searching from different directions for these provinces which I have now discovered, the true name of which is Guayana.<sup>69</sup>

Berrío also notes here that the Orinoco would be the primary means of supplying the interior via the island of Margarita. Over the next ten years Berrío led three expeditions to the Orinoco, during which he became amazingly proficient at extracting data about the whereabouts of El Dorado from the Carib Indians, masterfully manipulated Raleigh’s perception of the legend, and founded the town that would, four centuries later, become Ciudad Guayana (and which would finally show the truth of the Indian tales). Berrío was not only governor of El Dorado; by collecting information from the Indians he came across, he became its archivist and cartographer as well. The first two attempts were disasters. On his third expedition in search of El Dorado from the west, after losing most of his men and supplies, Berrío in desperation decided to continue down the Orinoco River to

find the Caroní River that he had heard about from the Indians “which comes down from Guiana and which cannot be navigated because of a great waterfall; but that a little higher up, where a chief called Moriquita lived, the mountains ended and the provinces of Guiana began, behind which in turn came those of Manoa and Eldorado and many other provinces.”<sup>70</sup>

Arriving at the place where the Caroní flows into the Orinoco, Berrío was able to get still further intelligence from the Indians:

We had much friendship in this journey; two of their chiefs came into my canoe and I handed one Spaniard over to them. They revealed great secrets about the land and confirmed all the information which I had received higher up; all that they had told me I found to be true.<sup>71</sup>

For all this good friendship, Berrío and his men evidently had some disagreements with the Indians at the Caroní, and spent several disease-ridden months waiting in vain for support to come from Margarita. They finally went further downriver and arrived at Trinidad on September 1, 1591. Here Berrío and the Governor of the island, Juan Sarmiento de Villandrando, came to the sort of disagreement that seemed to haunt relations between would-be powers at the mouth of the Orinoco, and Berrío was jailed. He became convinced that the governor had plans of his own for Guayana and El Dorado, especially when one of Sarmiento’s men teamed up with some of Berrío’s and returned to the Caroní, where they pillaged and sold some 300 Indians as slaves. Harlow speculates that it was during this enforced period of isolation that Berrío learned of the story of Juan Martín de Albújar. Albújar was the survivor of Pedro de Silva’s ill-fated expedition who had been captured and lived with the Caribs for ten years.<sup>72</sup> Harlow also speculates that his death-bed deposition in Puerto Rico, which Raleigh says Berrío had a copy of, was itself an opportunistic fantasy. Martín supposedly related how he had been led, blindfolded, to Manoa (this name for the golden city on the lake originates with Martín’s tale).

## Raleigh's Narrative Construction of El Dorado

... and as I haue beene assured by such of the Spanyardes as haue seen Manoa the imperial Citie of Guiana, which the Spanyardes cal el Dorado, that for greatnes, for the riches, and for the excellent seate, it farre exceedeth any of the world ...<sup>73</sup>

While at Margarita, Berrío came to know Domingo Vera e Iburguren. After Vera's success in obtaining money and men from Don Diego Osorio, the governor of Venezuela, Berrío sent him on another trip up to the Caroní in 1593. Vera's official account of this expedition was intercepted by English pirates and found its way to Sir Walter Raleigh (who published part of it as an appendix to his *Discovery*), who thus learned many of Berrío's "secrets" of El Dorado. Raleigh had learned more from Jacob Whiddon's 1594 intelligence mission to Trinidad, carried out under orders from Raleigh.<sup>74</sup> He was to learn even more of El Dorado when he captured Berrío in 1595. According to Harlow, they had gentlemanly conversations for a month while Berrío was Raleigh's prisoner.

Raleigh, after his disappointments in Virginia, which until his explorations, was "considered to be a comparable realm" to Guiana, "each a place of probable wealth in tropical products and gold and each prudently marginal to Spanish holdings," turned his attentions to Guiana.<sup>75</sup> Raleigh's discovery that Virginia was not as "tropical" as was believed helped form the distinction of the American North from the South—an economic differentiation, as it turns out, since the North provided "little attraction "for the commercial capitalists of northwest Europe" because their trade "was based on the complementarity of *unlike* regions. The greatest profits came from exotics . . ."<sup>76</sup>

At this time, Raleigh had the intercepted documents about Vera's expedition to the Caroní (interpreted through Vera and Berrío's projection of Manoa existing out in the Guayana highlands), he had evidently read the Spanish chronicles of the New World that were available to him, and now he had a long private audience with the world's foremost expert on the whereabouts of El Dorado, Antonio de Berrío.<sup>77</sup> Harlow makes a very good

case that this conversation is where Raleigh learns of Juan Martín de Albújar's story of being taken to Manoa; Raleigh certainly believes that Berrío has a copy of Albújar's deposition:

The relation of this Martynes (who was the first that discovered Manoa) his successe and end is to be seene in the Chauncery of Saint Iuan de puerto rico, whereof Berreo had a coppie, which appeared to be the greatest incouragement as well to Berreo as to others that formerly attempted the discouery and conquest.<sup>78</sup>

Judging from the inaccuracy of the particulars as they are related by Raleigh (Raleigh's *Discovery* places "Martynes" in the employ of Ordaz rather than Silva, for example), he never saw this document and Berrío, whether he had it the document or not, was having Raleigh on. In fact, Harlow judges that Berrío did not take Martín's story very seriously at all, since he makes no references to it in any of his official correspondence.<sup>79</sup>

At any rate, the image is that of the seventy-five-year-old Berrío narrating the tale of a tale told by a deceiver to the man Berrío knew as the pirate "Guaterral." Raleigh then retells it to encourage his virgin queen to enlist the help of Amazons in her expansion into South America. Raleigh foresees that these tales may be seen as strange, but the proof for him is in the results:

Nowe although these reportes may seem straunge, yet if wee consider the many millions which are daily brought out of Peru into Spaine, wee may easely beleeeue the same, for wee finde that by the abundant treasure of that contrey, the Spanish King vexeth all the Princes of Europe, and is become in a fewee yeares from a poor king of Castile the greatest monarke of this part of the worlde, and likelie euery day to increase, if other Princes forsloe the good occasion offered, and suffered him to adde this Empire to the rest, which by farre exceedeth all the rest; if his golde now indaunger vs, hee will then be vnresistable.<sup>80</sup>

Very near the beginning of his *Discovery*, Raleigh proposes that England protect herself from the danger of Spanish gold through his program of colonization in Guiana. The struggle between Berrío and Raleigh became the struggle between the Spanish attempts to found real cities on the ground, and Raleigh's attempt



to find justification for English settlement of the mythical El Dorado.

### **Wild Women and Mythical Cities in the World Economy**

The first thing Cortés did upon setting foot on the Continent was to found the city of Vera Cruz, an act that enabled him to communicate directly with the Crown through letters drawn up by the city's municipal government.<sup>81</sup>

The initial production of the New World as a mental image of a space was a displacement—Columbus saw it in the frame of reference of Europe's relation with the other that was "known" at the time, i.e., as the Orient, as Paradise, as the place where the exotic would be found. With the Spanish (and later English) quests for El Dorado, however, this unknown place where Amazons lived was pushed farther and farther into the interior of the new continent. Since this "virgin" land retreated, conceptually the land that was not El Dorado could be brought under production. The "trace of pleasure," the wild and feminine space of the Amazons, gave way to Certeau's "ethic of production." With the founding of new cities and the beginning of settlement of land for more sober purposes, the "discovered" land was being de-exoticized and brought under traditional systems of control.

Berrío never found El Dorado, but he did find a city at the conjunction of the Caroní and Orinoco that was to be the site, four centuries later, of the latest incarnation of the El Dorado myth. After Raleigh's attack of 1595, Berrío went on the defensive and built the fortified town of Santo Tomé at the "doors of El Dorado."<sup>82</sup> The town was meant to ward off any further foreign intrusion into Guayana and its supposed treasures, and to defend the wild space El Dorado with traditional fortifications. This defensive move was initially successful. Raleigh's *Discovery* had failed to convince the queen of Guiana's investment worth, and Raleigh determined that some more tangible proof of its value was needed. He sent his lieutenant, Keymis, back to the Orinoco in 1596 "to discover the exact whereabouts of Manoa and the most direct route thereto, and secondly to secure a supply of

gold from the banks of the Caroní.”<sup>83</sup> Keymis, interrogating the Indians once again, determined that the most promising route to Manoa “was to follow the Essequibo [in present day Guyana] to its head and then make a portage of one day’s journey” to Lake Parima (actually a seasonal overflowing of the Parima river).<sup>84</sup> Keymis’ discovery of the settlement at Santo Tomé caused Raleigh to reevaluate the enterprise.

Raleigh’s next attempt at making Guiana safe for British colonization had to wait until his time in the Tower of London was done. Berrío died a year after founding Santo Tomé and his son took on the task of governing El Dorado. In 1618 Raleigh returned and sacked Santo Tomé.

In the time between Raleigh’s 1595 exploration and his return, English interest in Raleigh’s ambition had grown. Robert Harcourt obtained permission from James I to colonize Guiana, and in 1609 arrived on the Wiapoco River with ninety-seven men.<sup>85</sup> He thereupon “tooke possession of the Land, by Turfe and Twigge, in behalfe of our Sovereigne Lord King James ... lying betwixt the Rivers of Amazonas an Orenoque, not being actually possessed, and inhabited by any other Christian Prince or State.”<sup>86</sup> Raleigh’s quest for El Dorado had the result (which he intended) of establishing real English settlements in what until then had been uncontested Spanish territory. The myth of El Dorado had been a prime component of this reterritorialization.

Near the end of Raleigh’s *Discovery*, he implies that the conquest of Guiana would make Elizabeth an “unresistable” virgin:

For whatsoever Prince shall possesse it, shall be greattest, and if the king of Spayne enioy it, he will become vnresistable. Her Maiesty heereby shall confirme and strengthen the opinions of al nations, as touching her great and princely actions. And where the south border of Guiana reacheth to the Dominion and Empire of the Amazonas, those women shall heereby heare the name of a virgin, which is not only able to defend her owne territories and her neighbors, but also to inuade and conquere so great Empyres and so farre remoued.<sup>87</sup>

For Raleigh, the Amazons and El Dorado are not just associated by an accident of geography; he seems to assume, perhaps for rhetorical purposes, that it is somehow natural that they occupy the same space. Although Raleigh was not the inventor of the

Elizabethan fascination with Amazons, he certainly played a part in their popularization.<sup>88</sup>

Raleigh's description of Amazons shows that he incorporated his exploratory encounters with tales of Amazons with an already existing archive:

I made inquirie amongst the most ancient and best traueled of the Orenoqueponi, and was very desirous to vnderstand the truth of those warlike women, bicause of some it is beleued, of others not: And though I digresse from my purpose, yet will I set downe what hath been deliuered me for truth of those women, and I spake with a Casique or Lord of people that told me he had been in the riuer, and beyond it also. The nations of these women are on the south side of the riuer in the Prouinces of the Topago, and their chiefest strangths and retraicts are in the Ilands scituate on the south side of the entrance, some 60 leagues within the mouth of the said river. The memoiries of the like women are very ancient as well in Africa as in Asia: In Africa those that had the Medusa for Queene: others in Scithia neere the riuers of Tanais and Thermadon: we find also that Lampedo and Marthesia were Queenes of the Amazones: in many histories they are verified to haue been, and in diuers ages and Prouinces: But they which are not far from Guiana do accompanie with men but once in a yeere, and for the time of one moneth, which I gather by their relation to be in Aprill. At that time all the Kings of the borders assemble, and the Queenes of the Amazones, and after the Queens haue chosen, the rest cast lots for their Valentines. This one moneth, they feast, daunce, and drinke of their wines in abundance, and the Moone being done, they all depart to their owne Prouinces. If they conceiue, and be deliuered of a sonne, they returne him to the father, if a daughter they nourish it, and reteine it, and as many as haue daughters send vnto the begetters a Present, all being desirous to increase their owne sex and kinde ...<sup>89</sup>

In the land of El Dorado Raleigh projects some psycho-spatial inversion: in the worlds that Amazons inhabit, as opposed to England where the queen is a virgin and the land is productive, in Guiana the women are productive and the land is virgin:

To conclude, Guiana is a country that hath yet her Maydenhead, neuer sackt, turned, nor wrought, the face of the earth hath not beene torne, not the vertue and salt of the soyle

spent by manurance, the graues haue not beene opened for gold, the mines not broken with sledges, not their Images puld down out of their temples.<sup>90</sup>

Through the identification of El Dorado with its mythical Amazonian inhabitants, even though the land is innocent and unexploited, it can, in the eyes of both her “protectors” at Santo Tomé and her potential conquerors from England, also be wanton and desiring to be productive. “The woman who resists conquest is the Amazon.” “Yet,” Tiffany and Adams continue, “men assume that this Wild Woman really wants to be conquered and that she will love the man who subdues her.”<sup>91</sup> The fact that the Amazon woman may get what she desires from this union—a daughter—seems to be unimportant. The exchange of pleasure would objectively seem to be to the profit of the Amazon, as she gets both pleasure and a daughter, while her partner spends his profit at once. The profit for the male is external to the fantasy of the Amazon; it comes when the fantasy is able to be used to appropriate the land of which the fantasy is the pleasurable trace. The land is then subjugated, even though the Amazon has not been; she instead is projected further into the interior and stored in the archive, to be used again when appropriate. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, the production of the land as reality and the production of the fantasy cannot be separated.<sup>92</sup>

The doubled image of El Dorado and the Amazons sets up an erotics of exploitation that can still be seen in North-South relations. These seemingly contradictory female qualities, wanton desire channeled toward (re)production, on one hand, and passivity and malleability on the other, are directly related to the sequence of conquering land and bringing it under patriarchal production systems. The first set of qualities is applied to spaces that have not yet been brought under male control (“nature”) while the second set begins the processes of culturalization, civilization and domestication that are associated with the building of cities. The narratives of these initial New World encounters produce a new master narrative of New World experience. Alice Jardine argues that these new master narratives are a “reconceptualization” of areas of “nonknowledge,” which “is almost always a ‘space’ of some kind (over which the narrative has lost

control), and this space has been coded as *feminine, as woman*.<sup>93</sup> The “interior” of the early narratives of the New World, what I am calling the innermost layer of the New World archive, is the master narrative of a wanton, but undefiled woman whose desire for production leads to her subjugation. In the chapters that follow I will examine how this underlying myth of an erotic interior interacts with particular actions on the ground in the Orinoco region over time. The object of this analysis will be to argue along with Jardine, that the vocabulary of space has to be reconceptualized.

This collapsing of both human and natural structures back into their so-called sources involves an exceedingly complex destructuring, disintegration, of the founding structures in the West through the exploration of the spaces that have defined them... The dichotomies defining boundaries and spaces ... are the dichotomies of metaphysics: the possibility of Man giving form to content, a certain conception of conception, how to create something different from the same, how to build a structure...

Here we are at the heart of gynesis. To give a new language to these other spaces is a project filled with both promise and fear, however, for these spaces have hitherto remained unknown, terrifying, monstrous: they are mad, unconscious, improper, unclean, non-sensical, oriental, profane. If philosophy is truly to question those spaces, it must move away from all that has defined them, held them in place: Man, the subject, History, Meaning. It must offer itself over to them, embrace them.<sup>94</sup>

Jardine’s proposal to counter this history: “A new conception of history means a new conception of time—a retreat from time and emphasis on space,” that is, the emphasis should shift from narrative time to the interrelationship of the formation of spaces in time.<sup>95</sup>

With urbanization under an early capitalist economic system, the mythical El Doradan landscape begins to be incorporated into emerging world markets, but always with the Certeau’s “remainder,” which is the idea that farther “out there” there remains a place of unfulfilled desire. “History,” writes Henri Lefebvre, “emerges on a world level and therefore it pro-

duces a space at this level: the formation of a world market, an international generalization of the state and its problems, new relations between society and space. World space is the field in which our epoch is created."<sup>96</sup> One of the new relations becomes a part of the undermost layer of the New World archive, which establishes that unfulfilled desire is an integral component of expanding into the new markets of "subaltern space," even if that desire must always be deferred to ever more interior regions.

### Notes

1. Abel Posse, *The Dogs of Paradise*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: Atheneum, 1989), 204.

2. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 97.

3. See, for example, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), Chapter 2 *passim*. The idea that "colonization" and "penetration into the interior" are both spatial and psychological components of capitalist expansion will be taken up to some degree at the end of this chapter. The further dialectical turn of this relationship is when capitalism runs out of spatial territory in which to expand, it turns to colonization of the lifeworld and begins to expand more and more into the private sphere/lifeworld.

4. "Columbus' letter to the Sovereigns reporting on the third voyage: the terrestrial paradise." In John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith. *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century, Vol II* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 102-104.

5. "Columbus' letter . . ." 102-104.

6. Sharon W. Tiffany and Kathleen J. Adams, *The Wild Woman: An Inquiry into the Anthropology of an Idea* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1985), 62.

7. John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapter 5, Part 49, 1690, <http://www.orst.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke2/locke2nd-a.html> (27 Mar. 2002).

8. Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5.

9. Germán Arciniegas, *America in Europe: A History of the New World in Reverse*, trans. Gabriela Arciniegas and R. Victoria Arana (New York: HBJ, 1986), 2-3.

10. Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," in *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 137.

11. Tiffany and Adams, *The Wild Woman*, 98.

12. "Las Casas' abstract . . .", Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 99.
13. "Las Casas' abstract . . .", Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 99-100.
14. David Beers Quinn. "New Geographical Horizons: Literature," in *First Images of America: the impact of the New World on the Old*, ed. Fredi Chiappelli, Michael J. B. Allen, and Robert Benson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 638.
15. "July 18, 1500. Amérigo Vespucci's letter from Seville [to Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici]," in Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 161.
16. Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 170.
17. Margarita Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 154.
18. Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, 175-6.
19. Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, 175-6.
20. Wilcomb Washburn, "The Clash of Morality in the American Forest," in Chiappelli, *First Images*, 336.
21. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 220.
22. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Women, Culture, & Society*, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974). Ortner responds to the debate provoked by this article in "Gender Hegemonies," *Cultural Critique* 14 (Winter 1989-90): 35-80.
23. Ortner, "Is Female to Male," 70. But see the later discussion cited in the previous note.
24. Ortner, "Is Female to Male," 72.
25. Ortner, "Is Female to Male," 85.
26. See "Gender Hegemonies," *Cultural Critique* 14 (Winter 1989-90): 35-80, as well as *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* ed. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
27. Ortner, "Is Female to Male," 85.
28. Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, 179.
29. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 227.
30. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 227.
31. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 5.
32. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 480.
33. Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, 7.
34. Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, 7.
35. Rudolf Hirsch, "Printed reports on the Early Discoveries and Their Reception." In Chiappelli, *First Images*, 538-9.
36. Hirsch, "Printed reports," 539.
37. Morison notes that "Columbus's own account of his Third Voyage was not printed except for a dull and brief digest in the *Libretto di Tutta la Navigazione* of 1504, and the *Paesi Novamente Retrovati* of 1507 . . ." Quinn also remarks that "It was perhaps a blessing for Columbus' reputation even a little after his own time that his letter to the

Catholic kings recounting his third voyage discoveries did not reach print." Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America, the Southern Voyages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 288. David Beers Quinn, "New Geographical Horizons: Literature," in Chiappelli, 638-9.

38. Hirsch, "Printed reports," 538-540.

39. Morison, *European Discovery*, 288. Morison is referring to the *Mundus Novus*.

40. Quoted in Mason, *Deconstructing America*, 171.

41. Mason, *Deconstructing America*, 171.

42. David Beers Quinn, "New Geographical Horizons: Literature," 642.

43. See Antonello Gerbi, "The Pseudo-Vespucci," in *Nature in the New World World from Christopher Columbus to Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1985), 45 ff., and Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 157.

44. About the apocryphal Vespucci publications, Gerbi remarks, "If they are of no value whatsoever as a 'source' for the knowledge of nature in America, they do have a value, indeed considerable value, for the history of the legend of the New World." Gerbi, *Nature*, 46.

45. Quinn, 647.

46. Quinn, 649.

47. Quinn, *passim*.

48. Gerbi, *Nature*, 53n. and Quinn, 647.

49. Gerbi, *Nature*, 52.

50. Gerbi, *Nature*, 59n.

51. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Intellectual Field: A World Apart," in *Other Words*, 146.

52. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods." In *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 115. Also published in abbreviated form in *Poetics* 14 (1985):13-44.

53. Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30.

54. Antonio Rodríguez Villa, *El Emperador Carlos V y su corte, según las cartas de D. Martín de Salinas, embajador del Infante D. Fernando (1522-1539)*, (Madrid, 1903), 529. Quoted in Irving Leonard, *Books of the Brave: Being an Account of Books and of Men in the Spanish Conquest and Settlement of the Sixteenth-Century New World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 56.

55. Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, 40.

56. Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World I*, 58.

57. During the early years of exploration, both rivers were referred to as the 'Marañón' (Gerbi, *Nature*, 66n). The following discussion of Orinocan exploration is taken from Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 489-492.

58. For a discussion of the terms Guiana, Guayana, Guyana, etc. see *Santo Tomé de Guayana: Historia y Desarrollo* (Ciudad Guayana: CVG, 1989), 6.

59. Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 489.

60. Parry and Keith *New Iberian World V*, xvi.



61. Don José de Oviedo y Baños, *The Conquest and Settlement of Venezuela*, trans. Jeannette Johnson Varner. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987 [1723]), 207.
62. Oviedo y Baños, *Conquest*, 207.
63. Oviedo y Baños, *Conquest*, 211.
64. Oviedo y Baños, *Conquest*, 219.
65. V. T. Harlow, *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, (London: Argonaut Press, 1932), lxxi.
66. Harlow, *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, lxxii.
67. "1585. Antonio de Berrio on his exploration of the Orinoco and the search for El Dorado," *Trinidad Historical Society, Publications*. No. 261, (n.d.), in Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 516.
68. Harlow, *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, lxxiii.
69. "1585. Antonio Berrio" Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World II*, 517.
70. "Letter from Berrio to the King . . . (1 January 1593)." *Archivo General de Indias*, in Harlow, *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, 99.
71. "Letter from Berrio to the King," 99-100.
72. Harlow, *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, lxxvii.
73. Raleigh, *Discovery*, 17.
74. Raleigh 15: "I sent Captaine Whiddon the yeare before to get what knowledge he could of Guiana . . ."
75. Meinig, 40.
76. Meinig 1986, 63. He also notes that until Raleigh and the early seventeenth century, "Guiana and Virginia were considered to be comparable realms, each a place of probable wealth in tropical products" (40).
77. Raleigh in his *Discovery* refers to Pedro de Cieza de León, author of *Cronica del Peru* (Seville, 1553; Antwerp, 1554), and Francisco Lopez de Gomara, *Cronica de Indias and Historia de la Conquista de Nueva-España* (Seville 1552-3). Raleigh, *Discovery* 19.
78. Raleigh, *Discovery* 17.
79. Harlow lxxvii-viii.
80. Raleigh, *Discovery* 18-19.
81. González Echevarría 49.
82. The phrase comes from a book published as a promotional history by the builders of the twentieth century Ciudad Guayana, the Corporacion Venezolana de Guayana (CVG), which will a major actor in Chapter 5. Jesus Sanoja Hernandez, *At the Doors of El Dorado*, CVG: 30 years (Caracas: CVG, ca.1990).
83. Harlow, 2-3.
84. Harlow, *ibid.*
85. Harlow, 9.
86. Harlow, *ibid.*
87. Walter Raleigh, *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1848), 75-76.
88. See Simon Shepard, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982); Abby Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983); and Gabrielle Jackson, "Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc," *English Literary Renaissance* 18(1):40-65 (1988).
89. Raleigh, *Discovery*, 26.

90. Raleigh, *Discovery*, 73.

91. Tiffany and Adams, *The Wild Woman*, 100.

92. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 28: "There is no such thing as the social production of reality on the one hand, and a desiring-production that is mere fantasy on the other. The only connections that could be established between these two productions would be secondary ones of introjection and projection, as though all social practices had their precise counterpart in introjected and internal mental practices, or as though mental practices were projected upon social systems, without either of the two sets of practices ever having any real or concrete effect upon the other."

93. Alice Jardine, *Gynesis* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1985), 25.

94. Jardine, *Gynesis*, 72.

95. Jardine, *Gynesis*, 82.

96. Henri Lefebvre, "Space: social product and use value," in *Critical Sociology*, ed. J.W. Freiberg ((New York, Halsted Press, 1979), 288-9.

## Chapter 3

### Literary Implantations: Mercantilism, Behn, and Defoe

The preaching of sermons is speaking to a few of mankind,  
printing books is talking to the whole world. — Daniel Defoe<sup>1</sup>

**D**uring the late sixteenth century, the coastal area between the Orinoco and the Amazon became known as “the wild coast” because it was outside the control of both the Spanish in Nueva Granada and the Portuguese in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> The three English attempts to colonize the area between 1594 and 1621 failed miserably, in partly because of overly enthusiastic reports investors, such as those by Raleigh. The English never established more than a temporary presence there in the early sixteenth century. The “wild coast,” however, was established as a permanent presence in English narrative, as part of the Orinoco *topos*, as shown in this description from *Robinson Crusoe*:

. . . it was the savage coast between the Spanish country and Brasils, which are indeed the worst of savages; for they are cannibals, or men-eaters, and fail not to murder and devour all the humane bodies that fall into their hands.<sup>3</sup>

The early explorer’s descriptions gave rise to an Orinocan *topos* based on the river as a labyrinthine route between the knowable, but ungoverned, coast and the unknown interior. They mapped the “known” as land available for incorporation into a productive economy and the “unknown” as territory outside that economy still available for use as the future direction of economic desire. This “wild coast,” so named because it was beyond even the control of the Spanish Other, more-or-less familiar, was up for grabs.<sup>4</sup>

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the region became the object of a displacement in England. As it became less important as part of England's economic projections, it became more important in the cultural realm. The Orinocoan *topos* began to take shape in England, although the boundaries of that form had little to do with geography. Certeau's "trace of the remainder" – the pleasure of the senses that became the ever-retreating paradise – was pushed further into the realm of signification, with only vague and imprecise geographic referents. The Orinoco existed within a cultural market of signs, which included the earthly paradise and El Dorado. David Watts notes that "[A]s the search for golden cities and easy plunder began to prove increasingly illusory," a new economic realism emerged in England.<sup>5</sup> That economic realism, however, did not translate to a realism in the representation of New World geography.

With the transition from expropriation of plundered booty to the beginnings of the actual integration of New World production into the world economy, the New World as a sensual paradise becomes increasingly literary. The Amazon became a character in a play, or a characteristic of a queen<sup>6</sup>; the signifier "Orinoco" was displaced from a tangled watery network onto the novel's first man of feelings, Aphra Behn's African prince Oroonoko; the mouth of the river, rather than the site of actual struggles between England and Spain, became the site of the internal struggles of Defoe's *Crusoe*. The Orinoco began to be represented as the site of a complex interplay of humans and nature, rather than simply a natural wilderness.

This compaction and confusion of man and nature can be seen in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In Behn the natural world and the cultural world are conflated in very name of the title character; in *Crusoe* the struggle to transform nature into culture becomes the paramount goal. The oscillation of the scientific narratives of von Humboldt and others between scientific categorization and economic analysis is prefigured in the awe at being in paradise while plotting to change barbaric paradise to civilization. The very absence of a consistent scheme of overall categorization along with the construction of elaborate schemes within specific domains created an overlapping and intertwined archival muddle of economics,

natural science, and a mythical sensual paradise. That the “wild coast” between the Guianas and Brazil was outside any political control made it easier for it to be fit into the categories of fiction and the cultural interests of topical play.

### *The Formation of Literary Discourse*

At the end of the sixteenth century, the number of exploratory voyages had become so many and interest in them so great that anthologies and collections began to appear. Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* and de Bry's *Great Voyages*, for example, were the work of specialist classes of cultural producers who began to use the relatively new forms of print circulation to produce documents directed toward a mercantilist audience that desired increased geographic knowledge for economic expansion. An unintended, though hardly insignificant, consequence of their publication was the creation of a canonical set of images, both visual and textual, of the New World.

In her analysis of the conception and dissemination of de Bry's illustrations, Bernadette Bucher's aims “to locate and analyze the genesis of a nonverbal mythology . . . with respect to the New World.”<sup>7</sup> The production of such a “nonverbal mythology,” for a particular region, is part of the cultural production of a regional *topos*. Behn's *Oroonoko* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which each included conceptions of the region based upon the de Bry canon of images, further defined the *topos* of the Orinoco.

The non-verbal components of the mythology of a region interact with the textual ones; these forms are stored in the archive and form the *topos* for a region. The *topos*, though constructed through texts and images, is a place—a fantastic place, but a place nonetheless. The Orinocoan *topos* continues its development as an imaginary geography that existed alongside the real. The *topos*, abstract and imaginary, became the narrative focal point that rationalized the physical expansion of capitalism. As Harvey notes, “The spaces of representation, therefore, have the potential not only to affect representation of space but also to act as

a material productive force with respect to spatial practices.”<sup>8</sup> The publication of the collections of texts and images not only expressed the direct short-term interests of the classes of people who produced them (by making commercial enterprise directed towards particular geographic areas more efficient), but also indirectly served those interests by providing the raw materials for manufacturing a *topos* of a region that was also to their long-term benefit.

### Protestant Europe and the Guyanas

De Bry’s publications begin to show the complex relationship of publishing to both the appropriation of New World space and to the dissemination of images of the New World as a physical space and cultural arena. De Bry’s works highlight the network of relationships among publishers, exploration, and imagery in the late sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries in Northern Europe, particularly London and the centers of publishing—Strasbourg, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam. Although these cities and their economic and cultural relationships formed the nexus of much of the worldwide activity of capital during this period, the particular nexus of capital and energy that led to the construction of the Orinocan *topos* of the time is worth drawing out for what it shows about the connection between economics, culture, and spatial representation. The constellation of capital, culture, and the publishing industry produced a “symbolic system”—the *topos*—of the Orinoco. This *topos* can be seen as being produced by a class of “specialists,” in an autonomous field of production and circulation. Bourdieu describes this apparatus as follows:

‘Symbolic systems’ are fundamentally distinguishable according to whether they are produced and thereby appropriated by the group as a whole or, on the contrary, produced by a body of *specialists* and, more precisely, by a relatively autonomous field of production and circulation.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of the production of the Orinocan archive and *topos*, a symbolic system was produced through the accumulated work of novelists, geographer/explorers, and publishers. It is perhaps too easy to argue that Defoe and Behn, in their dual roles as art-

ists and mercantilists, were merely serving the interests of their professions. Bourdieu continues by arguing that

Ideologies owe their structure and their most specific functions to the social conditions of their production and circulation, that is, first, to the functions they perform for specialists competing for a monopoly over the competence under consideration (religious, artistic, etc.); and second, and as a by-product of this, to the functions they perform for non-specialists. We must remember that ideologies are always *doubly determined*, that they owe their most specific characteristics not only to the interests of the classes or class fractions they express (the function of sociodicy), but also to the specific interests of those who produce them and to the specific logic of the field of production (commonly transfigured into the form of an ideology of 'creation' and of the 'creative artist'). This provides us with a means of avoiding the brutal reduction of ideological products to the interests of the classes which they serve (this 'short-circuit' effect is common in Marxist criticism) without succumbing to the idealist illusion which consists in treating ideological productions as self-sufficient, self-created totalities amenable to a pure and purely internal analysis (semiology).<sup>10</sup>

De Bry had met Hakluyt in London in 1586, and with Hakluyt's encouragement, Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, written in London "to promote English colonization and commerce in America," became one of the main textual sources for de Bry.<sup>11</sup> De Bry's works became, in large part, illustrated versions of the *Navigations*. Bucher notes several layers of abstraction in the production of de Bry's volumes. First, there is the change from the original media of pictures from the New World to the new technology of copperplate engraving. Second, for pictures without direct visual sources, de Bry created images from textual descriptions. Third, those textual narratives themselves were often abridged, truncated, edited, or taken from translations which themselves had already been abridged, truncated, and edited.

De Bry was also not at all concerned that the people he represented in his engravings actually matched the places supposedly represented. Regarding de Bry's organization of the portion of the *Voyages* representing the Caribbean and Venezuela, Bucher notes that de Bry used a collage technique:

Old materials going back fifty years and more are thus separated from their original settings and turn up again in new arrangements. We are, then, confronted with a sort of Tower of Babel of the Amerindian peoples. Physical types, articles of ornamentation, and hairstyles, all borrowed from different cultures appear quite incongruously in a single plate.<sup>12</sup>

The effect of many of these abstractions and rearrangements was to present a very Protestant view of the New World (de Bry was driven to exile from Liège to Strasbourg for his support of the Reformation, before finally settling in Frankfurt). Through pictures and accompanying narrative, de Bry stressed the barbarity of the Spanish in the New World and the relatively benign activities of Protestant activities.

As Harvey observes, “. . . the voyages of discovery produced an astounding flow of knowledge about a wider world that had somehow to be absorbed and represented. They indicated a globe that was finite and potentially knowable. Geographical knowledge became a valued commodity in a society that was becoming more and more profit-conscious.”<sup>13</sup> The popularity of de Bry’s volumes certainly shows the value of the geographic image as commodity. They also contributed to the Orinocoan archive, and as such became source material for the continuing evolution of the Orinocoan *topos*.

### Raleigh’s Contribution to Literary Images of the Orinoco

He studied most in his sea voyages, when he carried always a trunk of bookes along with him, and nothing to divert him.<sup>14</sup>

Raleigh was a collector of de Bry’s *Voyages* and owned several volumes of it, significantly the volumes on Florida, Brazil, and Virginia.<sup>15</sup> Raleigh was also a “contributor” to the *Voyages*—his *Voyage to Guyana* is the source of an interesting mythologizing of El Dorado by de Bry. Bucher writes:

Sometimes [in de Bry] the description of these [New World] peoples is supplemented by the description of mythical peoples, such as the famous Inca of Manoa mentioned by Raleigh in his *Voyage to Guyana*, included in volume 8. The de



Brys show the Inca emperor being anointed with a golden oil, on feast days, while drinking from a huge tankard . . . Raleigh takes this anecdote from old sources, notably from Lopez de Gomara, the author of the *Historia general de las Indias*; he paraphrases it in his description of the legendary emperor of Guyana, linked to the Eldorado legend. Other mythical figures, inherited from Pliny and the medieval tradition, appear on a map of Guyana, supposedly drawn by one of the members of the crew. In it we see an Amazon and some representatives of a "race of men whose shoulders rise up along the sides of the head so high that the face seems to be placed in the chest." What was only a comparison in Raleigh's text is brought to life in the de Bry map in the form of headless men with faces drawn on their chests—a type of medieval monster called "Blemmye." The caption identifies them as inhabitants of "Iwapanoma."<sup>16</sup>

Raleigh's narrative construction of El Dorado had more effect in England than it did at the site of its inspiration. Raleigh's *Discovery* established him as the popular architect of El Dorado and as the most influential promoter of its Amazonian inhabitants. Although Raleigh's narrative cannot be given full credit for the Elizabethan upsurge of interest in Amazons nor the Queen's identification with the warrior woman, it was certainly a factor. Even if the reading public, in Raleigh's own words, took his accounts of the wonders of Guiana "for a vain and unprofitable report," his fantasy of the New World had many readers in the Old. Their skepticism about the possibilities of profit in Guiana did little to stop the fantasy's influence on fashion and drama.<sup>17</sup> In the political-social realm, Raleigh's *Discovery* was influential in the construction of the "Black Legend" in England — the appropriation of the criticism by Las Casas, for example, by Northern European observers to justify expansion into Spanish domains— and helped set the stage for further British excursions to the area.<sup>18</sup> For the English, Raleigh's efforts legitimized colonization in Spanish territory on the ground, and became the prototype for the representation of colonization in literature.

### *The Construction of the Literary Orinoco in Behn and Defoe*

. . . I had no room for desire, except it was of things which I  
had not . . . — Crusoe<sup>19</sup>

The narrative that Raleigh produced did not have much effect on the actual ground of the Orinoco region, but it was the source of a northern European construction of discourse about the Latin American other. The direct connection between the characters in the narratives of Behn and Defoe, the fact that both used Raleigh's narrative as a model of colonization, together with the fact that all three narratives were immensely popular in England, not only help to trace the evolution of popular imagery of the Orinoco throughout eighteenth-century England, they also continue the two interwoven narrative strands founded in Chapter One—that of the Orinoco as an economic settlement, and that of the Orinoco as natural paradise. Raleigh's narrative was formed through his personal experiences, but influenced by his vast knowledge of the early literature of exploration. His *Discovery* was the source of both the name and the "noble savage" character of Behn's hero Oroonoko. Oroonoko, in turn, was the model for Defoe's Friday.<sup>20</sup>

Although Behn perhaps had more practical experience with the imperial reality of the region,<sup>21</sup> Defoe had a more obviously expansionist agenda. While writing *Robinson Crusoe*, he was also writing commercial proposals to the crown in which he revived Raleigh's colonization plans for Guiana.<sup>22</sup> Raleigh's influence on Behn was predominantly on her perception of the governmental and personal intrigues that accompanied colonization; for Defoe Raleigh's narrative served as the basis for his perception of the relationship between appropriation of land and the production of wealth. What is interesting about the two novels being considered here—Behn's *Oroonoko* and Defoe's *Crusoe*—is that both use the ostensibly empirical and objective descriptions of a region to create a *topos* displaced from any real geographic region,

and in so doing conflate place and character, in the case of Behn, and integrate the agenda of capital into the novel, in the case of Defoe. In both, the slave trade and the relation of the New World to Africa is the subtext, and in the conflation of African men and New World space, dependency and spatial control become superficially disconnected from the discourse of slavery while being incorporated, entangled, and merged in the Orinocan archive.

### **Naturalizing Displacement: Behn's *Oroonoko* and the Naturalist's Vision**

. . . Serranam may be considered as a place which by its scituation and other advantages may bee more searuceable to your Highnesse by being preserved and forborne than by beinge drayned & displanted at this tyme, it beinge a groweing plantacion and soe happily scituated, that from thence a strength may bee easily conveyed into the bowells of the Spaniard at Peru.<sup>23</sup>

If contemporary scholarship on Aphra Behn agrees on one thing, it would be that her authority as a representative voice in English literature has been consistently undermined from her lifetime until the current renaissance of interest in her work. Feminist scholars present this historical undermining as the product of the reaction of male-dominated culture to the voice of an independent woman. I would like to incorporate within this view an analysis of the production of colonial space through a reading of Behn's nature imagery.

Behn begins her tale as an "eye-witness" history of a "royal slave" – the character Oroonoko, an African prince who is captured as a slave and taken to the New World – but finds it necessary to insert a long description of the natural history of Surinam before she begins the tale proper. In her natural history she includes the natives, as distinct from the slaves, as well as parrots and deer. When there was still some question as to whether Behn had actually been to Surinam or not, her descriptions of Surinam were thought by some to be taken entirely from George Warren's 1667 *An Impartial Description of Surinam*. Behn's contextualizing description of the New World is in the style of an in-

ventory of characteristics very similar to that of Warren. Near the beginning of the novel, for example, she writes:

But before I give you the Story of this *Gallant Slave*, 'tis fit I tell you the manner of bringing them to these *Colonies*; those that they make use of here, not being *Natives* of the place: for those we live with in perfect Amity, without daring to command 'em; but, on the contrary, caress 'em with all the brotherly and friendly Affection in the world; trading with them for their Fish, Venison. Buffalo's Skins, and little Rarities; as *Marmosets*, a sort of Monkey, as big as a Rat or Weasel, but of a marvelous and delicate shape, having Face and Hands like a Human Creature; and *Cousheries*, a littel Beast in the form and fashion of a Lion, as big as a Kitten, but so exactly made in all parts like that Noble Beast, that it is it in *Miniature*. Then for littel *Paraketoos*, great *Parrots*, *Muckaws*, and a thousand other Birds and Beasts of wonderful and surprizing Forms, Shapes, and Colours. For Skins of prodigious Snakes, of which there are some threescore Yards in lentgh; as in the Skin of one that may be seen at his Majesty's *Antiquary's*; where are also some rare Flies, of amazing Forms and Colours, presetted to 'em by myself; some as big as my Fist. some less; and all of various Excellencies, such as Art cannot imitate.<sup>24</sup>

This description continues at length; it is also significant that she includes descriptions of native New World inhabitants within her biological inventory. Behn's sequence of presentations is similar in its development of a natural chain of being from animals to humans. This is no more than convention of the time; however, it is certainly no coincidence that the Great Chain of Being and the accountant's inventory both occur in the period noted for the development of mercantile strategies and methods.

Warren's account was published as ten short chapters in the following sequence: "Of the River", "Of the Climate and Country in General," "Of the Provisions," "Of the birds and other animal life", "Of the Fruits," "Of the Commodities," "Of the Plantations," "Of the Negroes or Slaves," "Of things there Venomous and hurtful," and finally, "Of the Indians." He and Behn differ in their respective treatment of the Indians, Behn constructing them as relics of the Golden Age, while Warren presents the men as "cowardly" and the women "lascivious."<sup>25</sup> Warren nonetheless gives the Indians the ultimate position in his chain, while Behn

reserves that (by their absence and their role in her subsequent narrative) to the slaves. What is significant in Behn's presentation is her use of the naturalist's perspective as the most appropriate way to introduce her "eye-witness" account. Whether Behn's descriptions are her own, her own amplified by other descriptions, or complete fabrications, her strategy to construct a believable account was to use a naturalists' rhetorical style as the initial construction of narrative truth.

The use of naturalistic rhetoric to construct a sense of geographic realism for the reader, as important a strategy in constructing the Orinocan *topos* as that may be, is augmented by the larger displacement of the entire region onto the novel's title character, the prince Oroonoko. Behn's naturalistic textual strategy on the surface works to create a distinction between the characteristics of the New World inhabitants and her presentation of the more sophisticated life of African royalty. However, by naming her prince after the region she is able to integrate African and New World cultures. Even as she argues for his higher degree of civilization, by separating Oroonoko from his kingdom, making him a slave, and christening him with the resonant naturalistic name of Oroonoko, Behn's novel subverts her own distinctions, and helps to create the idea of a unitary underdeveloped other. Behn is not alone in this, of course, as it is a common characteristic of her genre.

Behn's title *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave*, is interesting in that its internal contradictions and ironies continue throughout the novel. Oroonoko the prince, in the novel's initial African setting, is given a resonant New World name. He is rechristened "Caesar" by his new master upon his arrival to the Orinoco region, because "the Christians never buy any slaves but that they give 'em some name of their own, their native ones being likely very barbarous, and hard to pronounce." Behn's narrator, therefore, "for the future . . . must call *Oroonoko Caesar*; since by that Name only he was known in our Western World, and by that Name he was received on shore at *Parham-House*, where he was destin'd a slave."<sup>26</sup> Oroonoko, as royalty in Africa, is named for a region being colonized with slave labor; Oroonoko, re-christened Caesar as a slave in the New World, is given the name of Roman royalty.

The interplay of the places, the place-name and the given names, and the status varying with place, all contribute to the construction of a fuzzy identity between Africa, the New World, and the status of “natives” in both places. In the double displacement of Orinoco the place to Oroonoko the African royal name, and the subsequent Oroonoko the royal African name to Caesar the New World slave name, Behn’s construction of the nobility of the African slave in the New World can be seen as an extension of the Las Casas tradition of constructing the nobility of the New World inhabitants. Las Casas was arguing to restrict the slave trade to Africa, because of the nobility of New World inhabitants.

Behn’s “realism” allows both Africans and New World inhabitants to be seen as noble, but still slaves. In the process, Behn’s novel shows the process of Africa and Orinoco becoming the objects of some spatial conflation, some interlocking substitution of character and description, that continues to be worked out in Defoe and subsequent chroniclers.

### *Defoe's Reintegration of the Orinoco and Capitalism*

Defoe’s *Crusoe* might be seen as the fictional public relations work for his revival, published the same year as the novel, of Raleigh’s proposal to colonize the Orinoco region. In Defoe’s words, this proposal is “an Account how that rich Country might now be with Ease, Possess’d, Planted, and Secure’d to the British nation, and what Immense Wealth and Encrease of Commerce might be rais’d from thence.”<sup>27</sup>

Timothy Reiss argues that *Robinson Crusoe* is

only an end result of a complex development, and is perfectly representative of what can be seen not only in other literary texts but also in other types of discourse: science, philosophy, political and economic theory, law and juridical practice, criticism, and so on. The “possessive individual” (all users of analytico-referential discourse with a greater or lesser degree

of success) was now able to put his stamp on the “other,” conceived as exterior to the space of discourse.<sup>28</sup>

I would extend Reiss’ argument to say that not only is the other constructed through this discourse, but that exterior space within which this construction supposedly resides is constructed as well. The confluence of capital and culture begin to construct a discursive world which includes and defines the other as exterior to the space of discourse; this would include the human other as exterior to humanistic discourse and the space of the other as exterior to economic discourse. The “space of discourse” that Reiss refers to is the network of relations of capital and culture that have interests in forming the image of the other. Because the other is perceived as outside the space of discourse, “putting one’s stamp” on the other meant bringing it in to discourse in terms of what already existed—the interests of those already involved.

Capital’s expansion into the space of the other required the integration of the discourse about that other into the interests of capital, and the interests of capital in the seventeenth century were in northern Europe. This was, of course, not a given; it was a battle. The battle was not between the others’ struggle to represent themselves and those who would speak for them, but was between competing interests that already had power within the existing space of discourse. Any interest outside that discursive space could only be seen or heard through the screen of already empowered self-interests, such as the struggles between Raleigh and Berrío outlined in the previous chapter. How was the image of the other, and other spaces, constructed and disseminated? Through looking at the novels of Behn and Defoe, it becomes apparent that the discourse around an existing “other” space, African, became a source for constructing a discourse around the New World.

***Oroonoko and Friday, or, the Noble Savage Loses His Voice, Becomes a Slave, and Becomes a Metaphor for New World Space***

[I]n a little time I began to speak to him, and to teach him to speak to me . . . - *Robinson Crusoe*

The similarities between Behn's and Defoe's Others consist of making them physically distinct from and superior to their respective African and American peers by assimilating them to a European model. Oroonoko, except for the color of his skin, is the classical ideal—"His Nose was rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat."<sup>29</sup> Friday, also, is "manly," "well-shaped," "endowed with a "sparkling sharpness," and has the "softness of an European in his countenance."<sup>30</sup> Friday must also be taught to speak by Crusoe, an effort that is part of the Orinocan archive since Columbus's statement on the day of discovery that "If it please Our Lord, at the moment of our departure I shall take from this place six of them to your Highnesses, so that they may learn to speak."<sup>31</sup>

What unites Oroonoko and Friday is their status as slaves, and their transformation within their respective narratives from being free men to becoming enslaved. In Behn, Oroonoko's status changes as he is physically removed from Africa to Surinam; for Friday, it is the narrator Crusoe who moves from Africa to the New World, bringing with him his idea of the characteristics of the slave and applying them to the men he encounters.

As Timothy Reiss notes, Crusoe's time on his island "is enclosed within the "story" of his Brazilian plantation: its purchase and ever increasing value (not to mention sale)."<sup>32</sup> Reiss notes regarding the novel *Crusoe* that from its outset, "What is related in the first few pages of the novel is a clash of will and refusal, of desire and counter-desire, of command and disobedience."<sup>33</sup> After this initial description of Crusoe's relationship with his father, the only significant relationships Crusoe has during the course of the novel are with men he has enslaved—first Xury in the novel's early African scenes. Upon arriving in the New World, "the first thing I did [upon making some money in the Brasils], I bought me a negro slave."<sup>34</sup> After years of isolation on his island, he enslaves the first man he meets.

What is happening in the narratives of both Behn and Defoe is a substitution and conflation of Africa, the New World, and their respective inhabitants. This is the novelistic construction of North-South divide that becomes a significant part of the archive—all things "tropical" share characteristics from the viewpoint of the North. The construction of the possibility of domina-



tion of both the land and its inhabitants is significant, because, as Lennard Davis observes, colonization depends upon

a series of explanations, representations, and rationalizations [that] intervene to justify political action. Even the inhabitants of the targeted colony must, for a successful colonization, accept the domination of the language and symbols of this takeover. To win hearts and minds, one must occupy hearts and minds – in the dominant as well as the occupied countries.<sup>35</sup>

Oroonoko's and Friday's acceptance of their renaming and their status in the novels helps to construct the image of the status of the inhabitants of the places they represent in the mind of the reader. The strategy at work in Defoe is to further use the Black Legend image of the Spanish as inhuman barbarians in their treatment of New World inhabitants, but at the same time to project them into the "southern" *topos* with Africa and use a Protestant notion of improvement to justify England's subjugation of them. Crusoe's diatribe against the Spanish goes like this:

That this [aggression against cannibalism] would justify the conduct of the Spaniards in all their barbarities practised in America, where they destroyed millions of these people, who, however they were idolaters and barbarians, and had bloody and barbarous rites in their customs, such as sacrificing human bodies to their idols, were yet, as to the Spaniards, very innocent people; and that the rooting them out of the country is spoken of with the utmost abhorrence and detestation by even the Spaniards themselves at this time, and by all other Christian nations of Europe, as a meer butchery, a bloody and unnatural piece of cruelty, unjustifiable either to God or man; and such, as for which the very name of a Spaniard is reckoned to be frightful and terrible to all people of humanity, or of Christian compassion; as if the kingdom of Spain were particularly eminent for the product of a race of men who were without the principles of tenderness, or the common bowels of pity to the miserable, which is reckoned to be a mark of generous temper in the mind.<sup>36</sup>

Defoe is no less susceptible than Crusoe to using the contents of the Archive to further his own interests. His concern with the "barbarity" of the Spanish seems to be that their main mistake was in destroying potential consumer markets rather than capitalizing upon them. In Defoe's 1719 revival of Raleigh's

proposal to claim Guiana for England, his interest is one of expanding the market for manufactured goods:

It seems chiefly worthy a Trading Company [Defoe's proposal is to the South Sea Company] to attempt this Part of the World, inhabited by Millions of People, because Numbers of People are the Source of Trade, as they occasion the Consumption of Manufactures; and there can be no doubt, but that in a few Years the Consumption of our own Manufactures, and even of all sorts of European Goods, to cloath such innumerable Populous Nations, who have such a Return of Gold to pay for it, would be infinitely greater than all our present Export to Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Turkey put together.<sup>37</sup>

But the inhabitants of the New World, in Defoe's view, possess gold, and therefore are not only not poor, but "rich to excess":

Were they poor, as was the case of the Natives of North America, whose Cloathing is little better than Blankets, Duffels, and Cottons; or were they Few and Strangers to one another, living remote in a Brutal Solitude, as the Negroes of Africk, it might be suggested, that a few Trifles, such as the Coast carries off, would be the best of our Commerce.

But as they are rich to Excess, as they are populous even to Multitudes, and above all, as they are Sensible, Sociable People, addicted to Pomp and Magnificance in Building, in the Attendance and Court of their Kings: And as they are a Sociable People, fitted in any way to be improved and instructed, and willing to receive a People who would use them kindly; I say, as these things are in the Case, it seems a loud Call to Great Britain to make such an Attempt, and as it cannot be done now but within that Authority and by the Permission of his Majesty's Charter to the South Seas Company, this Affair is chiefly address'd to them to consider of, with this Addition, that if they decline the same, they will be willing another Set of Men, who will be found ready to form a Subscription of a Million Sterling for such an Undertaking shall be empowered to do it.<sup>38</sup>

Defoe seems remarkably prescient in his orientation towards creating new consumer markets.

Defoe then continues by quoting much of Raleigh's own account. Defoe's passage is remarkable for its simultaneous use of

archival materials, much of which contradicts his own knowledge as expressed elsewhere, with his prescient knowledge of strategies of consumer capitalism. It is interesting to note that in retrospect, the public relations battle of Northern Europe against Spain and Portugal had long been won in the north. Behn herself found no reason to even mention Spain in *Oroonoko*, other than that one of the English officials was so cosmopolitan that he spoke both French and Spanish.<sup>39</sup>

Eisenstein notes that "the center of gravity of the Republic of Letters shifted from sixteenth-century Venice to late seventeenth-century Amsterdam" and that this geographic "movement of ideas" had been preceded by a corresponding movement of the growing printing industries.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Behn's closer ties to centers of power in Amsterdam enabled her to dismiss Spain as a world power thirty years before Defoe.

In some respects, Behn and Defoe, although near contemporaries, represent two very different strategies in their use of archival materials. Eisenstein notes that the rise of printing and the resulting wide dissemination of texts had the effect that "The notion of a closed sphere or single corpus, passed down from generation to generation, was replaced by the new idea of an open-ended investigatory process pressing against ever-advancing frontiers."<sup>41</sup> Defoe is still operating under the notion that the archive is a single body that can be raided for support, and that all sources within it are contemporaneous and equal. He can resurrect Raleigh's visions of Manoa gold a century later and place them side by side his ideas of global consumer markets; he is able to blame Spain for the destruction of the native population and at the same time discuss the "multitudes" that are potential markets there. Geopolitics is cumulative for Defoe, not an evolving process.

For Behn, on the other hand, although there are some aspects of the archive that are unchanging, for example the natural world and the "natural" hierarchy of morality, her geopolitical world is one of current intrigues and configurations of power. She has little interest in history other than natural history, and her politics are of the moment rather than an accumulated mass of archival entries.

The archive itself, as a conceptual aggregate, is neither open nor closed. In Defoe's and Behn's time, as in Raleigh's, the possible contents of a New World compendium were already massive. Through the world of the Spanish New World chroniclers, there was already a potential anthropology of the New World available (even if second or third hand). The use of the archive was selective, and its contents were put to the service of the mercantile ideology of the period.

*"Over here" versus "Over there": The Place of Experience and the Place of Writing*

"The sequence attachment, recognition, naming constitutes the process of carrying back, the route by which the discoverer 'enters into' what he has discovered," writes Anthony Pagden.<sup>42</sup> In the construction of the narratives of Defoe and Behn, the line between what happens "over here" versus what happens "over there," is the "line used to distinguish between ethnological subject and object."<sup>43</sup> The place of new experience, the New World, is separate from the place of writing. As Reiss observes about Crusoe's narrative, "The main point, however, is that Crusoe is writing his story after it is over. . ."<sup>44</sup> Crusoe, the character, like Raleigh and Behn as authors, like most chroniclers of the New World, experience one place but write of it in another. As noted in the previous chapter, for Certeau,

the profit "brought back" through writing appears to delimit a "remainder" which, although it is unwritten, will also define the primitive. The trace of this remainder is pleasure . . . [They] are ephemeral and irrecoupable, unexploitable moments that will neither be regained nor redeemed. Something of [the traveler] himself does not return from over there.<sup>45</sup>

For Certeau, there is no pleasure in the writing, which is a profit-driven activity, the purpose of which is to

found a language upon its operative capacity for bringing this foreign exteriority back to "sameness." The "remainder" or "leftover" is more likely a fallout, an aftereffect of this operation, a waste that it produces through succeeding in doing what it does, but which comes as a by-product. This waste product of constructive thinking—its fallout and its repressed—will finally become the other.<sup>46</sup>

De Certeau's conception allows the construction of the other (it seems to be the image of the other that he is actually writing about) to be seen not as the intentional, propagandistic product of a malignant, possessive will, but instead as a by-product of the inability of capturing subjective experience into a narrative economy that values empirical objectivism. For Certeau, the primitive "is the return of what the economy of production had to repress in order to be founded as such."<sup>47</sup>

The geographical sources produced by explorers were also used in fictional narratives, which themselves became "sources" of popular imagery of geographic space. Both the geographies and the novels become a part of the archive. González Echevarría argues that the archive is characterized by:

- (1) the presence not only of history but of previous mediating elements through which it was narrated, be it the legal documents of colonial times or the scientific ones of the nineteenth century; (2) the existence of an inner historian who reads the texts, interprets and writes them; and finally (3) the presence of an unfinished manuscript that the inner historian is trying to complete.<sup>48</sup>

The work of Raleigh and Warren went into the construction of the Orinoco archive, where it was used by Behn in her natural history approach to the presentation of the New World, and by Defoe in his more obvious resubmission of Raleigh's proposals for colonization. Defoe sees himself as "an inner historian" trying to bring Raleigh's project to completion. His work is one moment in the continual augmentation, re-working and re-analysis of the Orinoco archive that had its beginnings in the foundational documents discussed in the previous chapter. However, in both his non-fictional and fictional work dealing with the Orinoco region, Defoe is able to insert his project of defining the terms for the possession of land through improvement. As Michael McKeon observes, this is not necessarily a reduction of Defoe's intent

to something like an ideal type of Protestant narrative religiosity. . . . As the Weber thesis suggests, in the historically transitional territory of early modern Protestantism, spiritual and secular motives are not only "compatible"; they are insepara-

ble, if ultimately contradictory, parts of a complex intellectual and behavioral system.<sup>49</sup>

What is significant to the archive from Defoe's work is his simultaneous work in the genres of fiction and non-fictional to elaborate, as Reiss observes, "*the place of the individual . . . in an already familiar order.*"<sup>50</sup> Defoe uses his economic arguments to the crown to set up the spatial political economy that provides the setting for the development of Weberian character. Defoe's geographical perspective of spatial expansion and development is necessary as the spatial corollary for his development of character.

As much as any geographer, Behn and Defoe constructed maps of the Orinocan *topos*. Their novels, as spaces of representation, as Harvey notes, "acted as a material productive force with respect to spatial practices."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, they were able to derive from the existing Orinocan archive a set of images that allowed them to represent geopolitical forces in quite contradictory ways. Behn is able to reconcile natural history with emerging images of the natural nobility and unity of humankind, while Defoe uses the same archive to differentiate societies based on Weberian principles. Eisenstein notes this paradox, observing that "the same presses which fanned the flames of religious controversy also created a new vested interest in ecumenical concord and toleration; the same wholesale industry which fixed religious, dynastic, and linguistic frontiers more permanently also operated most profitably by tapping cosmopolitan markets."<sup>52</sup> What is common here is the tapping of cosmopolitan markets, at which both Behn and Defoe (or at least their publishers) excelled.

## Notes

1. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 154.

2. David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change Since 1492*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 136.

3. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. (New York: Penguin, 1987 [1719]), 122.

4. The complexity of the relationship between the relatively known (to Northern Europe) Mediterranean "other" continued through the "boundary commission" study of the Venezuelan-Guyana border (1895-1904), a controversy which has yet to be resolved (at least according to Venezuela).

5. Watts, *West Indies*, 136.

6. For analyses of the influence of the Amazon figure in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century English social life see Simon Shepard, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982); Gabrielle Jackson, "Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc," *English Literary Renaissance* 18, no. 1 (1988): 40-65; Susan Shapiro, "Amazons, Hermaphrodites, and Plain Monsters: the 'Masculine' woman in English Satire and Social Criticism from 1580-1640," *Atlantis* 13, no. 1 (1987): 65-76; Ann Marie McEntee, "The 1579 masque of Amazons and Knights: Coalescence of Elizabeth I's Gendered and Political Identities," *Journal of Unconventional History* 1, no. 3 (1990): 53-65.

7. Bernadette Bucher, *Icon and Conquest: A Structural Analysis of the Illustrations of de Bry's Great Voyages*, trans. Basia Miller Gulati (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xiii.

8. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 219.

9. Pierre Bourdieu, "On Symbolic Power," in *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 168-9.

10. Bourdieu, "On Symbolic Power," 168-9.

11. Bucher, *Icon and Conquest*, 7. The discussion of de Bry is taken from Bucher, Chapters 1-2.

12. Bucher, *Icon and Conquest*, 18.

13. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 244.

14. Aubrey, quoted in Walter Oakeshott, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Library," *The Library* 23, no. 4 (1968): 285.

15. Oakeshott, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Library," 296.

16. Bucher, *Icon and Conquest*, 20.

17. The Raleigh observation is from his *History of the World* and is cited in Abby Kleinbaum's *The War Against the Amazons* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 129.

18. See William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1971).

19. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 140.

20. Uwe Böker. "Sir Walter Raleigh, Daniel Defoe, und die Namengebung in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*," *Anglia* 90 (1972): 92-104.

21. Although Behn's early biography is still unclear, she was probably in Surinam as the daughter of a planter (who apparently died on the journey over) from January to March, 1664.

22. Daniel Defoe, *An Historical Account of the Voyages and Adventures of Sir Walter Raleigh, Humbly Proposed to the South Sea Company*. (London: W. Boreham, 1719).

23. "Reasons offered by the Lord Willoughbie why hee ought not to be confined in his settlement vpon Serranam," in *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana 1623-1667*, ed. V.T. Harlow (London: Hakluyt Society, 1925), 182.

24. Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or, the Royal Slave*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973 [1688]), 1-3.
25. George Warren, *An Impartial Description of Surinam* [microfilm]. (London, 1667), 23.
26. Behn, *Oroonoko*, 40.
27. Defoe, "An Historical Account," 1.
28. Timothy J. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 361.
29. Behn, *Oroonoko*, 7-8.
30. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 208-209.
31. Cited in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 31. Todorov notes that "these terms seemed so shocking to Columbus's various French translators that all of them corrected the statement to: 'so that they may learn our language.'"
32. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism*, 295.
33. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism*, 301.
34. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 56.
35. Lennard J. Davis, *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction*. (New York: Methuen, 1977), 63.
36. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 178.
- <sup>37</sup> Defoe, *An Historical Account*, 43.
38. Defoe, *An Historical Account*, 43-45.
39. Behn, *Oroonoko*, 38.
40. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 261.
41. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 257.
42. Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 34.
43. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 225.
44. Reiss, *The Discourse on Modernism*, 300.
45. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 227.
46. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 227.
47. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 228.
48. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 22.
49. Michael McKeon, *The Origin of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1987), 319.
50. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism*, 295. Emphasis in original.
51. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 219.
52. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 99.



## Chapter 4

# In-forming Humboldt: Tropes and Tropics in Scientific Narrative

But for the established bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, travel was to become (at least potentially) every man's source of "philosophical," secular knowledge. Religious travel had been *to the centers of religion, or to the souls to be saved; now, secular travel was from the centers of learning and power to places where man was to find nothing but himself.*<sup>1</sup>

From my earliest youth I had felt an ardent desire to travel into distant regions, which Europeans had seldom visited. This desire is characteristic of a period of our existence, when life appears an unlimited horizon, and when we find an irresistible attraction to the impetuous agitations of the mind, and the image of positive danger.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative strands woven by Behn and Defoe become the basis for a tapestry that is to become ever more self-referential. *Robinson Crusoe* was very influential on another tragic love story, Bernardin de St. Pierre's 1788 *Paul et Virginie*, which was one of the books chosen by Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland to accompany them on their trip through the maze of the upper Orinoco.<sup>3</sup> Although Humboldt's multi-volume popularization of his expedition, the *Relation historique du voyage aux régions équinoxiales du nouveau continent*, contains many references to historical narratives of his precursors in the New World, many of these archival references were consulted after his return to Europe.<sup>4</sup> St. Pierre's novel, on the other hand, accompanied him on his journey. The influences on Humboldt's view of the tropics and the New World came from many sources. Humboldt's historical sources are fairly clear and well-documented; in what follows I would like to trace

some of his fictional sources, and how they may have influenced his perception and presentation of what he experienced.

Humboldt's New World journey established him as the pre-eminent man of science in the early nineteenth century. Although in retrospect others such as Darwin might have better claim to such a title, for his contemporaries Humboldt had reached the pinnacle of achievement. For thirty years, from his return in 1804 until 1834, he published thirty volumes dealing with his expedition; these came to be considered the paradigm for scientific journeys, empirical observation, scientific reporting, and the writing style of the educated traveler. Humboldt modeled his own journey after that of La Condamine to the Amazon. One of the goals of Humboldt's trip was to establish for once and all the relationship between the Orinoco and the Amazon, which had been the subject of much speculation. Upon his attainment of the juncture of the Atabapo and Orinoco River systems,

the main purpose of the expedition began, namely the unraveling of the intricate relations which exist between the basins of the Orinoco and Amazons in this little-explored area, and the solution of all the mystery and error which had enshrouded the identification of the various connecting tributaries, and the land of Eldorado. Humboldt was able to shew that the nomenclature of rivers can present problems no less knotty than that of plants; he was also the first to present a true and coherent map of this part of America, and to correct the mistakes of such romantic writers as Raleigh.<sup>5</sup>

Humboldt has been constructed as the great de-intricator of previous romantic misconceptions of the New World. But Humboldt was also a romantic himself, and his observations, which helped form the foundation of empirical science, present problems as knotty as do those he set out to resolve. The image of Humboldt is of the first objective, empirical traveling scientist; he is the paradigm of enlightened rationality, and his journey and his reporting of it not only established his own reputation as the avatar of that rationality, it also set the tone and method of scientific reporting from "the field." However, at the time of his departure, Humboldt was an ambitious, romantic, twenty-nine-year-old. Moreover, his accounts of his journey were written and published years after his return—his reputation preceded his publication. It is interesting to look at how his published writ-

ings support the emerging view of himself as the man of science, but how they also offer glimpses of a young man who has taken his *Wanderjahr* where no one had taken it before.

### *Historical archive and fictional archive*

With them [Humboldt and Bonpland] in their portmanteaus went two modest little books, that were often their only companions and solace in the wilds of the Orinoco, amidst the cordilleras, at Quito and Popayan, and on the table lands of Mexico. The one by Bernardin de St Pierre is described . . . in the language of the great naturalist, and the other by A. de Jussieu is described in this catalogue under No 5055. Bonpland probably retained the one, while Humboldt treasured the other.<sup>6</sup>

Humboldt, like Raleigh, was a great collector of texts—the catalogue of Humboldt’s library notes that of its 17,000 volumes “the reader will observe that an unusually large proportion . . . cannot be found in other single library public or private, not excepting even the British Museum, the Royal Society of London, or the Imperial Library of Paris.”<sup>7</sup> In his writing, Humboldt is familiar with a tremendous range of early New World chroniclers—he refers to Acosta, Oviedo, Gumida, Azara, Ulloa, La Condamine, Herrera, Gili, and devotes many pages to Raleigh and a refutation of the El Dorado myth. Thus it is all the more interesting which books the young Humboldt would carry to accompany he and his companion Bonpland on their five-year journey.

### **Disfigured By Wild Theories : *Paul and Virginia* and the Formation of the Tropical Topos in Literature**

Of the books that accompanied Humboldt and Bonpland on their journey, Humboldt’s citation of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s 1788 novel *Paul et Virginie* is a glimpse into Humboldt’s formative view of the tropics. Humboldt’s description of the novel’s place in the journey comes not from his narrative of the journey itself, but from the 1847 *Kosmos*:

In recurring to prose writers, we dwell with pleasure on the small work entitled *Paul et Virginie*, to which Bernardin de St. Pierre owes the fairer portion of his literary reputation. The work to which I allude, which can scarcely be rivaled by any other production comprised in the literature of other countries, is the simple picture of an island in the midst of a tropical sea, in which, sometimes favored by the serenity of the sky, and sometimes threatened by the violent conflict of the elements, two charming creatures stand picturesquely forth from the wild sylvan luxuriance surrounding them as with a variegated flowery tapestry.<sup>8</sup>

Although Humboldt is impressed with the St.-Pierre's descriptive technique, he is less impressed by his science. However, even though St.-Pierre's analytical apparatus is deficient, he is redeemed by the descriptions themselves, which are able to penetrate to the truth:

Here, and in the *Chaumière Indienne*, and even in his *Etudes de la Nature*, which are unfortunately disfigured by wild theories and erroneous physical opinions, the aspect of the sea, the grouping of the clouds, the rustling of the air amid the crowded bamboos, the waving of the leafy crown of the slender palms, are all sketched with inimitable truth. Bernardin de St.-Pierre's master-work, *Paul et Virginie*, accompanied me to the climes whence it took its origin. For many years it was the constant companion of myself and my valued friend and fellow-traveler Bonpland, and often (the reader must forgive this appeal to personal feelings), in the calm brilliancy of a southern sky, or when, in the rainy season, when the thunder re-echoed, and the lightning gleamed through the forests that skirt the shores of the Orinoco, we felt ourselves penetrated by the marvelous truth with which tropical nature is described, with all its peculiarity of nature, in this little work<sup>9</sup>.

For Humboldt the Romantic, even if "disfigured by wild theories," evocative textual descriptions can deliver penetrating, "marvelous truth." This passage also demonstrates Humboldt's debt to St.-Pierre for his own descriptive writing style, and his desire that his own descriptions improve on St.-Pierre's by integrating his cool and calm theoretical interpretations with evocative and emotional description.

Defoe's *Crusoe* had been an early influence on both Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Humboldt. For St.-Pierre, "The reading of voyages was with him, even in childhood, almost a passion. At twelve years of age his whole soul was occupied by Robinson Crusoe and his island."<sup>10</sup> Humboldt's "earliest tutor was Campe, the educationist, who among other children's books edited in German, *Robinson Crusoe*, a work which no doubt had its influence in bending the youthful twig."<sup>11</sup> St.-Pierre's later life also included its Crusoean elements. He was en route to a commissioned post in Madagascar in 1768, when "having quarrelled with his commander-in-chief on board ship, he was, before they arrived, put ashore on Mauritius."<sup>12</sup>

Despite his lack of any visible means of support, St.-Pierre made the best of his two-year island exile, making observations and notes that would lead to his two earliest books, *Voyage à l'Île de France*, a geographic description of the island, and *Paul et Virginie*, one of the first novels to give as important a place to setting as to character, and also one of the first to introduce a realistic exoticism into literature. As Robinson notes, the exotic was present in literature "well before Bernardin de Saint-Pierre," but that in these earlier cases the setting is imaginary or contrived from documentary sources. He notes that St.-Pierre "is original in taking the setting for his fiction from his own personal observations" and that "memory may add lustre to his scenes, as compared, say, to his *Voyage à l'Île de France*, but his eyes have beheld what his pen describes."<sup>13</sup>

St.-Pierre's letters from Mauritius are "punctuated with descriptions which are really essays in literary landscape. Many . . . already show the capacities for accurate observation and for powerful graphic evocation which are characteristic of his later, published, works."<sup>14</sup> The novel's early pages contain descriptions that ring very Humboldtian:

At the entrance of the valley . . . the echoes of the mountain incessantly repeat the hollow murmurs of the winds that shake the neighboring forests, and the tumultuous dashing of the waves which break at a distance upon the cliffs; but near the ruined cottages all is calm and still, and the only objects which there meet the eye are rude steep rocks that rise like a surrounding rampart. Large clumps of trees grow at their base, on their rifted sides, and even on their majestic tops, where the

clouds seem to repose. The showers, which their bold points attract, often paint the vivid colors of the rainbow on their green and brown declivities, and swell the sources of the little river which flows at their feet. . . . Within this inclosure reigns the most profound silence. The waters, the air, all the elements, are at peace. Scarcely does the echo repeat the whispers of the palm trees, spreading their broad leaves, the long points of which are gently agitated by the winds. A soft light illumines the bottom of this deep valley, on which the sun shines only at noon. But even at break of day the rays of light are thrown on the surrounding rocks; and their sharp peaks, rising above the shadows of the mountain, appear like tints of gold and purple gleaming upon the azure sky.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the descriptive metaphors in this passage could be from Humboldt. There is an empirico-phenomenological sense of presence in the passage that entails contemplating particular elements in harmony with others. This is in fact Humboldt's narrative ideal that "Descriptions of nature . . . may be defined with sufficient sharpness and scientific accuracy, without on that account being deprived of the vivifying breath of imagination. The poetic element must emanate from the intuitive perception of the connection between the sensuous and the intellectual, and of the universality and reciprocal limitation and unity of all the vital forces of nature."<sup>16</sup>

It would be tempting to conclude that Humboldt respected Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel because of its powers of descriptive observation alone, but Humboldt's relation to the novel seems to be more emotionally complex than that. *Paul et Virginie* is the story of two young lovers, both French children on Mauritius. After growing up together in poverty and falling in love, the manipulative mother of the girl persuades her to return to Europe to marry a wealthy man. She returns to Paul, but is killed when her ship capsizes in a storm while coming into her home harbor.

As Humboldt is describing his oceanic entrance into tropical America, verified by the appearance of the Southern Cross, he writes:

That the Cross is nearly perpendicular when it passes the meridian is known to all who inhabit the Tropics. It has been observed at which hour of the night, in different seasons, the

Cross is erect or inclined. How often have we heard our guides exclaim in the savannahs of Venezuela or in the desert stretching from Lima to Trujillo, "Midnight is past, the Cross begins to bend!" How those words reminded me of that moving scene where Paul and Virginie, seated near the source of the river Lataniers, chat together for the last time, and where the old man, at the sight of the Southern Cross, warns them that it is time to separate!<sup>17</sup>

Humboldt "virtually knew *Paul et Virginie* by heart."<sup>18</sup> Although the novel had direct influence on Humboldt, it is also of exemplary romantic character in itself, and forms both a theoretical and practical nexus for a look at Humboldt's romanticism. The scene to which Humboldt refers is one of the most emotional in the novel—the one where Paul and Virginie are contemplating her leaving for Europe. The scene is one of great loss, as the mother of the girl, upon hearing the lovers' dismay at separating, pretends to relent and let her stay. In this middle climax of the novel, however, Paul arises the next morning and discovers Virginie has gone after all.

This scene is one of the many instances in which Humboldt uses an emotional setting to frame an empirical discussion. It differs from most of those instances, however, in that it uses a fictional source for the production of emotion rather than Humboldt's own evocative descriptive language. In *Cosmos*, Humboldt observes that "With the simplest statements of scientific facts there must ever mingle a certain eloquence. Nature herself is sublimely eloquent. The stars as they sparkle in the firmament fill us with delight and ecstasy, and yet they all move in orbit marked out with mathematical precision."<sup>19</sup> The description of the Southern Cross, the signal of Humboldt's leaving Europe behind and entering tropical America, is punctuated by him with the reference to the unwilling separation of two lovers, one going to Europe and the other remaining behind in the tropics, a mathematically precise figure of loss and expectation.

Humboldt's narrative is constructed once he has finished his journey and is back in Europe. It is impossible to know whether his association with *Paul et Virginie* upon entering the Tropics occurred at the time or in retrospect. That the passage, and the transition from North to South, is associated with a feeling of

loss, however, seems evident. That loss may be one felt when leaving the comforts of Europe for the Tropics, or in retrospect for leaving the excitement of the New World for the prospect of home, or both.

### *Tropical Romance: Romantic description and empirical reporting*

Looking at a thing gradually merges into contemplation, contemplation into thinking, thinking is establishing connections, and thus it is possible to say that every attentive glance which we cast on the world is an act of theorizing.<sup>20</sup>

The scientific traveler interposed the grid of classification between his evolving self and the reality he described, as a way of defending himself from the possibility of collapsing into that other reality and becoming one with it.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps this “possibility of collapsing into the other reality” can help explain Humboldt’s movement back and forth between his Romantic appreciation of nature and his desire to describe it objectively. His predecessor Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, for all his innovation in including his own observations of nature and place in his novel, was still operating in the early novelistic mode of appealing to the objective truth of his story:

I projected a very grand design in this little book. I undertook to describe in it a soil and vegetation different from those in Europe . . . I purposed also to bring out many grand truths, and this amongst others: that our happiness consists in living according to the dictates of Nature and Virtue. Nevertheless, there has been no need for me to go to fiction for my description of such happy families. I can assert that those of whom I write actually existed, and that their history is true in its principal incidents. This has been certified by many residents known to me in the Isle of France.<sup>22</sup>

Bernardin de St.-Pierre’s appeal to a true history in his tale recalls the similar appeals in Behn’s *Oroonoko* and Defoe’s *Crusoe*. St.-Pierre differs from those in that he uses landscape as more



than a setting – he will unite “the beauties of Nature . . . with the moral beauty of a little community.”<sup>23</sup>

Humboldt’s goal is more ambitious; he would find in observing the particularities of place “unity of all the vital forces of nature.”<sup>24</sup> Humboldt sees himself as participating in the development of “delineative prose,” that,

since the latter half of the eighteenth century . . . has developed itself with peculiar vigor. Although the general mass of knowledge has been so excessively enlarged from the universally-extended study of nature, it does not appear that, in those susceptible of a higher degree of poetic inspiration, intellectual contemplation has sunk under the weight of accumulated knowledge, but rather that, as a result of poetic spontaneity, it has gained in comprehensiveness and elevation; . . . [A]mong those who were the first, by an exciting appeal to the imaginative faculties . . . we may mention in France Jean Jacques Rousseau, Buffon, and Bernardin de St. Pierre . . .<sup>25</sup>

Georg Forster, Humboldt’s mentor, is mentioned in this passage as well. Humboldt and Forster’s 1790 journey around Europe and to England, where they visited Joseph Bank’s herbarium, was the subject of Forster’s *Ansichten von Niederrhein von Brabant, Flandern, Holland, England, and Frankreich*. Nicolson notes that “this text was acclaimed in literary circles as a major achievement, particularly by the leading Romantics, Goethe and Schiller. The harmonization of scientific investigation with aesthetic awareness that Forster had accomplished was hailed as evidence of a new maturity among natural philosophers. . . . Scientific inquiry . . . could embrace and celebrate the earth in the act of studying it.”<sup>26</sup> The tension that Erich Heller notes between Goethe and Schiller, “between direct intercourse with ideas” and the refraction of experience, for a moment at least, found a resting point.<sup>27</sup>

Forster’s text, along with the earlier exemplars of Rousseau and St.-Pierre, became the model of Humboldt’s attempts to integrate feeling and observation that are so noticeable in his *Personal Narrative*. Historically, this is Humboldt’s Romantic response to the Kantian problem of how “human reason , which had only sense data to work with and was thus confined to the scrutiny of external characteristics, could ever come to compre-

hend the inner realities of things.”<sup>28</sup> Nicolson observes that Humboldt’s response to this was the argument that “Man’s aesthetics sensitivities could, if suitably trained and applied, transcend the limitations of reason, penetrate beyond surface phenomena and, sensuously and intuitively, grasp the underlying unities of nature.”<sup>29</sup>

The “synthetic holistic schema,” like those of Linnaeus and his followers, were not enough for Humboldt—he wanted to get at the underlying unities, rather than construct an artificial representation of it. At the same time, during his journey with Bonpland, Humboldt was “riding the crest of a wave of technical innovation and improvement,” and

[e]ven on short canoe trips from his main base . . . carried a sextant, an artificial horizon, a dip needle, a device for measuring magnetic variation, a thermometer, a barometer and a hygrometer. It is evident that a commitment to painstaking, accurate empirical investigation was a defining feature of Humboldt’s scientific enterprise. Everything that could be measured was to be measured. . . .<sup>30</sup>

The empirical possibilities and the descriptive ones open to him worked together to produce Humboldt’s manifestation of a writing style common to other Romantic writers and poets, one that seesaws between evocative description and empirical reporting.

### **Humboldt’s tension: imagery versus utility**

Although Humboldt shared Romantic nature writers’ desire to integrate the empirical details with poetic description, he also went further than most in integrating the investigation, classification with the Romantic mode of interpreting, describing, and reporting. One of the most striking characteristics of his writing is the at times jarring juxtaposition of his flights of descriptive imagery with a hard-boiled classificatory and utilitarian empiricism:

He who comprehends nature at a single glance, and knows how to abstract his mind from local phenomena, will easily perceive how organic force and abundance of vital development increase with the increase of warmth from the poles to the equator. This charming luxuriance increases, in a lesser de-

gree, from the north of Europe to the lovely shores of the Mediterranean than from the Iberian Peninsula, Southern Italy, and Greece, toward the tropics. The naked earth is covered with an unequally woven, flowery mantle, thicker where the sun rises high in a sky of blue azure, or is only veiled by light and feathery clouds, and thinner toward the gloomy north, where the returning frost too soon blights the opening bud or destroys the ripening fruit.

In this introductory passage, Humboldt sets the scene according to his regional classification of climates, illustrating his theory with descriptive proofs. In the section immediately following he goes on to demonstrate his mastery of the classification of plants, and is more specific about the vegetative types of the tropics as distinguished from that with which his audience is familiar:

While, in the cold zones, the bark of the trees is covered with dry moss or with lichens, the region of palms and of feathery arborescent ferns shows the trunks of *Anacardia* and of the gigantic species of *Ficus* embellished by *Cymbidia* and the fragrant *Vanilla*. The fresh green of the *Dracontium*, and the deeply-serrated leaves of the *Pothos*, contrast with the variegated blossoms of the *Orchidae*, while climbing *Bauhiniae*, *Passiflorae*, and yellow-blossomed *Banisteriae*, entwining the stems of forest trees, spread far and high in air, and delicate flowers are unfolded from the roots of the *Theobromae*, and from the thick and rough bark of the *Crescentiae* and the *Gustaviae*. In the midst of this abundance of flowers and leaves, and this luxuriantly wild entanglement of climbing plants, it is often difficult for the naturalist to discover to which stem different flowers and leaves belong; nay, one single tree adorned with *Paulliniae*, *Bignoniae*, and *Dendrobia*, presents a mass of vegetable forms which, if disentangled, would cover a considerable space of ground.<sup>31</sup>

This passage, with its simultaneous appeals to abstraction and theory, to systems of classification and nomenclature, to romantic imagery of the tropics, and ending with an implicit formula for disentangling it all so that it be can be more easily measured, is Humboldt at his entangled best. He is master of north and south, of Latin nomenclature and the naked earth's flowery mantle, and, one is led to believe, if any one were able to disentangle it all and lay it out clearly on the ground, it would surely be Humboldt.

Humboldt obviously is one who “knows how to abstract his mind from local phenomena,” and interpose classifying schemas of all sorts into his interpretations of observed phenomena. This is Humboldt’s method, to describe nature with scientific objectivity in a way that expresses the unity of its constituent parts. He characterizes all descriptions of nature, whether textual or graphic, as being most effective when, through “contemplation,” the writer/artist intuitively produces an accurate impression of the boundlessness of nature through a fluent description of its individual components:

The true effect of a picture of nature depends on its composition; every attempt at an artificial appeal from the author must therefore necessarily exert a disturbing influence. He who, familiar with the great works of antiquity, and secure in the possession of the riches of his native language, knows how to represent with the simplicity of individualizing truth that which he has received from his own contemplation, will not fail in producing the impression he seeks to convey; for, in describing the boundlessness of nature, and not the limited circuit of his own mind, he is enabled to leave to others unfettered freedom of feeling.<sup>32</sup>

I assume that by “leave to others” the translator is implying “impart to others.” Alternatively, perhaps through expertise and labor the writer/artist allows others to experience nature without the interposition of technique. Through sheer attention to natural detail, and an intuitive and fluent composition, the composer produces a zen-like expression of the unity of nature.

## Two Weeks with Humboldt and Bonpland

Humboldt’s own compositional technique is to present a descriptive, emotional image in tandem with a set of empirical observations, which reinforce each other. One use of emotional scenes is as a way to introduce to introduce complex, rambling treatises on just about anything:

When this noise [of the falls of Atures and Maypures] is heard in the plain that surrounds the mission, at the distance of more than a league, you seem to be near a coast skirted by reefs and breakers. The noise is three times as loud by night as by day, and gives an inexpressible charm to these solitary scenes. What

can be the cause of this increased intensity of sound in a desert, where nothing seems to interrupt the silence of nature?<sup>33</sup>

Humboldt then continues over many pages with an analysis of the propagation of sound and how it might be affected by changes in temperature, barometric pressure, humidity, sounds of nearby birds, leaves rustling, the droning of insects, and sunlight.

Two weeks in April, 1800, begin with Humboldt and Bonpland first entering the Orinoco at its confluence with the Apure, although rhetorically little different from the rest of the narrative, contain several significant episodes. On entering the Orinoco River for the first time, Humboldt writes:

On leaving the Apure River we found ourselves in a vastly different countryside. An immense plain of water stretched out in front of us like a lake as far as the eye could see. White-topped waves rose several feet high from the clash between the breeze and the current. We no longer heard the cries of the herons, flamingoes and spoonbills flying in long lines from one bank to the other. We vainly looked out for those diving birds whose busy tricks vary according to their species. Nature herself seemed less alive. Only now and then did we see between waves some large crocodiles breaking the water with their tails. The horizon was lined with a ribbon of jungle; but nowhere did the jungle reach the river. Vast beaches burned by the sun were as deserted and arid as sea beaches and, thanks to mirages, resembled stagnant marshes from afar. Rather than limiting the river these sandy beaches blurred it. The banks drew near or receded according to the play of the sun's rays.

In this passage Humboldt draws his mental picture in the emotionally impressionistic way reminiscent of the style of St.-Pierre, painting the regional setting, but these are not mere descriptions without a point to relate:

These scattered features of the countryside, this trait of solitude and grandeur, characterizes the course of the Orinoco, one of the greatest New World rivers. Everywhere water, like land, displays its unique characteristics. The Orinoco bed has no similarities with the Meta, Guaviare, Río Negro or Amazon beds. These differences do not depend solely on the width or speed of the current; they derive solely from a combination of relations easier to grasp on the spot than to define precisely. In

the same way, the shape of the waves, the colour of the water, the kind of sky and clouds, all help a navigator guess whether he is in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean or in the equinoctial part of the Pacific.<sup>34</sup>

The first paragraph of this passage is Humboldt in his emotive-descriptive mode; in the second, the observations made in the previous paragraph are subsumed as empirical proof of the concept of regional character. Humboldt repeats this pattern in the *Personal Narrative* many times. In the first week, after a lengthy investigation and description by Humboldt of the harvesting of turtle eggs for their oil, their pilot is demonstrating his sailing skills:

Just as he was boasting of his skill and the daring of his manoeuvre the wind gusted against the sail with such violence that we nearly sank [Humboldt could not swim]. One of the boat's sides was submerged. Water poured in so suddenly that we were soon knee-deep in water. It washed over a table I was writing on in the stern. I just managed to rescue my diary, and then saw our books, dried plants and papers floating away. Bonpland was sleeping in the middle of the boat. Woken by the flooding water and the shrieking Indian he immediately took control of the situation with that coolness which he always showed in danger. . . . We had lost only one book overboard—the first volume of Schreber's *Genera plantarum*. Such losses are particularly painful when you are able to take so few scientific books.

As night fell we camped on a deserted island in the middle of the river. We dined in the moonlight sitting on scattered empty turtle shells. How pleasing it was to be safe and together! We imagined how it would be if one man had saved himself alone, wandering these deserted banks, meeting more and more tributaries and unable to swim because of the crocodile and *caribe* fish [piranha]. We pictured that sensitive man never knowing what had happened to his companions, more worried about them than himself. If you like surrendering to these sad thoughts it is because escaping from danger makes you feel the need for strong emotions.<sup>35</sup>

Humboldt introduces each of these two paragraphs with an emotional event, then concludes them with an explanation of why the emotion is present. This particular event is significant in

that it is one of Bonpland's rare appearances in the narrative, and it also displays Humboldt in one of his Crusoean fantasies of being alone on a desert isle. These fantasies of being alone are common in Humboldt's narrative—throughout most of it, the reader has no notion that any traveling companions are even present. As will be discussed below, even Bonpland's presence rarely comes through in the text. The communion between man and nature was for Humboldt an experience that should happen in solitude, and this desire is reflected in his economy of characters. Even though the two men travel for weeks without seeing other Europeans, they are in daily contact with their guides and porters. These invisibles rarely interrupt Humboldt's solitary narrative, unless as an introduction to generalize about the character of New World men.

At this stage of their journey, Humboldt and Bonpland's only contact with non-indigenous people is at the very widely scattered missions along the rivers. At one point, "we found a white woman, the sister of a Jesuit from New Granada. After having lived with people who did not understand us, it is hard to describe the joy we felt upon meeting somebody with whom we could converse without an interpreter . . . 'After leaving my mission,' said the goodly monk at Uruana, 'you will be traveling as mutes.'"<sup>36</sup> It is four days after this comment that Humboldt makes his observations about "inexpressible charm" and "solitary scenes." It is also on this day that he makes another reference to Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*.

When, as the moon was going down behind the mountains of Uniana, her reddish disk was hidden behind the pinnated foliage of the palm trees, and again appeared in the aerial zone, that separates the two forests, I thought myself transported for a few moments to the hermitage of the old man, which Mr. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has described as one of the most delicious scenes of the Isle of Bourbon, and I felt how much the mien of the plants and their groupings resembled each other in the two worlds. In describing a small spot of land in an island in the Indian Ocean, the inimitable author of *Paul and Virginia* has sketched the vast picture of the landscape of the tropics. He knew how to paint nature, not because he had studied it scientifically, but because he felt it in all its [sic] harmonious analogies of forms, colours, and interior powers.<sup>37</sup>

Humboldt's reverie allows him to transport himself from one tropical region to another, and in the process re-affirm their resemblance. Although Humboldt presents this reference as one of congruence between his and St.-Pierre's modes of describing nature, the actual passage in the novel to which he refers, although it does contain descriptive landscape, is for the most part about the solitary life of the old man. The hermit is the novel's narrator, and the advisor to Paul after Virginia's departure. The context of the passage is a visit from Paul after his not having heard from Virginia for more than six months. It is notable for being one of the most globally comparative sections in the novel:

I live, as I have already told you, a league and a half from this point, upon the banks of a little river which glides along the Sloping Mountain: there I lead a solitary life, without wife, children, or slaves. After having enjoyed and lost the rare felicity of living with a congenial mind, the state of life which appears the least wretched is doubtless that of solitude. Every man who has much cause of complaint against his fellow creatures seeks to be alone . . . Solitude, by removing men from the miseries which follow in the train of social intercourse, brings them in some degree back to the unsophisticated enjoyment of Nature. In the midst of modern society, broken up by innumerable prejudices, the mind is in a constant turmoil of agitation. . . . But in solitude the soul lays aside the morbid illusions which troubled her, and resumes the pure consciousness of herself, of Nature, and of its Author, as the muddy torrent which has ravaged the plains, coming to rest and diffusing itself over some low grounds of its course, deposits there the slime it has taken up, and resuming its wonted transparency, reflects with its own shores the verdure of earth and the light of heaven. Thus does solitude recruit the powers of the body as well as those of the mind. It is among hermits that are found the men who carry human existence to its extreme limits. . . .

. . . I contemplate from my solitude the storms which rage through the rest of the world, and my repose seems more profound from the distant sound of the tempest.<sup>38</sup>

The tone of this passage sounds much like the later Humboldt of *Kosmos*, wherein he compares not only biogeographical regions, but also civilizations. Like his earlier reference to the novel while crossing into the tropics, it also comes at a time



when he is feeling most separate from Europe. On both these occasions, Humboldt found some connection to his own sense of loneliness and separation in the novel, and some way to make sense of the trials he was experiencing. González Echevarría notes, "The rhetoric of scientific travel narrative is permeated by the figure of this narrator-hero who undergoes trials for the sake of knowledge."<sup>39</sup>

The most arduous trial, however, was for the traveler to retain his sense of self at the same time as he searched for knowledge, and not any kind of knowledge, but one with cosmic implications, for it involved the origins of time and the innermost secrets of a natural world to which he too belonged. . . . [D]istance was created mostly by the practice of classification and taxonomy (for which Linnaeus had provided a whole new language). The other world, or world of the Other, is classifiable, apt to become the object of a taxonomy. The soul, the spirit of the traveler, interposes the grid of classification between his desire to fuse with the object of his study and that object itself.<sup>40</sup>

Humboldt's writing, his back and forth movement between romantic description and scientific analysis, can be seen, on one hand as the "expression [of] the romantic topic of longing for a lost unity of self and cosmos,"<sup>41</sup> and on the other as the interposing of a protective grid between self and other. The classifying, the writing, and even maintaining the sense of separation between "over here" and "over there" helped to keep that protective grid in place.

### *"Traveling as Mutes": Humboldt, Bonpland, and Writing*

Whatever his concerns and romanticizing about the inexpressibility of travels at the time, Humboldt more than made up by publishing thirty volumes derived from the journey upon his return. Bonpland's contribution, on the other hand, although listed as co-author by Humboldt for the journey's volumes, is widely portrayed as "his data rather than his authorship."<sup>42</sup> Be-

cause he “faded into the background, and eventually disappeared back into the contact zone,” he is characterized as little more than a footnote to Humboldt. A subject search in the Library of Congress catalog turns up 116 references to Humboldt and three to Bonpland (one of which is the to the works with Humboldt, the other two of which are recent novelizations of his life). Bonpland, who was the gardener for Empress Josephine before his return to South America, where he was imprisoned for years by the Paraguayan dictator Francia, seemed to live an extremely interesting and productive life until his death in 1858. However, because he did not publish and turned his back on Europe, he is presented, even by those sympathetic to him, as an eccentric figure who has gone native and is not living up to his potential.<sup>43</sup>

The influence of Humboldt’s publications was extremely significant. As González Echevarría notes, for scientific travelers of the period,

Their entire discursive activity, from traveling itself to taxonomical practices, embodied truth and exuded authority through its own performance. The influence of this travel literature was immense, not only on political developments within the very reality they described, but on the conception of that reality that individuals within it had of it and of themselves.<sup>44</sup>

Humboldt was very conscious that he was establishing perceptions of the New World, and became irritated when other travelers superceded his interpretations. Because his *Relation historique* took so long to publish, he writes, “In the late publication of my *Personal Narrative*, which was preceded by more scientific tomes, I have been pre-empted by travelers who crossed American twenty-five years after me.”<sup>45</sup> It took him eleven years to publish all three volumes, which were reconstructed from his diary notes. As Wilson observes, “But if the voyage lasted over five years, that was nothing compared to the labor of writing it, which lasted twenty-seven years from 1808 to 1834. . . . Humboldt’s nineteenth-century prestige depended as much on the writing of his books as on the voyage itself.”<sup>46</sup> The *Personal Narrative* at times takes the form of annotated and expanded journal entries, and it is difficult at times to determine what Humboldt is taking from his diaries and what he is interjecting later. Wilson

notes that “on his return to Europe Humboldt read voraciously and ‘with attention the Spanish sixteenth-century authors’ to document his own voyage.”<sup>47</sup> Humboldt is a dedicated note keeper:

During our voyage from San Fernando [de Apure] to San Carlos on the Río Negro, and from there to the town of Angostura, I made the effort to note down in writing, every day, whether in the canoe or at night camps, anything that happened which was worthy of note. The heavy rain and incredible amount of mosquitoes crowding the air on the Orinoco and Casiquiare obviously left gaps in my chronicle, but I always wrote it up a few days later. The following pages are taken from this journal. What is noted down while actually viewing the described objects keeps a semblance of truth (dare I say “individuality”), which gives charm even to insignificant things.<sup>48</sup>

Note that these journal entries begin months into the voyage, and several hundred pages into his narrative. The entries are centered around the actual journey down the Orinoco River. Like Defoe’s *Crusoe*, Humboldt’s journal entries appear when he wants to reinforce a “semblance of truth.” In addition, like *Crusoe*, the entries themselves are often interjected with pages and pages of observations and digressions, so that the reader quite forgets that these are supposed to be journal entries until the next date appears.

Bonpland rarely appears in these entries unless he is saving Humboldt from drowning, as discussed in the previous section, is taken ill and thereby forces Humboldt’s attention, or is useful in demonstrating the overwhelming presence of insects and how to combat them. Throughout the narrative, Humboldt constructs himself as the solitary explorer; one rarely finds any insight into their guides or their day-to-day interactions with their servants. Humboldt has no problem discussing the native population as an object of inquiry, but he never describes in detail the personnel of the expedition other than himself and Bonpland except than through peripheral references:

I confess that these often repeated scenes [of sighting large animals on the banks of the Apure] greatly appeal to me. The pleasure comes not solely from the curiosity a naturalist feels for the object of his studies, but also to a feeling common to all men brought up in the customs of civilization. You find your-

self in a new world, in a wild, untamed nature. Sometimes it is a jaguar, the beautiful American panther, on the banks; sometimes it is the hocco (*Crax alector*) with its black feathers and tufted head, slowly strolling along the *sauso* hedge. All kinds of animals appear, one after the other. “Es como en el paraíso” (“It is like paradise”) our old Indian pilot said. Everything here reminds you of that state of the ancient world revealed in venerable traditions about the innocence and happiness of all people; but when carefully observing the relationships between the animals you see how they avoid and fear each other. The golden age has ended. In this paradise of the American jungles, as everywhere else, a long, sad experience has taught all living beings that gentleness is rarely linked to might.<sup>49</sup>

Here Humboldt has his native guide recognize paradise for him, and in this paradise he already sees not only its end; perhaps there is also some recognition by Humboldt of the distance between himself and his rarely represented (“avoided and feared?”) companions. He is the one to classify, to inscribe, who is “linked to might,” while they are objects to be inscribed within his classification.

### *Displacements and Translations: Humboldt and the Construction of the Tropical Archive*

If one unhooks Humboldt from Schiller and locates him in another “Romantic” line—George Forster and Bernardin de St. Pierre . . . Volney, Chateaubriand, Stedman, Buffon, Le Valliant, Captain Cook, and the Diderot of the “Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville”—one might be tempted to argue that Romanticism originated in the contact zones of America, North Africa, and the South Seas.<sup>50</sup>

It is not necessary to engage in a counter-historical “unhooking” of Humboldt from his sources to find the development of Romanticism linked to tropical imagery. In the nineteenth-century construction of the idea of the “tropics” itself there is already a Romantic reduction of a tremendous variety of physical geography and culture into a pantropical fantasy. The use of the term “the tropics” (with the definite article) to mean a region ra-

ther than its more limited sense as the geographical demarcation of the sun's path was rare until the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Humboldt's use of the term "equinoctial zones" for the region itself implies that a more common shorthand was not in use at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although Humboldt's regionalism always leads him to look for the unique character of place, he himself figures largely in the construction of the idea of the "pantropical."

It is interesting to note that in Defoe's *Crusoe*, in Behn's *Oroonoko*, and in St.-Pierre's description of his own personal voyage, the narrative path is from Europe to Africa to tropical America. Crusoe's first adventures occur in Africa, where he is both made a slave and acquires one, while Behn's "royal slave" refers to her character's initial royal status in Africa and his being brought to America as a slave. St.-Pierre was en route to Madagascar when he was stripped of his position and put off at Mauritius. One explanation for the intermediary aspect of Africa in each of these narratives would be its necessity as a place to navigate from—the traditional and easiest route to the New World since Columbus established it was to use the trade winds off the Canary Islands. But there is something else going here in each of these narratives—the loss and reestablishment of authority, the gaining of mastery over oneself and others, and the bewilderment of being in a new place while building the knowledge to master the place. Europe is the place of mastery, Africa the place mastered, America the unknown place waiting to be classified and for its story to be written.

Humboldt frames his experience of tropical America through the lens of St.-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*. Whatever loss and separation he feels he can redirect through St.-Pierre's model of description and take solace from his positive re-framing of romantic solitude. At the time of the *Personal Narrative*, Humboldt felt from St.-Pierre's descriptions, "how much the mien of the plants and their groupings resembled each other in the two worlds. In describing a small spot of land in an island in the Indian Ocean, [St.-Pierre] has sketched the vast picture of the landscape of the tropics." At this point, there are still "two worlds," but St.-Pierre's descriptive skills are such that they can be generalized to the tropics as a whole. By the time of Humboldt's fur-

ther retrospective acknowledgment of *Paul et Virginie* in his *Kosmos*, the "inimitable truth" of St.-Pierre's novel, accompanied the pair "to the climes whence it took its origin." For the younger Humboldt, there were two tropical worlds; for the later Humboldt there are originary tropical climes that are collapsed into one another. In the forty intervening years, both for Humboldt and for European literary culture, "the tropics" has become a repository for all images and ideas of the exotic other.

For the English reader, the double-paned window into the tropics from Humboldt and St.-Pierre has another twist. The most popular English language editions of both Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* and Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* were both translated by the English radical Helen Maria Williams. Wilson observes that "Humboldt's French is curiously flat, scientific and modern. I was struck by the disparity between the English of his nineteenth-century translators and his French." Wilson notes that when Humboldt "enthused . . . his translator interpreted and exaggerated." In an interesting convolution of intertextual dynamics in Romantic scientific narrative style, Wilson observes that "Caroline Darwin accused her brother Charles of reading so much Humboldt that his phraseology made use of 'flowery French expressions' instead of his own 'simple straightforward and far more agreeable style', confusing the translation with Humboldt's original and cool French."<sup>52</sup>

According to Wilson, Williams said that in her translation of Humboldt she was producing "an imperfect copy of a sublime model."<sup>53</sup> Evidently Williams didn't feel the same relationship towards Bernardin St.-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, throughout her translation of which she not only placed her own sonnets, "adapted to the peculiar productions of that part of the globe," but also left out entire sections in which she "has spared the English reader many passages of long philosophical reflexions which the 'gay and restless Frenchman' listens to attentively."<sup>54</sup> The issue of the degree to which a translator's philosophical biases and narrative stylistics becoming a part of the canonical text in translation may always be present. However, it does create some additional difficulties in recovering the genesis of the *topos* of the Romantic tropics

## Notes

1. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 6.
2. Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of travels to the equinoctial regions of the New continent : during the years 1799-1804* [7 vols.], trans. Helen Maria Williams (London : Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1821-1829), Vol. 1, 3.
3. For *Paul et Virginie* accompanying Humboldt, see Henry Stevens, *The Humboldt Library* (London: Henry Stevens, 1863), viii. For Defoe's influence on St.-Pierre, see the "Memoir" of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1891), 13. The influence of *Crusoe* on von Humboldt is through his childhood tutor Campe, who edited the German Children's edition of *Crusoe* (Stevens, *The Humboldt Library*, iii).
4. The recent translator of Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* notes that "on his return to Europe Humboldt read voraciously and 'with attention the Spanish sixteenth-century authors' to document his own voyage." See Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent*, trans. Jason Wilson (London: Penguin, 1995), 309, note 131. Except where noted, subsequent references to Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* refer to this edition and translation.
5. N.Y. Sandwidth, "Humboldt and Bonpland's Itinerary in Venezuela," in *Humboldt, Bonpland, Kunth and Tropical American Botany*, ed. William T. Stearn. (Lehre: J. Cramer, 1968), 71-72.
6. Henry Stephens, *The Humboldt Library: A Catalogue of the Library of Alexander von Humboldt*, (London: Henry Stephens, 1863), viii. Stephens could be overstating here—well into the journey Humboldt and Bonpland lose "some books" on the Zama River, and the loss seems to have no great significance.
7. Stephens, *The Humboldt Library*, ii.
8. Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of the Physical Description of the Universe, Volume 2*, trans. E.C. Otté (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 [1850]), 76-77. Subsequent references refer to this volume and edition.
9. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 76-77.
10. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "Memoir," in *Paul and Virginia* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1891), 13.
11. Stephens, *The Humboldt Library*, iii.
12. Philip Robinson, *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: Paul et Virginie*. (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986), 12.
13. Robinson, *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre*, 12.
14. Robinson, *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre*, 13.
15. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*. (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1891), 38-40. Subsequent references to the novel refer to this edition except where noted.
16. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 81.
17. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 42-43.
18. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, trans. note 21, 300.

19. Malcolm Nicolson, "Historical Introduction," Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, xx.
20. Goethe, *Theory of Colors*, quoted in, "Goethe and the Idea of Scientific Truth," in Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1975 [1952]), 25.
21. Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 132.
- 22.) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "Memoir," in *Paul and Virginia* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1891), 33.
23. Saint-Pierre, "Memoir," 33.
24. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 81.
25. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 74-75.
26. Nicolson, "Historical Introduction," Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, xv.
27. Heller, *The Disinherited Mind*, 31-32.
28. Nicolson, "Historical Introduction," xx.
29. Nicolson, "Historical Introduction," xx.
30. Nicolson, "Historical Introduction," xxiii.
31. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 96.
32. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 81.
33. Humboldt, trans Helen Maria Williams, Vol. 5, 67.
34. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 186.
35. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 192-3.
36. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 200.
37. Humboldt, trans Helen Maria Williams, Vol. 5, 47.
38. Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, 198-201.
39. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 107.
40. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 108.
41. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 106.
42. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), note 14, 240.
43. See in particular, the interesting but somewhat sensational article by Jason Wilson (a recent translator of Humboldt), "The Strange Fate of Aimé Bonpland," *London Magazine* (April-May, 1994), 36-48.
44. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 102.
45. *Personal Narrative*, trans. note 143, 310.
46. Wilson. "Introduction." Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, lv.
47. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, trans. note 131, 309.
48. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 177-8.
49. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 178-9.
50. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 138.
51. The first use in the regional sense listed in the OED is from Washington Irving's 1837 *Captain Bonneville*.
52. Wilson, "Introduction," Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, lix.
53. Wilson, "Introduction," Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, lix.
54. See Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie*, trans. Helen Maria Williams. (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989 [1796]), vii.



## Chapter 5

# The City of Letters: Planning and the Culture of Modernism

There is a labyrinth of streets penetrable only through personal exploration and a labyrinth of signs decipherable only through the application of reason. -Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*

Perhaps, then, this was what traveling was, an exploration of the deserts of my mind rather than those surrounding me?—  
Claude Lévi-Strauss<sup>1</sup>

The very building of the [Spanish-American] towns . . . embodied a plan which would determine the mode of occupation of the territory and define how it was to be organized under the administrative and political authority of urban power . . . The result is a strictly hierarchical organization of space . . . Some historians have described this colonial town as an artificial product, but they forget that this artificial product is also an instrument of production: a superstructure foreign to the original space serves as a political means of introducing a social and economic structure . . . <sup>2</sup>

**H**umboldt set the stage for future scientific-romantic journeying to Latin America. His *Personal Narrative* became a major component of the Latin American archive, and his geographic and naturalistic descriptions helped establish the imagery of the *topos* of the Orinoco. As his followers consulted his contributions to the archive, however, and added their own contributions, an interesting phenomenon began: the accumulated narratives within the archive become available for comparison and reflection, and become a source for self-reflection about the relationships between exploration and modernity. In the middle part of the twentieth century, the capacity of the archive to enable self-reflexivity and to demonstrate the

stereotypical repetitions that could occur in encounters with the other, led to the development of the archival novel, represented here by Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*, and to more awareness of the role of the ethnographer in his encounters with his subject, as in Levi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*.

The formation of the archive enables this capacity for self-reflection. This self-reflection leads to a recognition of the romanticization of the Other and to questioning the role of the individual in the process of modernization. This mode of self-reflection, based on the ability to see one's own activities as repetitive instances of archival forms, stops short of questioning the totalities that make up the relationships of the subjects doing the analysis and the objects of analysis—the self, the West, the Third World. And, as I will attempt to show in a look at urban planning, it is an activity and process that has been accepted more completely not only in some disciplines more than others, but in the narrative form of the archival novel more so than in the narrative forms of science.

Angel Rama has coined the term "letrado" to denote the work of the administrative elites in Latin American cities. In his work, *The Lettered City*, he notes that in the history of Latin American cities "the tension between the discursive and material dimensions has become especially acute", and that a class of professionals, those he terms *letrados*, historically arises from a colonial administrative bureaucracy to mediate between these two dimensions. The baroque bureaucracy of Latin American public administration is "the sumptuous embodiment of a kind of language composed of two different but superimposed grids." The grid of the material dimension "exists on the physical plane, where the common visitor can lose himself in increasing multiplicity and fragmentation," while "the second exists on the symbolic plane that organizes and interprets the former . . . , rendering the city meaningful as an idealized order."<sup>3</sup> Rama continues:

This labyrinth of signs is the work of the *letrados*, or collectively, the achievement of the city of letters. Only the *letrados* could envision an urban ideal before its realization as a city of stone and mortar, then maintain that ideal after the construction of the city, preserving their idealized vision in a constant struggle with the material modifications introduced by the daily life of the city's ordinary inhabitants.<sup>4</sup>

Rama's delineation of the *letrado* is useful as a way of bringing together ideas about progress, the founding of cities, and idealized urban form from both Carpentier's novel about the founding of an ideal city, and from the actual planning of a new city on the Orinoco River, Ciudad Guayana. Two of Carpentier's characters in the novel have significant roles in writing and the production of signs, the protagonist/narrator and the character known as "the Adelantado." The name "Adelantado," derived from the Spanish verb meaning "to move forward" or "advance," was historically the title given to the governor of a frontier area. In the novel, the Adelantado has this role, and through writing in his notebook "he was creating day by day a *polis* . . ." <sup>5</sup> The narrator, on the other hand, is inspired in the newly created city to write his magnum opus, but is frustrated by having to vie with the Adelantado for paper. This tension between actual city form and missed opportunities for idealized cultural expression is also evident in the process and results of the planning of Ciudad Guayana.

The archival novel as a form is a useful place to examine the intersections of the cultural and the geopolitical. Edward Said observes that

an internally structured archive is built up from the literature that belongs to these experiences [of travelers, traders fabulists, conquerors]. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient [or Other] is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter . . . <sup>6</sup>

*Los pasos perdidos* takes up one of these forms of "encapsulation," the attempted journey of the civilized man back to Genesis, to Eden, and attempts to focus its lens back on itself.

### ***Repetition and the Ritual of Travel: Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos***

What distinguishes our modern culture (including art, literature, music, and so on) from all other cultural systems . . . is the

absolute priority given to innovation and the increasing taboo on repetition, the loss of fear of the horizon, the desire for the unknown, and the integration of the other . . .<sup>7</sup>

Born in Cuba of a French father and Russian mother, Alejo Carpentier (1904–1980) spent formative parts of his youth and early adulthood in Paris and Madrid. The cosmopolitan author's novel of a cosmopolitan man's journey into the wilds of South America, *Los pasos perdidos* (The Lost Steps), is a self-conscious parable of the modern idiom of exploration. A good part of *The Lost Steps* is given over to the protagonist's role in the founding of a city in the jungle, and the loss and destruction of paradise entailed in modern explorers' very discovery of it. It is also finally about the role of some projected "other" in the individual alienation and self-discovery that seems to come with modernity. The self-discovery of the protagonist comes not through his discovery that his romantic idea of an Edenic paradise is imaginary and unbelievable, but rather that its inhabitants do not believe in him.

The protagonist and narrator, an un-named New York advertising man with thoroughly modern sensibilities and interests, leaves his numbing marriage to his wife Ruth, and through a series of coincidences, embarks on an exploration of the Orinoco River. After what the contemporary reader might term a mid-life crisis, he is hired by a museum for an ethnographic and musicological study and to collect ethnic musical instruments. He is at first accompanied by his mistress Mouche, but rejects her superficiality and dilettantism upon meeting Rosario, a native woman of quiet strength and dignity. Rejecting what he sees as a weakness in modern women, the protagonist eventually shows that he shares some similar qualities.

Rosario and the novel's narrator-protagonist eventually form bonds with a group of adventurers and settlers evoking what Carpentier evidently sees as archetypal New World settlers—the Greek, modeled after Odysseus, the Priest, representing the Catholic Church in its missionary evangelistic role, and the Adelantado, who represents the administrative urge to inscribe new boundaries onto New World space by establishing cities. Together this group locates, with the help of local Indians and the network of rumors to which the Adelantado is privy, a

site for a new city in the jungle. They found a settlement there, and for a while it is a paradise. The narrator finds himself open to creative urges that have been absent for a long time in his stifling urban existence. However, before long conflicts arise between the administrative, the religious and the domestic roles of the settlers. The narrator, in the midst of composing his most significant and inspired musical work (and having to scrounge for paper on which to write) leaves, intending to return, but is not able to find his way back.

Carpentier's novel may be seen as a parable examining the cultural interactions of modernized institutions and individuals with modernizing or pre-modern ones. More specifically, it functions as an analysis of the development of the modern site of El Dorado, the city and state of Guayana, the region where the major events of the novel take place. From its sixteenth-century incarnation as Santo Tomé de Guayana, the site of Raleigh's farthest attempt up the Orinoco, and Berrío's redoubt against him, to its twentieth-century role as the target of one of the century's most massive regional development campaigns, Ciudad Guayana and its environs have replayed the drama of global economic forces acting in the "hinterlands" of a global system.

By having his protagonist, a quintessential 1950's advertising man, self-consciously follow in the footsteps of explorers, botanists, anthropologists, and other modern horizon-shrinkers, Carpentier's novel re-inscribes those journeys as repetitious, timeless, and iconographic substitutes for one another, and by doing so rewrites the "modern" journey as primitive and archetypal. This kind of journey is seen by Carpentier as a modern stereotype, a mass-reproduced image of itself, capable of being re-written by any modern traveler.

Carpentier constructs himself as a *letrado* of modernism, the go-between for the Europe to which he looks for legitimacy and the New World that is the fount of authentic experience. As Angel Rama observes, Carpentier translates the experience of Latin American modernization for his readers:

While European writers could address their audience without worrying about the marginal readers outside of Europe, writers like Carpentier, from other regions of the world, continued to yearn for European readers and regard their reading as the

true and authorizing one. What Carpentier proposes is the absorption (into the work's narrative language, though not without leaving some trace) of the explanatory metalanguage that bridges the gap between the two lexical codes [of the "educated people's use of two parallel and semantically equivalent vocabularies, one more prestigious and formal than the other]. His proposal certifies the continued sense, on the part of some twentieth-century Latin American letrados, that they remain exiled on the fringes of a civilization whose animating center lies in the metropolitan powers of Europe.<sup>8</sup>

The letrados became translators, appealing to a metalanguage in order to move back and forth between these two lexical codes.

Carpentier's novel parodies, although with little comic effect, the characteristics of modernity set out by Michael Nerlich. Nerlich has argued that the ideology of chivalry and adventure evolved with emerging capitalism in ways that "meant an extension of adventure-desire, adventure-thought, and adventure-mentality ultimately to all domains of social practice." Nerlich argues that analyses of the "history of modernity" can be based on a set of ideas about the meanings of what he terms an "ideology of adventure."<sup>9</sup> *Los pasos perdidos* includes all of the characteristics that Nerlich ascribes to modernity:

- 1) The acceptance of economic, social, cultural, and mental changes and revolutions. Disorder is conceived of as a mode of producing a new order; order itself is conceived of as change.
- 2) The acceptance of the unknown as a positive value; the deliberate leaving of the known for the unknown; desire for the new.
- 3) Acceptance of blindness with regard to the unknown; acceptance of economic, social, and cultural risks.
- 4) Acceptance of chance. Chance, constructive of any adventure, becomes an essential value of adventure-ideology and—mentality. Translated into the philosophical terminology of so-called scholastic philosophy, this means that *accidens* becomes *essentia*. Here we are confronted with the birth of the individual and the beginning of a putting into question the divine sense of life.

5) Recognition of the other (other races, other languages, other manners, other societies, other necessities, other desires, etc.). Integration of the other into one's own, by peaceful means or not; the transformation of the other into a business partner; his destruction or his acceptance as the other.

6) Elaboration of "search systems," calculation of chances, minimizing of risks, elaboration of insurances, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

The style of *Los pasos perdidos*, like much of Carpentier's fiction, is heavily symbolist—many of the characters are not named, but given capitalized titular names such as the Friar, the Adelantado, and the Greek. As a novel, it suffers in that the symbolism outweighs the story. As an extended parable, an allegory of modernism, however, it is full of revelations. The archive of images is continually rebuilt and redeployed, and Carpentier is insightful in pointing out the repetition of symbols that recur in the modern narratives of development. Written two years before Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*, for which it can be read as an anti-commentary, *Los pasos perdidos* is a critique of everything from conquistador chronicles, through Humboldt, to Amazonian anthropological expeditions. *Tristes Tropiques* includes chapter titles such as "Setting Out," "On Board Ship," "Looking Back," "Crossing the Tropic," "The Lost World," "A Writing Lesson," "A Canoe Trip," and "Robinson Crusoe." In *Tristes Tropiques* Lévi-Strauss is himself a self-conscious commentator on the narratives of modernism. However, when compared to Carpentier's use of the symbols and clichés of scientific travel narrative, Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* seems conscious that there is some sort of repetitive pattern going on, whereas *Los pasos perdidos* is more obviously critical of the entire process.

Discussing the relationship between science and travel in the nineteenth century, Johannes Fabian observes:

But for the established bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, travel was to become (at least potentially) every man's source of "philosophical," secular knowledge. Religious travel had been to the centers of religion, or to the souls to be saved; now, secular travel was from the centers of learning and power to places where man was to find nothing but himself.<sup>11</sup>

Quoting Dégarando, who said, "The philosophical traveler, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact exploring the past; every step he makes is the passage of an age," Fabian argues that the early traveling empiricists—naturalists, ethnographers, etc.—lacked explicit theories of time: "philosophical travel', that is, the conception of travel as science, could leave the problem of Time theoretically implicit because travel itself, as witnessed by Dégarando's statement, is instituted as a temporalizing practice."<sup>12</sup>

In *Los pasos perdidos*, as the narrator goes farther and farther up the river, he goes farther and farther back in time:

We are in the word of Genesis, at the end of the Fourth Day of Creation. If we go back a little farther, we will come to the terrible loneliness of the Creator, the sidereal sadness of the times without incense or songs of praise, when the earth was without order and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.<sup>13</sup>

In the novel, explicit time does not begin in the novel until the narrator arrives in Caracas from New York (although these cities are never directly named). Chapter Two begins with an epigraph from Shelley—"Ha! I scent life"—and a time notation similar to those sporadic entries in Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* and Defoe's *Crusoe*—"Wednesday, June 7," for example. Time continues to be noted this way until the narrator reaches the "Eden" in the jungle, Santa Monica, and does not resume until he has returned to his urban life.

A fear of the tropics, of their fecundity and rampant disorder, and a paradoxical desire to both lose oneself and to impose order, are among the chief characteristics of Carpentier's protagonist. The "terrible loneliness of the Creator" becomes the terrible alienation of the narrator. He alone of his fellow travelers—the woman Rosario, the Friar, the Adelantado, who actually founds the town of Santa Monica de los Venados and begins writing its institutional structure in his notebooks, and Yannes, the Greek adventurer—is critical of the assumptions of progress. Carpentier's protagonist, leaving his urban home to search for authentic experience, is unhappy with its messiness and irrationality when he finds it, but is also unhappy with the Adelantado's administrative efforts, as well as the priest's insti-



tutionalization of religion. The protagonist is the modern romantic, rediscovering in himself through his outing an old desire to write a symphony – a threnody, a song of lamentation.

In his rediscovery of himself in this Edenic environment, the narrator is able to integrate his knowledge of classical music with his current experiences:

Rosario opened the door, and the light of day surprised me in my pleasant reflections. I could not get over my amazement: the *Threnody* had been inside me all the time, but its seed had been resown and had begun to grow in the sight of the Paleolithic . . .<sup>14</sup>

Unbeknownst to the narrator, he is believed to have been lost in the jungle, and his wife and employer have mounted a search and rescue operation:

Somebody . . . had said *back there* that I was lost in the jungle, possibly a prisoner of head-hunting Indians. I had become the hero of a novel, which included the hypothesis that I had been tortured. It was another Fawcett case, and the accounts, published in the newspapers, were a modern version of the story of Dr. Livingstone.<sup>15</sup>

Here Carpentier refers to and builds upon the larger archive of historical tropical images. The hero in Carpentier's novel has become the hero of a novel in his fictional press, wherein factual cases from the archive become modern stories.

When a searching airplane offers the narrator a ride back to civilization, he takes the opportunity. He leaves his musical composition behind as a sign to Rosario that he will return. Back in the city, he begins divorce proceedings. After some months, he attempts to return to Santa Monica de los Venados, only to find that the high waters of the river hide the secret waterway to its location (an allusion to the archive of the upper Orinoco's intricacies). He also learns that the woman Rosario has married the son of the Adelantado.

The character of Rosario embodies the of the New World. Initially receptive, passive, and female, she finally decides to continue with her own life rather than wait for the narrator's return from "*back there.*" In her, Carpentier revives from the archive the notion of the New World as female. As the group is for

the first time approaching by river the new city of Santa Monica, the narrator reports:

[I] rested my head in Rosario's lap, thinking of the vast territories, the unexplored lands, the myriad plateaus, where cities could be founded on this continent on which nature had not yet been subdued by man. The rhythmic splashing of the oars lulled me into a pleasant drowsiness, there on the living waters . . .<sup>16</sup>

Rosario as New World is the most significant of the relationships of the narrator with women in the novel, but they all have a definite trajectory. The first is with his wife, Ruth, an actress who at the beginning of the novel is consumed with her career. Their relationship is conventional, but sterile and lifeless. The next is his mistress, Mouche, bisexual, cosmopolitan, a dilettante. Finally there is Rosario—which means “rosary” in Spanish—something one fondles in order to do penance. The trajectory is from Ruth—a conventional, though modern and professional woman—to Mouche, who is described so as to seem weak and dependent, but who actually behaves in a very self-sufficient manner—to Rosario, who is stoic, a peasant, but with an earthy attractiveness, who in the end has no need of the narrator.

This trajectory—from wife to mistress to ideal—repeats itself upon the narrator's return to civilization. This time, however, Ruth, rather than passive and career obsessed, is portrayed as a manipulator who uses her acting ability to her benefit in the divorce proceedings. Mouche, whose sexual wiles the narrator succumbs to once again through “a weakness of the will,” is irrelevant except that she brings news of events in Santa Monica. The narrator heads for Rosario once more, but she has married someone else, and he never sees her again. The overall trajectory is a spiral from the known to the liminal to the unknown, except that upon its second turning the unknown is the narrator himself rather than a romantic projection of paradise:

I had tried to make straight a destiny that was crooked because of my own weakness, and a song had welled up in me—now cut short—which had led me back to the old road, in sackcloth and ashes, no longer able to be what I had been.<sup>17</sup>

Only then does he realize

The truth, the crushing truth . . . these people had never believed in me. I was there on loan. Rosario herself must have looked on me as a Visitor incapable of staying on indefinitely in the Valley where Time had Stopped . . . New worlds had to be lived before they could be analyzed. Those who lived there did not do so out of any intellectual conviction; they simply thought this, and not the other, was the good life . . . The one who made too much of an effort to understand, . . . the one whose idea was that of renunciation when he embraced the customs of those who forged their destinies in this primaeval slime in hand-to-hand struggle with the mountains and the trees, was vulnerable because certain forces of the world he had left behind continued to operate within him.<sup>18</sup>

Carpentier's protagonist has his head in the lap of the New World, but he is restless. He is drawn to romantic ideas of living in nature, but cannot reconcile them with his desire to be an individual creator himself, and can never recognize himself in that territory nor see it for what it is.

Carpentier is not simply describing an archetypal modern journey, the ritual of self-discovery. He is describing his own journey as well—his journey from his Latin American roots to Europe and back again. Because he is a thoroughly modern artist, Carpentier's idea of art, and thus his description of his own journey, is of a repeated and reproducible experience. For all its being an instance of a model, the journey is yet authentic, because it also serves a ritual function. As Walter Benjamin argued, "the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value." For Benjamin,

. . . the instance the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics.<sup>19</sup>

Carpentier uses the archive of literary forms and genres to formulate a political statement about the repetition of narratives of discovery of the other. The novel has a ritualistic pace and setting, but Carpentier, through his use of character as role and of allegory, illustrates that "modern" man is still subject to the repetition of romantic illusion:

The Stone Age, like the Middle Ages, is still within our reach. The gloomy mansions of romanticism, with its doomed loves, are still open. But none of this was for me, because the only human race to which it is forbidden to sever the bonds of time is the race of those who create art, and who not only must move ahead of the immediate yesterday, . . . but must anticipate the song and form of others who will follow them, creating new tangible witness with full awareness of what has been done up to the moment.<sup>20</sup>

Allegory, classical allusion, the romantic appeal of popular literature, all available forms from the archive are, for Carpentier, tools for constructing an exit from it through art. However, like his protagonist when he tries to relocate the door to paradise, the high waters may be covering the entrance. Carpentier is a *letrado* of modernism, working between two worlds. His realization, however, is that these two worlds do not exist apart from one another. As González Echevarría notes,

This double movement of subject and object [of the traveler and the retreat of paradise back through time] creates an asymptote whose expression is the romantic topic of long-lost unity of self and cosmos, an organicity that would include the observing self. In Europe the poets always traveled south, preferably to Italy, like Goethe, Byron, or Musset, to regions where nature, together with the ruins of a splendid pagan past, could kindle or rekindle inspiration, and actually transform the self. . . . That symbolic South is analogous to the world of nature found elsewhere in Africa or Latin America in that it is outside the modern world that the poet flees; a modern world whose most bewildering and perverse feature is that it determines that flight from itself and absorbs it.<sup>21</sup>

Carpentier's narrator travels, searching for authenticity while at the same time inscribing that journey as repetitious and ritualistic, valuing the ritual while at the same time distancing himself from it through art. Valuing the distance, regretting the alienation, yet finally the journey is re-absorbed into his own world—the modern world where only individual intellectual labor has meaning: “Today Sisyphus' vacation came to an end.”<sup>22</sup>

However valuable the individual experience, Carpentier also recognizes that its reproducibility devalues it as art and reinscribes the journey as political. Carpentier's novel in one sense is

an attempt to use the methods of modern art—recognizing and valuing repetition—in a search for authenticity and self-awareness. In so doing he also finds the tension between the artistic and personal and the political.

The novel provides a powerful critique of modernist images and narratives. By encapsulating the form of those narratives within his own, he also places himself firmly in the tradition of modernist self-criticism, makes the narrative forms themselves visible, and makes both the power and the limitations of the continued application of the modern archetypes of exploration, discovery, and ethnographic distance apparent. By giving the novel the form of a parable, by generalizing the characters, places, and events, thus presenting the whole as a modern ritual of self-discovery, Carpentier reinscribes two of the characteristic features of modernity—spatial expansion and individual self-discovery—into a pre-modern form, the allegory.

This insertion of other genres, like allegory, into the novel, Bakhtin observed, “begins to appear like a stylization, a stylization taken to the point of parody, despite the intent of the author.”<sup>23</sup> The awkwardness of Carpentier’s text is a result of his allegory becoming, because of its insertion into the form of the novel, “dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, [and] elements of self-parody.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, even at its most serious moments, where the narrator is faced with his own failures and lack of commitment, Carpentier inserts not-so-veiled references to the popular literature of Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World*—“Rosario must have looked on me as a Visitor incapable of staying on indefinitely in the Valley where Time had Stopped.” The contemporary reader cannot help but insert his own post-Carpentierian allusions to such films as *The Land That Time Forgot* and other remakes of Doyle’s Professor Challenger stories.

An example of the use of the popular novel in Carpentier is that Doyle’s Professor Challenger story *The Lost World* appears to be the specific source for the intrigue and intricacies surrounding the location of the new city. As Professor Challenger and companions approach the riverine maze-like entrance to their lost world, amid Doyle’s Humboldtian descriptions of the landscape (“Vivid orchids and wonderful colored lichens smoldered upon

the swarthy tree-trunks;" the plants are "the golden allamanda, the scarlet star-clusters of the tacsonia, or the rich deep blue of ipomaea"), the Professor warns his companions that "we were now approaching the door of the unknown country, and that the fewer whom we took into our confidence the better it would be."<sup>25</sup> The door to the unknown in *Los pasos perdidos* is a triple "V" marked on the trunk of a riverside tree, marking the tributary that leads to the unknown—an allusion for both Doyle and Carpentier to the Casiquiare canal that Humboldt found to be the connection between the Amazon and the Orinoco.

There is a passage in *Tristes Tropiques* that is uncannily similar to Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* protagonist's experience writing his symphony. It is the initial section of the part Lévi-Strauss' work called "The Return," in which he begins to deal with his own role as anthropologist and the relation between his European perspective and his ethnographic work. "Through a remarkable paradox," Lévi-Strauss writes, "my life of adventure, instead of opening up a new world to me, had the effect rather of bringing me back to the old one, and the world I had been looking for disintegrated in my grasp . . . Travelling through regions upon which few eyes had gazed, sharing the existence of communities whose poverty was the price . . . for my being able to go back thousands of years in time, I was no longer fully aware of either world."<sup>26</sup>

At one juncture, on a plateau in Mato Grosso, Lévi-Strauss gets a bit of Chopin's Etude no. 3, opus 10 stuck in his head, and the passage is remarkable in its epiphanic similarity to the experience of Carpentier's protagonist-composer:

Mile after mile, the same melodic phrase rang through my memory, and I could not get rid of it. It seemed constantly to reveal fresh charms. After beginning very slackly, it appeared to be twisting its thread as if to conceal its approaching termination. The knotting became progressively more inextricable, so much so indeed that one began to wonder if the melody was not about to founder; suddenly, the next note brought complete resolution and the path of escape appeared all the bolder after the dangerous preliminaries which had both rendered it necessary and made it possible; once it had been heard, the notes leading up to it were illuminated with fresh meaning;

what they had been seeking no longer seemed arbitrary, but became a preparation for the unsuspected way out.<sup>27</sup>

For Lévi-Strauss, this experience of musical resolution leads to an illumination of a dramatic nature:

One afternoon . . . I had the idea that the problems bothering me could provide the subject matter of a play. It was as clear in my mind as if it had already been written. The Indians had disappeared: for six days, I wrote from morning till night on the backs of sheets of paper covered with word lists, sketches and genealogical tables. After which, inspiration abandoned me before the work was completed, and has never returned since. On rereading my scribbles, I don't think there is any cause for regret.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, once back home, Lévi-Strauss constructs the remainder of his essay around the outline of this forgotten inspiration, which is an allegorical fable of the contradictions inherent in the life of an ethnographer. After constructing his play as allegory for an entire profession, Lévi-Strauss dismisses it—his justification is that “it illustrates the mental disorder to which the traveler is exposed through abnormal living conditions over a prolonged period.” However, the problem it brings up “still remains: how can the anthropologist overcome the contradiction resulting from the circumstances of his choice? He has in front of him and available for study a given society—his own; why does he decide to spurn it and to reserve for other societies—which are among the most remote and most alien—a patience and a devotion which his choice of vocation has deflected from his fellow-citizens?”<sup>29</sup>

Carpentier's narrator, living in his new-found city with Rosario, wakes up one morning an inspiration similar in form to that of Lévi-Strauss:

I awoke with the strange feeling that something great had taken place in my mind: something like the ripening and coalescing of chaotic, scattered elements, senseless when dispersed, but suddenly, when ordered, assuming clear meaning. A work had been constructed in my spirit; a “thing” before my eyes, open or closed, which rang in my ears, amazing me by the logic of its order. A work inscribed in me, which could easily be transferred to words, score, something that all could handle, read, understand.<sup>30</sup>

The work itself is described in terms that bring to mind Heitor Villa-Lobos' Amazonian compositions such as "Gênesis," "Amazonas," and "Origem do rio Amazonas." The vocal parts of these Villa-Lobos compositions are wordless, pure vocal sound. Carpentier's protagonist is "striving for the unadorned word . . . the word prior to music." He describes it as "a kind of word-genesis"<sup>31</sup> (186). Borrowing notebooks from the Adelantado, which are meant to contain the administrative strictures of the city, the musician draws musical staves, "using the edge of a machete as a ruler" (189). The physical inscribing of New World space via the Adelantado's machete finds its counterpoint in the same notebook.

But all does not end well. Unlike Lévi-Strauss, who can relate the outline of his play even if its soul has retreated, the narrator of *Los pasos perdidos* first runs out of paper—the Adelantado gives him one more but threatens to cut him off and hands him a guitar. Rather than recognizing the validity of folk forms and performance rather than composition, he begins to write on leaves, eliciting yet another notebook from the Adelantado. Finally, when the opportunity of returning to civilization presents itself, he justifies his return with his need of ink and paper. His return, like that of Lévi-Strauss, makes it obvious that there are requisites of paper at home as well—the legalities of his marriage, navigating the waters of the domestic life and his deflection from the lives of his fellow citizens.

### March 16

I hate traveling and explorers. Yet here I am proposing to tell the story of my expeditions. But how long it has taken me to make up my mind to do so! It is now fifteen years since I left Brazil for the last time and all during this period I have often planned to undertake the present work, but on each occasion a sort of shame and repugnance prevented me making a start. Why, I asked myself, should I give a detailed account of so many trivial circumstances and insignificant happenings? Adventure has no place in the anthropologist's profession . . .<sup>32</sup>

My first day in Caracas, also my first day in South America. Looking out my window of the Hotel Presidente, one of the first



things I see is uniformed and non-uniformed men marching down one of the main streets in military fashion. Whether part of the coup that was attempted that day or the counter-coup, I do not know. I have a few days in Caracas before heading for my destination of Ciudad Guayana. I am taking the time to explore the city and re-read *Los pasos perdidos*, and have just finished the part where the protagonist, on his first day in the unnamed Latin American capital, is taken by surprise by an attempted coup, part of which is taking place outside his hotel room. I have planned my itinerary on-line with a Colombian travel agent in Atlanta. Few hotels in Caracas and only one in Ciudad Guayana show up on his computers.

In my enthusiasm to get to the site of my research interests, I would have bypassed Caracas altogether if there had been a direct flight to the new urban center of Guayana. The flight down, an inaugural one as the Venezuelan carrier Aeropostale celebrated its new direct Atlanta/Caracas flights, was filled with wine and good-humored businessmen. I sat next to a Venezuelan who operated tours for rich fisherman to the lake formed by the Guri Dam, near my final destination, Ciudad Guayana. He gave me the name of a friend who works for the CVG and tells me that I will love Guayana. With my limited Spanish and obvious out-of-placeness, I am very self-conscious as I navigate my way through the ancient, starched-shirt staff of this four star hotel and out into the city. They reassure me that it is safe to walk the streets, that the marching men are just for show.

### *Ciudad Guayana Letrada: Elites and the Circulation of Texts*

Accordingly, from the time of their foundation the imperial cities of Latin America had to lead double lives: on one hand, a material life inescapably subject to the flux of construction and destruction, the contrary impulses of restoration and renovation, and the circumstantial intervention of human agency; on the other hand, a symbolic life, subject only to the rules governing the order of signs, which enjoy a stability im-

pervious to the accidents of the physical world. Before becoming a material reality of houses, streets, and plazas, which could be constructed only gradually over decades or centuries, Latin American cities sprang forth in signs and plans, already complete, in the documents that laid their statutory foundations and in the charts and plans that established their ideal design.<sup>33</sup>

The experiences of Carpentier's protagonist in *Los pasos perdidos* parallels the evolution of the planning narratives and critiques of the resulting cities. Each traces the construction of a mythical city and the disenchantment and self-evaluation that occurs when the myth turns out to be problematic. Ciudad Guayana was to be an example of what modern planning could do. The experiences of its North American planners parallel those of Carpentier's protagonist, and show a corresponding parallel to Nerlich's tenets of modernism. The collective experience of the planners of Ciudad Guayana seems to be an uncanny reflection of the novel—idealistic entrance to an exotic spot, the attempted synthesis of the existing and the new, disillusion with implementation, the return home, and the reevaluation of the project and their roles within it.

Ralegh's mythical city of Manoa, Lake Parima filled with gold, and El Dorado all lay in the region bounded by the Orinoco and Caroní rivers. In the early 1960s, the planning of Ciudad Guayana as the regional center of economic growth for Guayana brought new life to the idea that this region was the source of great mineral wealth and future prosperity. The Corporación Venezolana de Guayana (CVG) was established as a development agency for the region; it contracted with a joint Harvard and MIT planning team to establish a plan for the region with Ciudad Guayana and the Guri Dam as the economic anchors. The El Dorado dreams of mineral riches would become complicated—in addition to the fabled gold and diamonds, the Guayana region was now known to have rich bauxite and shale oil deposits. The planners' strategy was to build Ciudad Guayana into a regional "growth pole" based on its position as the central urban core of a mineral rich region, which would process raw materials for export, fueled by hydroelectric power from the Guri Dam.

The bibliography of planning literature of Ciudad Guayana reads like a *Who's Who* of American planning theory and practice: Lloyd Rodwin, John Friedman, Donald Appleyard, and Anthony Downs, among many others were all on site (or at least in Caracas) at various times.<sup>34</sup> Lisa Peattie, an anthropologist involved in the project from its early days, was one of the first to begin questioning how and why the development goals laid out for Ciudad Guayana began to have less than ideal results for the lives of the people who inhabited the area. Her critiques of the planning process have themselves become a major part of both the planning and anthropological literatures.<sup>35</sup>

The rationale for the planning of the city and the development of the region around it parallels that of another Latin American modernization effort—that of the planning of Brasília, a city that

. . . was built to be more than merely the symbol of this new age. Rather, its design and construction were intended as means to *create* it by transforming Brazilian society. [There are] paired premises of this inversion in development—an inversion in which urban form and organization are considered instruments of social change. The first premise is that the plan for a new city can create a social order in its image; that is, one based on the values that motivate its design. The second premise projects the first as a blueprint for change in the context of national development. It proposes that the new city should be a model of radically different social practices. It argues that if this model could serve as an exemplar of progress for the rest of the nation, then it would be possible not only to generalize its innovations, but also to propel the country as a whole into the planned future it embodies. In this way, planners could stimulate leaps in the development process itself, causing the nation to skip undesired stages in its evolution.<sup>36</sup>

At first glance, the planners of Ciudad Guayana would seem to share more characteristics with the Adelantado of Carpentier's novel than with the novel's artist protagonist. In the Spanish colonies the Adelantado had the official capacity to form new cities and to establish the legal structure and bureaucracy for administration. In Carpentier's formulation in *Los pasos perdidos*, the functions of art and planning are separate. As Angel Rama observes, historically this has not been the case:

Before their appearance as material entities, cities had to be constructed as symbolic representations. Therefore, the permanence of the whole depended on the immutability of the signs themselves—on the words that transmitted the will to build the city in accordance with the stipulated norms—and also on the diagrams that translated the will into graphic terms. Without drawn plans the mental image created by the written directives was more likely to suffer permutations owing to local conditions or to inexpert execution. *Thinking the city* was the function of these symbolic systems, and their growing autonomy suited them increasingly to the manipulations of absolute authority.<sup>37</sup>

As, González Echevarría notes, “The first thing Cortés did upon setting foot on the Continent was to found the city of Vera Cruz, an act that enabled him to communicate directly with the Crown through letters drawn up by the city’s municipal government.”<sup>38</sup> The group that has historically served as the mediators between authority and local populations Rama terms *letrados*, that “myriad of administrators, educators, professionals, notaries, religious personalities, and other wielders of pen and paper,” whose activities “took on huge proportions, apparently unrelated to the tiny number of literate persons who could read its voluminous writings . . .” As formative members of the colonial elite, the *letrados*, through their knowledge and intimacy with writing and administrative systems, became a privileged class, gatekeepers of change and progress, and were the *de facto* interpreters of “the network of signs” which “seemed to float autonomously over the material world, a tissue of meaning that overlaid reality, disclosing its existence and granting it significance.” Rama ascribes three major reasons for the great success of the class of *letrados* in Spanish America: they not only fulfilled “the administrative requirements of a vast colonial enterprise, they also oversaw “the transculturation of an indigenous population, and lastly were “the first to use mass communications in an attempt to ideologize the masses.”<sup>39</sup>

Rama is explicit in his contention that the *letrados* are not a mere relic of the past:

The evolution of the symbolic system did not lose momentum with the passage of time, and it seems to have reached its apotheosis in our own era, replete with schemes of symbols,

indices acronyms, diagrams logotypes, and conventional images so many of which imitate, or even aspire to replace, language. The component symbols in each of these systems respond only vaguely to particular, concrete facts of daily life. They respond, instead, to the needs of the symbolic system wherein they were originally conceived . . . Their function—founded on reason and instituted through legal mechanisms—is to prescribe an order for the physical world, to construct norms for community life, to limit the development of spontaneous social innovations, and to prevent them from spreading in the body politic.<sup>40</sup>

Rama does not compare the history and evolution of the Latin American letrados with other colonial bureaucratic elites. Although differences based on particular colonial situations are apparent, the rise of these administrative classes goes hand in hand with global modernization, and is a factor in the spread of modernism and Enlightenment values. As Rama's previous analysis of Carpentier implies, these elites tend to look to metropolitan centers of power for their authority and legitimacy. Rama does not go to the next step in the evolution of the letrados—their internationalization into groups of professional specialists such as planners and architects. However, it is through these international networks that modernist projects are disseminated and evaluated, and, as Lisa Peattie observes, the Venezuelan planners in the Guayana project are in a position similar to Carpentier: "In 1982 a planner in Venezuela tries to understand the potentialities of his role by comparing his work to that of planners in the New York City system earlier."<sup>41</sup>

The cases of the planning of Ciudad Guayana and Brasília are an example of how this internationalization evolved. Both projects were driven by politically powerful individuals within their respective countries: in Brazil, Juscelino Kubitschek, and in Venezuela, Colonel Raael Alfonso Ravard. Kubitschek campaigned for president in 1955 on the platform of finally fulfilling the mandate of the first Republican Constitution of 1891 to transfer the capital to the interior. Steeped in national mythology, like El Dorado in Venezuela, the Brasília project was also instituted at the apex of the international modern architecture movement, and at the beginning of a strategy of development, led by the

United Nations, to promote national development by establishing regional growth poles.<sup>42</sup>

My point here is not to argue that planners in the developing world, or writers in the developing world, are subordinate in some way to their counterparts in the U.S. and Europe. I would instead argue that the intellectual elites, including Rama's letrados, participate in a convergence of forces of modernization that have produced networks of professionals, organized around disciplines, whose centers of authority and legitimacy are usually in global centers of power. This situation is not so different from the original colonial letrados, except that the lines of communication are now internationalized, and occur within disciplines rather than between the letrado and a colonial power.

Colonel Ravard had headed up preliminary studies in Guayana. When President Betancourt announced in 1959 three projects "which attract us and which we are going to execute"<sup>43</sup>—a national hydroelectric dam project, a national telecommunications project, and the development of Guayana—Ravard was in the right place at the right time, even if he may have valued some parts of the program more than others:

Let us recall that some people—participants in the Guayana Project with a reasonable claim to knowledge—believe that Colonel Ravard's central purpose was the building of the Guri Dam. He wanted the World Bank to finance the dam, and he needed the aluminum company and the city to legitimize the project. If this is correct, the goals of industrial growth, regional development, and decentralization were secondary to the particular objective of executing the dam. The program was project driven.<sup>44</sup>

Even though the two projects began roughly contemporaneously and with similar objectives and mythologies of origin, the source of planning ideas for Brasília was European modernism in the tradition of Le Corbusier, while the design inspiration for Ciudad Guayana was American structural-functionalism.

Le Corbusier had given a series of lectures in Brazil in 1929 and 1936. He had also worked directly with Brazilian architects Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa, who went on to head the Brasília project. So, as Holston documents, there was a firm foundation of modernist city planning at the base of the Brasília project.

He notes that Brasília “ is a “CIAM [Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne] city . . . the most complete example ever constructed of the architectural and planning tenets put forward in CIAM manifestos.”<sup>45</sup> The planning of Ciudad Guayana, on the other hand, seemed to grow out of a personal conversation between Colonel Rafael Alfonzo Ravard, an engineer, and Lloyd Rodwin, who was consulting in Venezuela in 1959 :

We got off somehow on a discussion of the nature of planning, and our half-hour meeting lasted more than three hours. Colonel Alfonzo [Ravard] mentioned the possibility of developing some more extended association – and then pressed me to visit the Guayana region . . . The CVG had a private plane. Adlai Stevenson and his party were visiting the region; so were some key members of President Betancourt’s cabinet.<sup>46</sup>

Rodwin and company’s volume of analyses of the Guayana program makes clear that this was a technical assistance project. It is very different in vision than Brasília , perhaps because the architectural and planning professions are much less integrated in the U.S. than in Europe. There are very few discussions of urban form in the Rodwin work. The chapters are economic analyses from the perspective of the structural economy of the region: regional patterns of urbanization, transportation, migration, education, housing – each receive their separate analysis by the appropriate expert. There is not the obvious vision and emphasis on abstract form that is present in the Brasília project, but an exhaustive structural and functional analysis of the regional context.

Ciudad Guayana and Brasília are very different cities in reality. The results of the two sets of planning analyses, however, are strikingly similar. In assumptions about what is important, in visual style of presentation of results and in the functional areas chosen for analysis they could have been done by the same team. Each is the result of a modernist structural-functionalist approach to planning and design. Each set of planners adopted a somewhat ahistorical posture, in that, even though the plan would be implemented in a regional context, a more-or-less blank slate for implementation was assumed. The Brasília planners looked to Europe for their methods while the Ciudad Guayana planners looked to the U.S., yet they analyzed virtually

by the same set of categories. There seem to be two reasons for this to be so. The first is that even with differences in disciplinary focus and method, there exists a network of commonality in what is perceived and expounded to be legitimate practice. The second is the sources for economic legitimation for the two projects: the World Bank in the case of Ciudad Guayana, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in the case of Brasília. The development strategies for the projects had to seem legitimate to their respective agencies. Part of the reason for looking to the U.S. or looking to Europe, rather than say, going with local tradition or some other alternative, was that the network of discourse, both professional in terms of the planners, and political in terms of the politicians who sought funding, was of necessity directed toward those centers of power. As Harvey observes, if space is constructed as "an open field of play for capital but a closed terrain for workers."<sup>47</sup> themselves, then a crucial advantage accrues to the capitalists. The planners and economists, sets of new international letrados both, were necessary because they understood the systems of signs needed to get the paperwork done.

A great deal of North American planning literature is devoted to Ciudad Guayana, both in its planning stages and in its aftermath. A subject search of the term "Guayana" in one large North American library reveals two major categories of holdings: studies carried out by the USGS on the distribution and economic value of the oil and mineral resources of the region, and a set of books produced as outcomes of the planning process and contracts with the Harvard-MIT Joint Institute of Urban Studies. Many of the books are notable for having been written by people who went on to become deans of United States university planning departments. As with Raleigh and his reports back to the crown, and with Humboldt and his mineralogical surveys of the region, the patterns of global articulation shown by the contents and authors of widely distributed images of the region continue to show ties to global economic and information capital, "the veil over real geography," in Harvey's phrase<sup>48</sup>. The "information capital" is the archive of regional images that forms the basis for cultural and economic discussions of the region by the flexible investors of world capital.





Figure 5.1 *La Gran Sabana*

### Wednesday, March 18

I arrive in Ciudad Guayana after having feasted on street food in Caracas, especially the *arepas* of corn masa, filled with squid, beans, cheese, a vast array of choices, served hot off the grill. The 727 from Caracas listed Puerto Ordaz as its destination, not the name of the planned city. I am excited about finally being able to see the city about which I have read so much. The site of the planned city has been the site of several other foundings. The first town in the region, pre-Raleigh, was a short-lived effort near the confluence of the Orinoco and Caroní rivers called Santo Tomé. Another Santo Tomé was founded by Antonio de Berrío, a few miles east of the confluence of the Orinoco and the Caroní, to defend the interior against Raleigh's advance. The present Ciudad Bolívar, some fifty kilometers upriver from the confluence, was founded in 1764 as Santo Tomé de la Nueva Granada. Humboldt's Orinoco journey ended coming down the river to Ciudad Bolívar, so he never saw the present site of Ciudad Guayana, even though he devotes several pages of historical and economic analysis to it.<sup>49</sup>

I have reservations at the Hotel InterContinental, near the planned park. Compared to the surrounding city, it seems more out of place than I do, some island of jet-set luxury in a hot, flat, industrial city. I order a Campari and soda, and sit in the bar overlooking the Caroní just above its confluence with the Orinoco. I decide to spend one night here before looking for some place I can afford. The hotel travel agency – “Happy Tours” – informs me that travel down the newly constructed road that goes in the direction of the Guri Dam, to the land of the *tepuis*, the flat-topped mesas that figure in the movies derived from Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World* and his Professor Challenger, and on to Brazil – the only paved road going south from the city – is not recommended without a guide. Privately I wonder how lost one could get on such a linear journey. She quotes a price per day with a guide for the 300 kilometers to the border town of Santa Elena de Uariren, and I dismiss my idea of exploring the surroundings of Ciudad Guayana.

### *Ciudad Guayana: The Map and the territory*

...the function of official writing began to create an idealized political architecture, “an airy republic” in the acerbic expression of Bolívar, detached from reality, prolonging the same disjuncture between social life and legal structure that had existed during the colonial period.<sup>50</sup>

The protagonists of *Los pasos perdidos*, like the planners of Ciudad Guayana, sought to establish something new – not utopias in either case but a drawing upon a slate they assumed to be emptier than it was. Those ideas were soon taken over by the bureaucratic necessities of administration and political reality. Much of Peattie’s evaluation of the planning of Ciudad Guayana takes great pains to make evident the differences between the planned city and the city as it actually developed, and between the planners, responsible to the government in Caracas or their corporate employers, and the citizens and their local concerns:

With the wisdom of hindsight it is possible to imagine that things could have been made somewhat different by having

more of the planning of the city go on at the site. This would have had meant primarily the Joint Center staff; they had less to lose than the Venezuelans in personal and professional contact in Caracas, and what they lost in interaction with their Venezuelan counterparts they would, I believe, have made up in the leverage of knowing more about what was actually going on.<sup>51</sup>

Peattie also notes that the main concerns of the Venezuelan planners are also in Caracas rather than on site. However, it not simply location and focus that led to the blindness of the planners to the social reality of the town. The evidence that the planners see themselves as the new letrados is palpable. The Corporación Venezolana de Guayana maintains a community food bank in the Centro, where lines of tired-looking people wait for some bureaucrat to declare their eligibility. It is a company town, and the company is the CVG. The planners have reserved for themselves the highest point in town for the CVG headquarters. In a neighborhood called Alta Vista, the headquarters is a modern Palenque—a conventional curtain-wall modern Mies Van der Rohe box in construction, except that it is in the form of a stepped pyramid. Giant full-color topographic maps of Guayana line the walls like tapestries. Harold Lasswell's *The Signature of Power* discusses the relationship of the facades of public buildings to structure of power; however his examples are from European capitals. Here is the historical myth of regional power writ in stone and glass.<sup>52</sup>



*Figure 5.2. The CVG headquarters.*

The building, a modern expression of a structure that was the center of authority and tribute for an entire region, is an accurate expression of the role of the CVG in Guayana. The town, the mining company, the Guri Dam, the community food bank, all were obviously in close relationship with the CVG. It was not until I got out into La Gran Sabana south of the city that I began to realize the extent of the development company's interests. A group of Dutch scientists landed in a helicopter at an agricultural experiment station, just back from a study of water quality on the top of the tepuis—the mesas that Arthur Conan Doyle made famous for being islands of biogeography. At another CVG-funded site, more helicopters were monitoring Pemon Indians practicing traditional burning for agriculture, a practice now frowned upon for its environmental impacts. Back at CVG headquarters, a sophisticated geographic information system monitored rainfall, water quality, mining operations, population, erosion. The building truly was the center of the region, and the letters CVG began to have import similar to YHWH.

To a large extent, well documented by Peattie, the city-as-plan of the planners, and the city-as-a-lived-place of the inhabitants of Ciudad Guayana component communities, were invisible

to one another for quite some time. The integration of Puerto Ordaz and San Felix into the aggregate city of Ciudad Guayana, was a truth only on planners maps:

Despite a ceremony in 1961 in which the then President of Venezuela, Rómulo Betancourt, laid the foundation stone for the city, a majority of the city's inhabitants thought of the area as composed of several small towns rather than as a single city. Some thought that the new city was to be a separate development. This conceptual reluctance to aggregate small units into a larger one could be a bad omen for the future political unity of the area.<sup>53</sup>

The idea for Ciudad Guayana was to combine several existing communities into a new urban unit. The "reluctance to aggregate" still exists in the 1990s. Airline flights to Ciudad Guayana in 1993 still listed Puerto Ordaz as their destination. People say they live in San Félix or Puerto Ordaz, not Ciudad Guayana. The planners method for imposing form, for relating the physical arrangement of the new city to its functions in the regional context, was based on the structural analysis of form developed by Kevin Lynch. Christine Boyer presents the planners as trapped in their structural vocabulary:

The planners for the most part are silent, as if they refuse to create a place for their voices in the historical process and accept instead the sealed empirical world to which they have condemned themselves. When they do find a voice, they attempt to offer a structural analysis of urban form best exemplified in the work of Kevin Lynch. Searching for a way to describe urban form, he isolates landmarks, nodes, paths, edges, and districts in order to offer the user a behavioral image of the city. Thus the sense of a settlement becomes "the clarity with which it can be perceived and identified, and the ease with which its elements can be linked with other events and places and that representation can be connected with nonspatial concepts and values." . . . But in this case the history of place is broken up, and only in fragments as palatable remnants of the past is it allowed to fit into the functional reordering of the city.<sup>54</sup>

This method of admitting the past genres only as the functional re-ordering of the whole is parallel to Carpentier's method in *Los pasos perdidos*. Carpentier used genres such as allegory,

Doyle's popular fiction, and ethnographic narrative to generate a structural form of the modern ritual of travel as self-discovery. He also used structuralism as modernist method by linking elements "with other events and places," connecting his images from the archive to other set of concepts and values. For both Carpentier and the planners of Ciudad Guayana, the archive is a functional repository, a set of elements to be brought out and enlisted in a new project. As Boyer observes,

. . .the tendency to seek a formal order for the city can be aligned with the modernist gesture to reappropriate a fragmented and compartmentalized modern reality by transforming it into a personal aesthetic style and a private abstract language. This urge to aesthetic abstraction reveals an inability of modern man to establish a rapport with material reality. Thus is created a gap between those concerned with a stylistic order and those dependent upon social conditions, as well as a situation that reflects the alienation and separation of modern reality.<sup>55</sup>

By inscribing past forms into a structural narrative of modern life, in Carpentier's case, and by attempting to integrate existing city forms into an abstract system of urban form, in the case of the Ciudad Guayana planners, both show a modernist tendency toward taking the accumulated forms of the past and transforming them into stylistics and abstraction. The "personal" and "private" parts of Rama's formulation become discipline-specific sets of symbols. Carpentier's result is perhaps more self-aware and self-critical than the planners, even though an awareness of the stylistics and abstraction appear from the Ciudad Guayana planners as well.

### Thursday, March 19

Not knowing where the next *cambiar* will be and accepting the hotel's extortionate rate I leave the Hotel Intercontinental, after exchanging as few dollars as I think I can get away with for awhile. The desk clerk has named several cheaper hotels to me, without recommending one, since none can measure up to where we are. He is young and appears sympathetic when I say I cannot afford to stay here with the oil company executives

hanging out in the bar. The cab driver, on the other hand, recommends El Rasil, since that is where most of the backpacking young tourists and mineral exploration company workers stay. I agree to check it out, and he points out other possibilities on the way. When we arrive, I am pleased to see that it is adjacent to a plaza, and has a shopping area with a bakery.

I check in, and ask the clerk how my Spanish is. "*Sorprendente*," she replies, "surprising." The same adjective used in the ads for the Spanish translation of the *Twin Peaks* television show I had watched in Caracas a few nights before, I am not quite sure what to make of this compliment. After checking in, I notice a tattered Toyota Land Cruiser, pre-yuppie model, pull into the parking lot and unload several very grimy looking backpackers. The driver gets out and wanders into the plaza. I hastily write a note and ask what he charges to drive and guide someone into *La Gran Sabana* and leave it under his wiper blade. The pool has been taken over by some boisterous American oil field workers, two of whom are wearing LSU t-shirts. I remember Santiago, my undergraduate friend at LSU years ago who was studying petroleum engineering. The two swimmers are from Houston, here for a few weeks drilling test wells for seismic studies.

### *The City, the Region, and the Retreating Urban Utopia: Carpentier in La Gran Sabana*

. . . Santa Mónica de los Venados is what Santa Elena del Uariren might have been in the early days of its founding, when the easiest way to get to the young city was a seven-day trip from Brazil up a turbulent river.<sup>56</sup>

One of the interesting things I learn traveling through Guayana is that, when I tell people what I am doing, looking at the planning of the Ciudad Guayana and *Los pasos perdidos*, I get understanding nods. What to me seems to be a promising investigation into some perhaps tenuous ties between literature and planning, seems to the people I meet almost trite. They live in El

Dorado, and seem accustomed to its dual life as a fantasy and as their everyday environment. González Echevarría's analysis of the textual influences on Romulo Gallegos' *Doña Bárbara* notes that when John Englekirk visited San Fernando de Apure to investigate the real world sources of Gallegos' novel, found "that the people of the Apure region had incorporated the novel into local lore. Englekirk found plainsmen whom Gallegos had used as models and who now, like characters in the second part of *Don Quixote*, knew they had an added life in fiction."<sup>57</sup>

The same summer, 1947, that Englekirk made his trip to San Fernando de Apure, Alejo Carpentier also made the first of his two trips to the region.<sup>58</sup> González Echevarría argues that Englekirk's work and Carpentier's novel are the beginnings of "the major figure in modern Latin American fiction: the Archive, or repository of stories and myths, one of which is the story about collecting those stories and myths."<sup>59</sup> Carpentier's first trip is to the area known as La Gran Sabana – an extremely different biogeographic area from his second trip the following year by boat to the Upper Orinoco. The Orinoco trip took Carpentier through terrain much more like his descriptions in *Los pasos perdidos*. As Carpentier biographer Shaw notes:

Initially it had been his intention to write a nonfiction account of his first journey, to be called *El libro de la Gran Sabana* (The book of the Great Savannah), but . . . this book never came to completion. It was overtaken by the inspiration for a new novel in which Carpentier combined the impressions of his launch journey and his flight, involving two quite different parts of Venezuela, to provide the setting for *Los pasos perdidos*.<sup>60</sup>

Carpentier's impressions from his Gran Sabana trip are collected in a series of essays called *Visión de América*, in one of which he discusses his great-grandfather's trip to the Guayana region. Alfred Clerec Carpentier – "el primer americano de mi familia" – the first American of his family. In flight to Ciudad Bolívar, Carpentier muses about his grandfather's arrival in America on a boat he built himself in which to cross the Atlantic: "Procediendo como los antiguos conquistadores españoles, Alfred Clerec Carpentier comenzó por planear y construir un barco . . ." <sup>61</sup> – "Like the ancient Spanish conquistadors, Alfred Clerec Carpentier began to plan and build a boat . . ." Perhaps



Carpentier's journey back in time in *Los pasos perdidos* is personal in more ways than an allegorical description of modern alienation.

Carpentier may have always looked to Europe for validation, as Rama argues, but perhaps the traditional view of him—that he traveled to Europe to discover himself, and continued to look to Europe as the center of meaning, is too limiting.<sup>62</sup> With the trips to La Gran Sabana and the Orinoco, Carpentier began his most productive years. The titles of the *Visión de América* essays are instructive: "La Gran Sabana: World of Genesis"; "The Last Explorer of El Dorado"; "Ciudad Bolívar: Metropolis of the Orinoco." Taken together with his repeating the journey of discovery of his great-grandfather, Carpentier seems to be forming his identity as an American during this period. He is also forging his identity as an individual in modern society. On such a personal level, *Los pasos perdidos* may be read as a structural inventory of the archive of the Orinoco, using mostly European sources. The accumulation and integration of the genres of European tradition, represented by the narrator's musical composition, is lost in the interior of America. The romantic idea of returning to Eden in the jungle is lost as well.

### **Tuesday, March 24**

I have contracted with Harry, the burnt-blond, ex-Californian who parked his beat-up Land Cruiser in the Hotel Rasil parking lot, to drive me through La Gran Sabana. Having met the *gerencia* of Public Relations at the headquarters of the CVG, and spent some time in the Centro Cívico near the hotel, I was restless to see the surrounding countryside. The rate seems exorbitant to my graduate student sensibilities, but is much less than that quoted by the agent at the Intercontinental. I tell Harry I have no particular destination in mind, and he seems a little suspicious. There is but one road along the 300 kilometers from Ciudad Guayana through southeastern Venezuela to Brazil, fairly recently paved in its lower portions. The last Venezuelan town on the road is Santa Elena de Uairén, where Carpentier had once taken a trip by airplane, and compared it to his mythical city of Santa Monica.

We are headed towards Chivatón, where Harry knows a Pemon Indian woman who runs a tourist hostel. I grow accustomed to seeing trucks hauling mahogany logs north from Brazil and returning loaded with sacks of cement. Harry lives beyond Santa Elena de Uariren, beyond the end of the road. He came to Guayana as an employee of a mineral exploration company, is married to a local Indian woman, and seems to enjoy deriving his income from one economic system—that of rich tourists—and spending it in another, the cash and barter world of rural Guayana.

South of Ciudad Guayana, after passing through the farm and cattle country outside the city, the Guayana shield rises suddenly in front of us. The elevation rises 1000 meters rather abruptly, and we drive up through jacaranda trees in full bloom. At the top, a vast landscape of low grassland appears—La Gran Sabana. We stop on the highway near the mining town of El Dorado for coffee. This is a wide spot in the road, but there are gold and diamonds for sale in huts every twenty yards. I learn that the preferred mining technique is to take a large high-pressure hose and just eat away at the landscape for treasure. The men look mostly desperate, and it is the only time on the trip so far I have felt unsafe.

Halfway to Santa Elena, we stop at a the “hotel” at Chivatón, after a bone-jarring twenty kilometers of unpaved four-wheel drive path, only to find that the adobe structure is fully occupied by a group of German tourists. Tired and hungry, Harry is on friendly enough terms with Emelia, the proprietress, a Pemon Indian woman, to persuade her to let us stay at her house. Emelia and another Pemon woman run the hotel and wash the linens in the stream that runs beside it. Emelia’s daughter and boyfriend are also staying that night, but she agrees to let us stay.

We reach Santa Elena de Uariren. The end of the road. This is as close to Brazil as I will get. We stay in what looks to me like an abandoned bar and motel for ten dollars per night. The place was obviously once a thriving business, but now the restaurant and bar are closed, and the paint is peeling. Much of the rest of the town looks prosperous, though. Paving the road has made travel fairly easy here. At one time, the only way here was by

river from Brazil. Now, Happy Tours has a branch office here, and most of the restaurants and shops are run by young European expatriates. This is the town that was the model for Carpentier's Santa Monica de los Venados. I have the best meal in days at a restaurant run by an Italian woman. The town is full of smiling, excited people who seem to have their feet in many worlds at once. It is a tourist destination, but relatively unknown, populated by people who wanted to get away from it all, and most of them working providing services for people who want to get away from it all for a shorter period of time. Ciudad Guayana is booming, the growth pole strategy—a regional developments strategy built around exporting raw materials—is working. But Santa Elena is booming too, with a perhaps more efficient strategy of importing tourist dollars. Harry tells me that he is buying a ham radio so that he can more easily stay in touch with the tour companies in Ciudad Guayana for business prospects.

### *Writing: "Over here" versus "over there"*

In the introduction to a Harvard/MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies summary of the planning Ciudad Guayana, Lloyd Rodwin writes there were "on occasion serious disagreements between the Venezuelans and the Joint Center Staff." He continues by writing, "That such disagreements should arise was hardly surprising, given the differences in the backgrounds, interests, and aims of the participants."<sup>63</sup> In a footnote to this passage he also observes:

The reader needs to be cautioned, however, that the issues and the differences of opinion as well as the accomplishments are being recorded by the Joint Center staff—with the natural bias this may imply. Some Venezuelan contributions were sought but were not obtained. This is a pity because they would have provided other revealing perspectives. One reason those contributions were not obtained was that the Venezuelan staff—as civil servants—are less prone to write up their individual views. Another was that the Joint Center staff had more time

and a greater academic interest in articulating their ideas and experiences.<sup>64</sup>

This passage was written almost thirty years ago now; as yet there have been very few studies, in either English or Spanish by Venezuelans about the Ciudad Guayana project in academic planning literature.<sup>65</sup> The original group of American planners seems to “own” the production of such materials.

There are two major sources of information about the Ciudad Guayana planning project: from the CVG itself, and from the set of publications of the Harvard/MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies. The CVG documents are either technical studies and reports meant for internal use—regional demographic and environmental studies, the great majority of which are published in Spanish—or what can best be described as promotional literature—commemorative books marking the various anniversaries of the founding of the project, published in both Spanish and English. Only in the 1990s have Venezuelan studies independent of the CVG begun to appear, none of which have yet had major impact in the planning literature outside Venezuela.<sup>66</sup>

I am not dismissing the quality of the analyses done by the CVG, but rather commenting on the forces affecting the academic diffusion of planning theory. There is a fairly explicit bias, even in Peattie’s 1987 re-evaluation of the project, about the location of the sources of planning innovation:

As has been mentioned, some of these [innovations in planning process] have come into existence in Ciudad Guayana. There are the neighborhood committees, the commission on zoning, the conservation board. In the Venezuelan national planning body, there has been a move to replace “normative planning,” which assumes that only the state makes plans and that plans are based on consensus, by a “situational or strategic planning” which takes political actors into account. In part, the creation of these institutions responds to political movements within Venezuela, both at the grassroots and at the national level. But their creation is also in part a response to the American example. Social inventions diffuse as technical ones do.<sup>67</sup>

The clear implication here is that innovations diffuse from the planning elites outward. Even where there are instructive lessons to be learned from technical, assistance projects, the analy-

sis, synthesis, and deployment of lessons learned and proposed innovations flow from legitimized centers to the periphery.

Peattie's 1987 evaluation of the Ciudad Guayana project, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, is to date the most perceptive and self-aware look at the problems of a centralized approach to a planning applied to a site that is both remote and removed from the real interests of the planners involved. However, Peattie stops short of examining the roles that publishing from centers of power and gatekeeping by elites play in the spatial formation of developing regions. At one point she notes that "here we see that through a historical process which we will certainly not take time to trace here the conventions of planning practice were such as to serve the purpose of legitimizing a project which had as its primary purpose the transfer of resources to large corporations and their well-to-do staffs."<sup>68</sup>

Peattie focuses on the inequities and contradictions in the planning process itself, but never sees the inequities produced by the ability of the North American planners to represent the project as a whole through their relatively better access to resources for dissemination. The North American planners become the producers of the image of the project in the world market, while the South American planners are relegated to be consumers of the dominant system of production or producers for a local market.

The documents produced by the North American consultants to the planning of Ciudad Guayana are at the moment the "canonical" ones. However, the emerging critiques by their Venezuelan peers will also become a part of the archive of the Orinoco. As the genres of acceptable planning techniques change over time, one may overtake the other in significance. The North American planners, like Carpentier's narrator in *Los pasos perdidos*, look back on their role in the construction of the new city with frustration and a sense of their own shortcomings. I suppose that the Venezuelan planners in turn, like the Adelantado and Rosario, wonder what relevance the short-term presence of outsiders was for their continuing work to build a city. This is a supposition only; Carpentier does not tell the story of Santa Monica from the perspective of its permanent inhabit-

ants, and the Venezuelan planners do not tell their own story either.

Other than the looks of mild amusement from the Public Relations manager at the CVG, and the sense that I was not getting the full story about his perceptions, I was not able to get many direct assessments of the North American involvement in the planning process of Ciudad Guayana from him. My field notes from my interview with him say only that my impressions of Miguel Galindo were of an extremely hospitable man

. . . who is very good at his job, takes it very seriously, very casual about having lots of power. I am not even aware of my own nervousness and am probably incoherent at times, but he is perfectly casual, relaxing, and helpful. I think his English is much better than he lets on (his way of encouraging the foreigner to adapt?), something I seem to keep running into.

Looking upon these notes years after the fact, brings to the surface Michel de Certeau's notions of writing and the other. For the North American planners, "truth is over here while error is over there," the "initial dangerous and skeptical bipolarity" of Certeau's hermeneutics<sup>69</sup>—planning is a process of developing a path between "what is" to "what ought to be," how to get from "here" to "there"—a process that in the end means that the answers are produced "here" and applied "over there."

Just as de Lery's ethnographic writing practice made the initial distinction between the place of experience and the place of writing, Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* was built back at home years after his notes were taken, Carpentier's narrator is only able to see his role in Santa Monica from the vantage of his return, I am able to "make sense" of my experience from the vantage point of my own interests. These are all examples of the form of writing that "ubiquitously takes for granted a rift between *discourse* and the *body*," a form that "assumes a gap to exist between the silent opacity of the "reality" that it seeks to express and the place where it produces its own speech, protected by the distance established between itself and its object."<sup>70</sup>

The modern journey to the other is founded on the assumption of the return and the re-establishment of distance and separation. When that distance is not re-constructed, the would-be author "goes native," and, as in the case of Bonpland versus

Humboldt, loses touch with the network necessary for the dissemination of results. While there is no physical lack of paper and ink, there is a lack of access for their dissemination.

The view that the relation of the powerful center to the less powerful periphery implied by modernity is one that must produce distance, alienation, and resentment—would be a cynical and negative view, if it were the end of the story. But the separation that modernity assumes is a fiction, a fiction that is becoming more and more difficult to maintain as the space for retreat to the familiar shrinks and disappears. The self-serving illusion that a boundary exists between “us” and “them” has been able to be maintained only through another illusion—an illusion of the possibility of indefinite expansion into unlimited space.

### Notes

1 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 378.

2 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 151.

3 Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 27.

4 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 28.

5 Alejo Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, trans. Harriet de Onis (New York: Avon, 1979 [1956]), 182. Subsequent references to the novel will be given parenthetically as page numbers in the text.

6 Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage, 1979), 58.

7 Michael Nerlich, “On the Unknown History of our Modernity,” CHS Occasional Paper, Number 3 (University of Minnesota, Center for Humanistic Studies, 1986), 13.

8 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 37.

9 Nerlich, “On the Unknown History,” 13.

10 Nerlich, “On the Unknown History,” 15-16.

11 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 6.

12 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 7.

13 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 164.

14 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 188.

15 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 202. Emphasis in the original.

16 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 166.

17 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 238.

18 Carpentier *The Lost Steps*, 237-238.

19 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 224.

20 M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 238-9.

- 21 González Echevarría, 106.
- 22 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 239.
- 23 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 6.
- 24 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 7.
- 25 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World* (1912), Chapters VII and VIII. <http://www.literature.org/authors/doyle-arthur-conan/lost-world/> (28 Mar 2002).
- 26 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 376.
- 27 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 376-7.
- 28 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 377.
- 29 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* 383.
- 30 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 185.
- 31 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, 186.
- 32 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 17.
- 33 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 8-9.
- 34 In addition to the books by Peattie, the following works are important in the discussion of the planning history of Ciudad Guayana: Lloyd Rodwin and Associates, *Planning Urban Growth and Regional Development: The Experience of the Guayana Program of Venezuela* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1969); John Friedmann, *Regional Development Policy: A Case Study of Venezuela* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1966); Donald Appleyard, *Planning a Pluralist City: Conflicting Realities in Ciudad Guayana* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1976); Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
- 35 See Lisa Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1987), and her earlier *The View from the Barrio* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968). The latter book is often used in introductory urban anthropology classes as a classic example of urban ethnography.
- 36 James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 4.
- 37 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 6.
38. González Echevarría 49.
- 39 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 18, 24, 19.
- 40 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 25.
- 41 Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, 170.
- 42 This discussion of the history and planning of Brasília is drawn from Holston, *The Modernist City*.
- 43 The discussion of the formation of the Venezuelan development strategy is from Jesus Sanoja Hernandez, *At the Doors of El Dorado: CVG, 30 Years* (Caracas: Editorial Binev, n.d. [ca . 1990]), 6-8.
- 44 Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, 155.
- 45 Holston, *The Modernist City*, 31.
- 46 Lloyd Rodwin and Associates, *Planning Urban Growth and Regional Development: The Experience of the Guayana Program of Venezuela* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), vii.
- 47 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 233.
- 48 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 87.
- 49 Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, trans. Helen Maria Williams, Vol. 5, 697ff.
- 50 Rama, *The Lettered City*, 41.



- 51 Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, 156.
- 52 Harold D. Lasswell, *The signature of power : buildings, communication, and policy*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1979).
- 53 Appleyard, *Planning a Pluralist City*, 22.
- 54 M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 287.
- 55 Boyer, *Dreaming*, 282.
- 56 Carpentier, *The Lost Steps*, "Author's Note," 13.
- 57 González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 143.
- 58 González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 143.
- 59 González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 144.
- 60 Donald L. Shaw, *Alejo Carpentier* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), 44-45.
- 61 Alejo Carpentier, *Obras completas*. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985), Vol. 5, 201.
- 62 Shaw notes that "Like Carpentier in his long trip to Europe, the narrator needs to travel in order to discover something about himself." Shaw, *Alejo Carpentier*, 53.
- 63 Rodwin and Associates, *Planning Urban Growth*, 4.
- 64 Rodwin and Associates, *Planning Urban Growth*, note 1, 492.
- 65 Discounting publications by the CVG itself, the primary sources for Venezuelan perspectives on Ciudad Guayana are Maria-Pilar Garcia "La Guayana Venezolana: otra caso aleccionador," in *Las truchas: inversión para la desigualdad?* ed. Ivan Restrippo (Mexico City: Centro de Ecodesarrollo y Editorial Oceano, 1984); and Maria-Pilar Garcia and Rase Lesser Blumberg, "The Unplanned Ecology of a Planned Industrial City: The Case of Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela," in *Urbanization in the Americas, from the Beginning to the Present*, Vol. 3, ed. Schaedel, Hardoy, and Kinzer (The Hague: Mouton, 1978).
- 66 See, for example, Gustavo Coronel, *Una perspectiva gerencial de la Corporacion Venezolana de Guayana: la vision, los desastres y las soluciones* (Estado Carabobo: Sabana del Medio, 1995); Benjamin Thula Rangel, *Guayana en el desarrollo nacional y global, 1993-2000* (Caracas: Imprenta Universitaria de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1994); Manuel Alfredo Rodriguez, *Lecturas guayanesas* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1995).
- 67 Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, 168-9.
- 68 Peattie, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana*, 162-3.
- 69 Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University, 1988), 221.
- 70 Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 3.

## Chapter 6

# Globalization and the Ethics of Narrative

At present, we are experiencing a new phase of the old struggle—no longer a struggle of a contemporary form, filled with life, against an old, lifeless one, but a struggle of life against the form *as such*, against the *principle* of form. Moralists, reactionaries, and people with strict feelings for style are perfectly correct when they complain about the increasing “lack of form” in modern life. They fail to understand, however, that what is happening is not only a negative, passive dying out of traditional forms, but simultaneously a fully positive drive towards life which is actively repressing these forms.<sup>1</sup>

One of Carpentier’s accomplishments in *Los pasos perdidos* is his demonstration of the ways the archival novel takes stereotypical “encapsulations” of individual modern experience and uses them to re-envision their own genesis. The focus of the narrative, however generalizable, remains on the experience and perception of the self. Other archival novels, such as those of Abel Posse, more explicitly examine the capability for modern institutions to themselves be reflexive, and are part of the process of “reflexive modernization,” conceived of as “a radicalization of modernity, which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to another modernity.”<sup>2</sup> For example, Posse, in his novel *Daimón*, includes the voice of the other as it irrupts into what had been seen as a process of development coming from Europe, and enables that system to recognize its own constraints and posit the possibility of alternative modes of being, as well as alternative criteria for progress.

Niklas Luhmann asserts that this reflexivity becomes possible and even unavoidable because of the fact that communication has become global. “The inclusion of all communicative be-

havior into one societal system is the unavoidable consequence of functional differentiation," Luhmann observes. As a result "society becomes a global system," whose "communicative network spreads over the globe" and "includes all human (i.e. meaningful) communication". Thus global society "provides one world for one system; and it integrates all world horizons as horizons of one communicative system . . . A plurality of possible worlds has become inconceivable. The world-wide communicative system constitutes one world which includes all possibilities."<sup>3</sup> For Luhmann, this is a planetary given, even with the splintering fragmentation of civil war and cultural politics that has happened during the past decade.

The third participant in the dialogue I would like to construct here, in addition to Posse and Luhmann, is the Argentine liberation theologian Enrique Dussel. Dussel's project is to create a new vision of modernity – what he calls the "transmodern" – to redress what he sees as its historical omissions brought about by a Eurocentric understanding of modernity and its processes.<sup>4</sup> His argument for re-appropriating the principles of modernity and re-applying them in a more inclusive way should be distinguished from other current efforts that seem to remain Eurocentric, such as those expressed by Benjamin Barber in his *Jihad vs. McWorld*.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas Barber's analysis of the effects of emerging global consumer markets is trenchant and his goal of strengthening civil society laudable, his rhetoric is that of a defensive modernism rather than an inclusive one, and is unnecessarily polarizing.<sup>6</sup> Lévi-Strauss had already seen the problems of such exclusive rhetoric in his 1954 analysis of Islam and French society, when he wrote "we seem to be incapable of realizing that principles, which were fruitful when it was a matter of ensuring our own development, may not be venerated by others to the point of inducing them to renounce these principles for their own use, through the sheer gratitude we think they owe us for having been the first to invent them." "Political oppression and economic exploitation," he continues, "have no right to look for excuses among their victims."<sup>7</sup> Barber's rhetoric seems to return to the division Certeau notes "between *Nature*, whose uncanniness is exteriority, and *civil society*," between nature and culture, and

ultimately between nature and human.<sup>8</sup> Other analysts of cultural resistance to global forces, particularly Castells, are no less concerned about the prospects for a democratic future when that resistance “may fragment rather than reconstitute society.”<sup>9</sup> However, Castells is able to express those concerns in an open way that is prepared for positive change.

Dussel’s critique of Eurocentric conceptions of modernity is an attempt to both redress what he sees as past wrongs and to go beyond normative prescription to a more inclusive dialogical reconstruction of the principles of modernity. As such, he shares commonalities with the perspective of communicative ethics, which includes Habermas and Barber. However, his interest in redress of the past perhaps allies him even more with the “asymmetrical reciprocity” communication perspective of Iris Young, wherein “each [party] brings to the relationship a history and structured positioning that makes them different from one another, with their own shape, trajectory, and configuration of forces.”<sup>10</sup> Dussel’s liberation philosophy “begins by affirming alterity” while recognizing the impossibility of effective dialogue when that dialogue “fails to take seriously the asymmetric situation of the excluded Other.”<sup>11</sup>

From renewed calls for civil society to the most radical postmodern celebrations of fragmentation and difference, Luhmann would argue that entire range of debate occurs within a planetary communicative horizon. He is thus more amenable to comparison with sociological analyses of the emerging “network society” of Castells. Castells conception is that emergent global society is “based on the systemic disjunction between the local and the global,” where “civil societies shrink and disarticulate because there is no longer continuity between the logic of association and representation in specific societies and cultures.”<sup>12</sup> However, because of the networked and distributed nature of power and identity in emerging global society, Castells argues that, rather than the dichotomy of *Jihad vs. MsWorld* that Barber constructs, new “collective agents of social transformation, “ “new proactive subjects” formed in resistance to but enabled by global communication, may, in fact, “be the main potential source of social change in the network society.”<sup>13</sup> Even with its monolithic overtones, Luhmann’s formulation, when

applied to the work of fiction within such a global system, may provide some insights into the contemporary situation of global culture.

Abel Posse's 1978 novelization of the life of Lope de Aguirre, *Daimón*, shows the complexities of the history of Latin American in a global system, a Latin America that cannot avoid being seen through the lens of its own archive, producing what Posse in the novel refers to as the "spatiotemporal spiral." The archival form of the novel becomes one representation of what Niklas Luhmann terms "self-description" within a global system, a description that can form a starting point for the paradoxical method of describing a system from within:

We would gladly concede that there is no such thing as a binding representation of a society within that society. But that concession would not be the end but rather the beginnings of a reflection on the form of such a system's own self-observations and self-descriptions. These must be submitted within the system in a process that must in turn be observed and described.<sup>14</sup>

The image of the system of global relationships expanding until it feeds back upon itself could be that of the serpent with its tail in its mouth. However, that image is too self-contained—the creation of the new is too dependent upon what existed before. A more appropriate image, though still simplifying, may be that of the early computer algorithm called Life, where a randomly populated grid of cells, with prescribed rules for interaction between any two cells, exhibits dramatic new characteristics when the edges of the grid are allowed to fold back onto itself.<sup>15</sup>

Contemporary archival novels, literary theories of globalization and culture, and social systems theory may be read together as "submissions" of analyses of the current relationships of globalization and culture within a world system. Where such a viewpoint leaves the activity of criticism of and resistance to the negative aspects of globalization is problematic. Whereas traditional conceptions of modernity may focus on its relation to individual self-reflection, as demonstrated in *Los pasos perdidos*, or to a concern that modernity reflexively question its internal assumptions and its own history, the work of Posse and other contemporary archival novels foregrounds the relationship of modernity with what has been seen as external to it, the other that

has been its object and locus for expansion. Contrary to novels of colonialism, these novels integrate and privilege the point of view of the other.

The attraction of Niklas Luhmann's systems-theoretical formulation of the problem is that while it does not deny the impossibility of apprehending, understanding, and analyzing a totality from within, neither does it retreat into a realm of discontinuous, incommunicable fragments. Luhmann's basic notion of methods of analysis of contemporary society – "There is no *métarécit* because there are no external observers"<sup>16</sup> – can be used as a starting point for an analysis of contemporary global situation of culture. If applied in a manner consistent with the multicultural reality of global society, Luhmann's ideas may allow a way out of the box of the Derridian "metaphysics of presence," the postmodernist view wherein "the world that is systematic . . . can never be the world of discourse: this world is never present to itself; it never constitutes an accomplished totality."<sup>17</sup> Luhmann assumes that there is no "outside" to this discourse as a given; given such a starting point, where does one go?

In what follows I try to create a dialogue among these three major participants – Niklas Luhmann, who has written about the systems aspects of modernity, Enrique Dussel, who has tried to radically re-envision the genesis and possibilities of modernity, and Abel Posse, whose archival novel *Daimón* can also be read as a case for the redemption of modernity. This dialogue will be grounded in an argument, developed from Henri Lefebvre's ideas about the production of space, that the emergence of the issues of the nature of modernity and modernity's relationships to what it has excluded have come about because of changes in the spatial ground of capitalism. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## *Two Texts on the Redemption of the Spirit of Modernity*

The proclamation of the “postmodern” has at least one virtue. It has clarified that contemporary society has lost faith in the correctness of its self-description.<sup>18</sup>

The past is neither the merely similar nor the simply remote and unique. The reiterations of time are like the throbbing of a life that is also our own.<sup>19</sup>

The two texts considered here, Abel Posse’s novel *Daimón*, and the work of liberation philosopher Enrique Dussel, both reconstruct history through the reinterpretation of Latin American archival materials. Each indicts that history while at the same time attempting to redeem it for a positive future. Both authors are Argentine, and thus come from a country with a Borgesian sense of the significance of the archive and practical experience with the politics of memory.

Posse, although not very well-known in English, is a premier exponent of the archival novel. In addition to *Daimón*, he has written, among others, *The Dogs of Paradise*, a novel of the Columbian voyages, and *El largo atardecer del caminante*, a novelization of Cabeza de Vaca’s journey’s through what is now Mexico and Texas. Dussel, after early education at the University of Mendoza, received a doctorate in philosophy in Spain and a second in history at the Sorbonne.<sup>20</sup> His work moves from an early interest in the concept of the “common good” to histories of various religious humanisms to a philosophical history of the church in Latin America. His dissertation for the Sorbonne, published as *Les Eveques Hispano-Américain: Défenseurs et évangélisateurs de l’Indien 1505–1620*, was in part an analysis of the different attitudes of Las Casas and Sepúlveda toward the indigenous peoples of America. Returning to Argentina in 1967, he studied Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas, and began to develop the ideas which resulted in the 1978 *Ethics and the Philosophy of*

*Liberation*. He was persecuted into leaving Argentina for exile in Mexico in 1975.

The archive of Orinoco sources is, in the phrase of Claudio Guillén, a “diachronic and supranational structure.”<sup>21</sup> Even though spread across time and space, the accumulated set of texts and images commenting upon and observing the Orinoco region make up an evolving formal structure of intertextuality, and, Guillén argues, “interhistoricity.”<sup>22</sup>

Once we identify a genre, form, or theme that seems to be a supranational diachronic structure, we must of necessity investigate those options, relations, semantic, and formal spaces that encompass or link different periods and places: the structures that without coinciding entirely with a period or place—with some term of an option, some outstanding component of a relation—subsume, or better yet, sum up the multiplicity of facts.<sup>23</sup>

This is a good description of the method of both Posse and Dussel. The cultural production of the archive, in a global sense, is the enabling of the comparative studies of source materials such that the contradictions within them become apparent. As a result, “familiar geographical categories are uprooted from their original territorial sites and attached to new locations,” notes Fernando Coronil, and “modify also the spaces and targets of imperial subjection and of political contestation.”<sup>24</sup> The archive becomes a locus for the struggle for cultural redefinition, as the very basis of the self-image of modernity becomes contested.

### **Adventures of the Spirit: Wandering Through the Archive with Abel Posse’s *Daimón***

By the time Humboldt made his South American journey, legends about Lope de Aguirre and his men being condemned to forever wander their self-proclaimed empire of Marañón were already part of Latin American folklore. Discussing flames coming from underground volcanic gases on the banks of the Manzanares River near Cumaná, Humboldt writes:

This fire, which recalls springs of methane or the Salse of Modena and the will-o’-the-wisp of our marshes, does not burn



the grass. The people, though less superstitious here than in Spain, call these reddish flames by the odd name of The Soul of the Tyrant Aguirre; imagining that the ghost of Lope de Aguirre, harassed by remorse, wanders over these countries sullied by his crimes.<sup>25</sup>

The major conceit of Abel Posse's 1978 novel *Daimón* is the extension of this bit of archival folklore to a novel-length chronicle of Aguirre's post-mortem wanderings. The demoniac spirit of Aguirre wanders through the archive of Latin American history, meeting archival characters from Humboldt to twentieth century development economists. Throughout the novel, Aguirre's misapprehension of the basic realities of the New World is the subject of commentary by a chorus made up of the New World pantheon of animal spirits, caciques and other New World spiritual guides, as well as by former members of Aguirre's party whom he has murdered. The subtexts of the novel are the conflation of the figure of Aguirre with the expansion of Europeans and European ideas into Latin America, and the encounters of a continually modernizing Latin America with the traces and residues of its former self.

The expedition of the historical Aguirre left Lima in 1560, headed downstream on the Amazon. The original purpose of the expedition was to discover new lands along the river. During the course of the expedition, Aguirre, who had wanted to explore into Peru where there were known assets to exploit, led a rebellion. In a letter to Phillip II, the rebels declared themselves outside the jurisdiction of the Spanish crown, and declared themselves *Marañones* ("*Marañon*" was an early name given to the Amazon River complex, and has connotations of plots, webs, and entanglements.):

I firmly believe that thou, O Christian king and lord, hast been very cruel to me and my companions for such good service, and that all those who write to thee from this land deceive thee much, because thou seest things from too far off. I, and my companions, no longer able to suffer the cruelties which thy judges and governors exercise in thy name, are resolved to obey thee no longer. We regard ourselves no longer as Spaniards . . .<sup>26</sup>

The letter was signed "Lope de Aguirre, the Wanderer." Aguirre's scheme was to proceed down river to the island of Margarita, take it by force, then proceed to Nombre de Dios (modern eastern Panama) and take it as well. When these two centers of Spanish administration were his, he planned to return to Peru and continue his rebellion.

The rebels ruthlessly murdered their leader Pedro de Ursúa and those loyal to him, and appointed Fernando de Guzmán, Ursúa's lieutenant, and Aguirre as leaders. As the rebellion continued, Aguirre continued to gather power through the murder of Guzmán. He and his supporters also murdered Ursúa's wife or mistress, Doña Inez de Atienza, who was accompanying the expedition. The expedition continued to be marked by bloody violence.

The rebels did make it as far as Margarita, which they sacked. There is some indication that they may have reached there by taking the Rio Negro route up to the Orinoco and out its mouth, thus perhaps becoming the first white men to traverse that route, a route whose existence Humboldt would take the pains to confirm.

Although there is some support for this idea in the documents left by the expedition, most modern scholars think that the evidence for Aguirre's presence on the Orinoco is unprovable one way or the other.<sup>27</sup> Minta notes, "Perhaps the answer is a simple one: that they lost their way among islands in the ever-widening river and that the general atmosphere of suspicion in the fleet led to the sort of stories we find reflected in the chronicles."<sup>28</sup> In any case, the stories of Aguirre's possible detour along the Orinoco become a part of the archive of lore that emphasizes both the labyrinth of the river itself and that of Aguirre's journey.

After reaching Margarita by whatever route, Aguirre decided to return to Peru via marching across Nueva Granada (present-day Venezuela). At the end, cornered by troops loyal to the crown, Aguirre murders his own mestiza daughter, presumably to keep her from torture. Eventually, abandoned by most of his men, he was killed, quartered, and his head placed in a cage for display.

This is the point at which the novel *Daimón* begins. Returned from some limbo, where he has “perdured in the eternal return of the Same”<sup>29</sup>, Lope writes once again to Phillip II, “Most Excellent Sir, I’m preparing to make a long expedition whose end I cannot see. It is the American Expedition” (17). Lope has awoken to become the spirit of European expansion.

The novel is divided in to two major sections: the first – “The Epic of the Warrior,” – traces Aguirre’s post-mortem continuation of his conquistadorial quest for gold and power. Along the way, he meets the Amazons of Orellana’s earlier expedition, crosses paths with Raleigh, and eventually finds the gold of El Dorado. Aguirre is inhabited by the Fiend, Satan, and has no great desire to be exorcised, although he allows the priest traveling with him to attempt it – “Demonic rebellion can also include the urge not to be even the Devil’s agent.” (50) Their erotic interlude with the Amazons ultimately has no effect on either his men or on Aguirre since he is “wildly afraid of his own bliss” (63). Freed from time, he writes to Phillip II, “I set before you new proof of my rebellion, the eternal rebellion of America” (95).

The flow of the novel is interrupted at irregular intervals by commentary by indigenous New World observers, bewildered at the irrational actions and out-of-placeness of these European adventurers:

Not solely the men of the jungle tribes, but the plants and animals too, were soon convinced that the invaders were deeply estranged from the Spirit of the Earth. Enjoyed neither harmony nor peace. Had been born to prowl like hungry wolves . . . It was vital to understand that these were the victims of a capricious god who reveled in punishing them by fulfilling their ambitions (44).

These episodes of indigenous commentary are irruptions in the flow of the novel until the group decides to approach Cartegena, and enters the city on June 15, 1719:

In Cartegena the Marañones saw that their world had been shunted aside by the march of time . . . Officers and soldiers saw that there was no room for their rough, warring ways amid the elegancies . . . Nowadays lieutenants comported themselves like lawyers; *corregidores* knew how to read; killings

and torture were conducted within the sober confines of the law (101).

Seeing the new reality of the age, the men embark on trading venture to Amsterdam, but are turned away because “Brute! All shipping is handled through the Dutch West India Company and the Zucker and Trust Gesellschaft, didn’t you know?” (103). Aguirre, “After this whiff of the monetary and mercantile prepotency of modern imperialists, . . . felt like an emperor in rags”:

For the first time in his long lives, he felt American. Or in any event he felt American resentment, that rustic scenic pride later to be misread as mere folklorism.

For the first time he welcomed the company of Huamán, the Incan polyglot he had once beheaded, and bid him sit at his side and tell him tales of his childhood in the Valley of Kings . . . (96)

This moment of beginning to listen to the voice of the Other is pivotal in the novel. Lope begins to feel American. However, he does not yet see the significance of these interactions; they are nostalgic reflections.

In one foreshadowing scene, Aguirre is given a lecture on alchemy by the Jew in his party, Lipzia:

“Lead never really transmutes into gold . . . The gold you’ve got after a long journey is only a figure of speech. There’s gold, yes, but it’s spiritual. The quest has transformed you. Resurrection, rebirth . . . Then you possess the power to see gold in anything and everything, or in gold, sees mud, as you like. This is invincible power, not dependent on reality. It is you who have been transmuted, from the shit of life, you see, Lope? Dignity, Wisdom . . . (113).

Lope is not yet ready to hear this, and has Lipzia tortured. Later, through torturing an explorer for the Royal Geographical Society, the men extract from him the location of El Dorado, and actually find it. Dunes of gold dust; acres and acres of it. The men begin to plan how to transport it. The landscape is otherwise sterile—no food and little water. For Aguirre it proves to be a hollow victory; he cannot summon the will to lead. Then the astounding occurs. The Inca Lord of El Dorado appears on a mission to re-found the Inca empire. He asks that Lope give

them the golden dunes “so the Spaniards don’t take them from you and convert them into more weapons to be turned against us’ (130). Surprisingly, Lope agrees, and has the first of several epiphanies in the novel:

After the emissaries contentedly took their leave, the Old Man [Aguirre] felt something truly phenomenal and grand: he had betrayed them all, even *doña* Inés and his own daughter . . . It was a grand sensation, a relief. They had all relied on him and trusted in him, and in a trice he had double-crossed them. Another fine betrayal. The looks on their faces, the curses, the shrieks of the whores, was something to see! Something truly fine and good (131).

In a life of betrayal, Aguirre has betrayed his patrimony and reason for being. The voice of the Fiend whispers to him, “Don’t you see, Lope? Maybe you wanted to rebel with the blacks and Indians! Maybe you’ve already joined the other side! . . . This is the hour of nations, Lope” (132).

But it is to a woman who Lope turns. Sor Angela, seemingly modeled on the historical Sor Juana de la Cruz, “weeps for you, she waits for you. Moans with love in the Santa Catalina convent . . .” (132). And so ends the first section of the novel, “Epic of the Warrior,” and begins the second, “The Personal Life,” where he finds love and everyday existence: “Oh love, love of the palm and the dove” (133) As for his men, he leaves them to “wrangle for power like well-matched dogs. Land in democracy. ‘That’s right, democracy! They’ll spend their time strategizing, looking after cripples and half-wits! . . . They’ll all be equals, to hell with ‘em . . .’ ” (133).

The first section of the novel, “The Epic of the Warrior,” presents the spirit of the West as manifesting itself through the conquistador. Throughout most of the second section, “The Personal Life,” the spirit of the conquistador in the new world is transformed by new historical conditions and is married to the spirit of the church. It begins to become apparent that the character of Aguirre and the *Daimón* of the title are the adventures of the Hegelian spirit in the New World.

Aguirre and Sor Angela retreat to Machu Picchu, in a state of erotic bliss. “Cruelty is the sport of curs and widowers and

bachelors," Aguirre reflects (148). Huamán, the Inca storyteller, philosophizes:

"We have arrived, Aguirre. This is the city, the Cosmic University. It symbolizes Universe, Tawantinsuyu, Inca Empire. Joins earth and sky. Body and spirit. Night and day. Forges the amazing alliance of the living and the dead, as you shall see" (149).

While his men are in the cities fomenting democratic revolution, Aguirre and Sor Angela, with the assistance of the residents and spiritual forces of Machu Picchu, are establishing the *de facto* integration of the conqueror, the church, and the local population that become everyday South American domestic life. Aguirre realizes that a space has been produced that allows this unlikely combination of forces and learns

that Machu Picchu counts among those few places where parallel worlds converge . . . .A vertiginous unity (which men vaguely desire but can't endure the presence of) drives mad those who attempt a prolonged analysis without adequate initiation. Future and past hold their usual places and coexist—without claims to exclusivity—on the plateau of present time . . . .[A] secret harmony can be glimpsed (naturally not a matter of solemn Historicity . . . ) if and only if no ingenuous attempt is made to capture it in that net of smoke known as human reasoning (minirationalism) (154).

But domestic tranquility does not last. Becoming bored, Lope leaves Machu Picchu for a time to see the continuing rebellion of his men that has now taken the form of the republican revolutions. At a party given by the political socialite his daughter has become, he is informed that "Gold means nothing nowadays. Sugar, cattle and wood! Gold comes in pounds and marks . . ." (179). The native chorus is no longer there: "They're so shy! They wouldn't enjoy a classy party, why make them uncomfortable? They're very equal, I don't deny it, a trifle unrefined. And besides, with the new piece rate, they work when they like, and we mustn't deprive them of the liberty to do so" (179). When he returns to Sor Angela, he is disillusioned both with the collaborative politics of republicanism, and with his domestic routine. In his marriage, "matrimonial eroticism had been achieved." Aguirre finds evidence that Sor Angela is planning to

kill him with a kitchen knife. The voice of the Fiend comes to him once again, and Lope beats her to the punch, slitting her throat because "she had died some months before" (202).

After more years of wandering, Aguirre is put through a process of ritual purification and vision-seeking by the Inca Huamán. Aided by the hallucinogenic *ayahuasca*, Aguirre, "with the skill of a Madrasi yogi . . . cleared out the impure Atman, which left no room for the Other . . ." (214). Aguirre enters what Posse terms "The Vast":

Step by step, led along by the marvelous force of nonwill, which softened all his intentions. This firm victory of nonwill demonstrated that his urge to *do* was broken at the base. His Southamericanness was almost complete (216).

A result of this cleansing is that "space no longer halted before his eyes. Things were not there to be measured, used, appropriated, altered. Things were, as he was" (217).

Throughout the novel, Lope has been haunted by the character known as "the Moorish girl." He first met her in his youth in Spain, but has several near encounters with her in the new world. Beautiful, but mocking and unattainable, she seems to represent for the *Daimón*, the spirit of the West, the pre-New World Other that was never recognized, the African Other. As in Defoe's *Crusoe*, Behn's *Oroonoko*, and Humboldt's reading of *Paul et Virginie*, the discovery of the New World Other obscures and is conflated with the pre-existing Other. After his ritual purification, however, Lope is able to engage with her. They spend a summer together on Lake Titicaca.

Finally she confesses to him that she has joined a revolutionary group. This turn in history, it is one of his former men, Diego de Torres, who has transformed from a martyr seeking sainthood in the republican period to a Che-like revolutionary. In the final scene of the novel, while in a café drinking and eating a duck, "a curiously elongated bird, with a neck almost like that of a swan" (274), the Moorish girl convinces Lope to provide his expertise to the group. As they declare their love for one another, Aguirre chokes on the wishbone and dies, leaving the Moorish girl, "fertilized by Aguirre's fierce daimon," (275) to carry on the revolutionary struggle.

Posse's Aguirre may be read as a fictional exemplar of the re-envisioning of the spirit of modernity given by liberation theologian Enrique Dussel. Conversely, Posse's vision of the wandering spirit might be read as a commentary on the possibilities for realizing Dussel's reformulation of history. After presenting Dussel's ideas, I will return to Posse and see what a dialogue between the two might reveal.

### **Enrique Dussel's Re-envisioning of the Space of Modernity:**

History exists at different levels, I would even go so far as to say three levels but that would be only in a manner of speaking, and simplifying things too much. There are ten, a hundred levels to be examined, ten, a hundred different time spans. On the surface, the history of events worked itself out in the short term: it is a sort of microhistory. Halfway down, a history of conjunctures follows a broader, slower rhythm. So far that has above all been studied in its developments on the material plane, in economic cycles and intercycles. . . . And over and above the "recitatif" of the conjuncture, structural history, or the history of the *longue durée*, inquires into whole centuries at a time. It functions along the border between the moving and the immobile, and because of the long-standing stability of its values, it appears unchanging compared with all the histories which flow and work themselves out more swiftly, and which in the final analysis gravitate around it.<sup>30</sup>

The study of space offers an answer according to which the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself.<sup>31</sup>

Enrique Dussel (1937–present), coming out of the tradition and perspective of Latin American liberation theology, attempts to re-envision radically the concept of modernity by placing its genesis in a historical world-systems perspective. Like Posse, he is Argentine. Dussel's recent works assert "that eurocentrism must be taken seriously as a *philosophical* problem, and that philosophy must abandon no longer appropriate or useful notions or categories of universal history . . ." <sup>32</sup> He opposes what he



terms the dominant “Eurocentric” paradigm of modernity to a “planetary” paradigm. The Eurocentric paradigm, Dussel argues, is derived from Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* (“Universal history goes from East to West. Europe is absolutely the end of universal history . . .”) through Weber’s question (“to what combination of circumstances should the fact be attributed that in *Western civilization*, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which [as *we* like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value). This paradigm “has imposed itself not only in Europe and the United States, but in the entire intellectual realm of the world periphery,” resulting in “an ideological and deforming organization of history” that “has already created ethical problems with respect to other cultures. Philosophy, especially ethics, needs to break with this reductive horizon in order to open itself to the ‘world’, the ‘planetary’ sphere.”<sup>33</sup> Even when modernity is self-critical, as in the case of postmodern philosophy, Dussel asserts, it is not reflective enough of its origins “to contribute valid alternatives . . . for the peripheral nations” (1998, 18).

The opposing paradigm, which Dussel constructs in his work, “conceptualizes modernity as the culture of the *center* of the ‘world-system’, of the first world-system, through the incorporation of Amerindia, and as a result of the *management* of this ‘centrality’.” Modernity did not begin as an independent European phenomenon, Dussel argues, but is rather “a phenomenon proper to the system ‘center-periphery’ ” that “begins with the *simultaneous* constitution of Spain with reference to its ‘periphery’ . . .” Europe “will go in to *constitute* itself as center (as a superhegemonic power that from Spain passes to Holland, England, and France) over a growing periphery” (1998, 4). Not only does Europe constitute itself through the establishment of its periphery, he continues, but the establishment of the centrality of Europe is a direct result of its exploitation of New World resources:

In addition, we submit a thesis that qualifies the previous one: the centrality of Europe in the world-system is not the sole fruit of an internal superiority accumulated during the European Middle Ages over against other cultures. Instead, it is also the fundamental effect of the simple fact of the discovery,

conquest, colonization, and integration (subsumption) of Amerindia (1998, 4-5)

The conquest of America “will give Europe the determining *comparative advantage* over the Ottoman-Muslim world, India, and China,” Dussel asserts. “Modernity is the fruit of these events, not their cause.” Because of its comparative advantage, Europe will be able to manage its “centrality of the world-system” which “will allow Europe to transform itself into something like the ‘reflexive consciousness’ . . . of world history” (1998, 5). As a result,

the many values, discoveries, inventions, technologies, political institutions, and so on that are attributed to it . . . are in reality effects of the *displacement* of the ancient center of the third stage of the interregional system toward Europe. . . . The human experience of 4,500 years of political, economic, technological, and cultural relations of the interregional system will now be hegemonized by a Europe—which had never been the “center . . .” (1998, 5).

Dussel’s major spatial argument is that many of the activities historically represented as early European expansion—the Crusades, Portuguese exploration of Atlantic sea routes, for example—were actually attempts to establish ties with the traditional centers of the interregional system in the eastern Mediterranean and India. Columbus’s expedition was an attempt to reach this center through the west, and was attempted by Spain only because eastern routes were pre-empted. Spain thus finds America “without looking,” and “the entire European medieval paradigm, . . . the paradigm of a peripheral culture,” “enters into crisis” (1998, 9).

Dussel argues that because of these orientations toward existing centers, it was an “existential impossibility” for Columbus to convince himself “that what he had discovered was not India.” (1998, 9). It is left to Amerigo Vespucci, the “first one who suspected a *new* . . . continent,” to become “existentially and subjectively the first Modern, the first to unfold the horizon of the Asian-Afro-Mediterranean system as world-system, which for the first time incorporated Amerindia.” The discovery of America produced a “revolution in the Weltanschauung of the cultural, scientific, religious, technological, political, ecological, and eco-

conomic horizon," and according to Dussel, "is the *origin* of modernity" (1998, 10).

Spain is thus positioned to become the center of this new view of the world, and funds this position with the import of 18,000 tons of silver from the Potosí mines during the sixteenth century. This bullion, Dussel notes, was necessary to pay for the "great armada that defeated the Turks in 1571," and, quoting Wallerstein, "was a necessity for the expansion of the European economy" (1998, 10-11). As for land and labor, Dussel points out that by 1550 Spain had colonized more than "2 million square kilometers (an area greater than the whole of Europe of the center) and more than 25 million (a low figure) indigenous peoples", which gave birth to not only the world-system, but also to "peripheral social formations" (1998, 12-13).

For Dussel, there are two successive modernities: one "a Hispanic, humanist, Renaissance modernity, still linked to the old interregional system of Mediterranean, Muslim, and Christian. In this, the "management" of the new system will be conceived from out of the older paradigm of the interregional system" in which Spain manages its "centrality as domination through the hegemony of an integral culture, a language, a religion . . ." (13) The second modernity, "to be able to manage the immense world-system suddenly opening itself to tiny Holland, which from being a Spanish colony now places itself as the center of the world-system, must accomplish its efficacy through *simplification*." Although Dussel does not bring out the Catholic-Protestant trajectory of this transformation, this proto-Weberian aspect of the succession of modernities seems to be implicit in his analysis. According to his argument, this efficiency through simplification strategy entails omitting "cultural, anthropological, ethical, political, and religious variables" that would have problematized the technical management of the global system. As a result of this decomplexification, the "new economic attitude (practico-productive)" of capitalism takes over "the totality of the life-world . . ." (1998, 13).

The main value of re-constituting the first of Dussel's modernities is in recovering its central ethical question: "What right has the European to occupy, dominate, and manage the recently discovered cultures, conquered by the military and in the

process of being colonized?" (1998, 13). Much of *The Invention of the Americas* is a discussion of the debate between the points of view of Las Casas and Sepúlveda, with Dussel appropriating the concern of Las Casas which "focused on how the Other should enter the community and begin to *participate* in it," rather than "partaking of its irrational myth" involving "sanctioning violence in order to *compel* the Other to join the community of communication" (1995, 69-70). The second modernity, Dussel asserts, did not deal with this question. Eurocentrism established "the legitimacy, without falsification, of the domination of the world-system," a position which "will *no longer* be questioned until the end of the twentieth century . . ." (1998, 14).

Modernity's developmentalist strategy contains this sacrificial myth, according to Dussel. It justifies its violence, for example wars of colonialism, "as a last resort in order to destroy any obstacles to modernization," and constructs that violence as a sacrifice and as "the inevitable costs of modernization" (1995, 136-7). Denying "modernity's innocence" and affirming "the alterity of the Other" reveals both "the other face hidden and yet essential to modernity" and "modernity's irrational action in contradiction to its own rational ideal" (1995, 137). "Modernity will come into its fullness," writes Dussel, "not by passing from its potency to act, but by surpassing itself through a co-realization with its once negated alterity and through a process of mutual, creative fecundation. . . . This bonding occurs not via negation, but via a subsumption from the viewpoint of alterity and in accord with Marx's reversal of Hegelian *Aufhebung* through the concept of subsumption" (1995, 138).

Dussel sees two possibilities within "the planetary horizon" of current formulations of modernity. One is the "developmentalist" position "that conceptualizes modernity as an *exclusively European* . . . phenomenon that must be concluded. Dussel can include both those who are critical within European modernity, "defenders of reason" such as Habermas and Apel, and the postmoderns who deny "to modernity positive qualities." Both groups Dussel sees as unable to see beyond their Eurocentric horizon (1998, 18).

The position that Dussel defends would build upon and extend "the process of modernity as the . . . rational management

of the world-system." His conception would include the intent "to recoup what is redeemable in modernity, and to halt the practices of domination and exclusion in the world-system. It is a project of liberation of a periphery negated from the very beginning of modernity" (1998, 19). The extension of this project would include "the overcoming of *cynical managerial reason*" which Dussel implicated in "the ecological destruction of the planet and the extinguishing in misery and hunger of the great majority of humanity," before which "the projects of many philosophical schools would seem naïve and even ridiculous. . ." (1998, 19).

In raising the question of Marcuse – "[W]hy do we need liberation from such a society if it is capable . . . of conquering poverty . . . reducing toil . . . and of raising the standard of living? If the price for all goods delivered, . . . for all these achievements, is exacted from people far away from the metropolis and far away from its affluence? If the affluent society itself scarcely notices . . . how it is fighting liberation in all corners of the globe? – Dussel is asking for a process of modernity that recognizes these wrongs and that is willing reconstruct itself in such a way as to redress them. He sees the subsumption of world cultures and difference into a Eurocentric process of modernity as an impossibility because "the globalizing world system reaches a limit with the exteriority of the alterity of the Other, a locus of 'resistance' from whose affirmation the process of the negation of the negation of liberation begins" (1998, 21).

"Place," writes Anthony Giddens, "has become phantasmagoric because the structures by means of which it is constituted are no longer locally organised."<sup>34</sup> Dussel would argue that this phantasm of place is a result of the deterritorializing work of a distorted concept of modernity, and that the reterritorializing to be done must happen locally in emerging "loci of resistance," the place of "jihad" of Barber or the "communes of resistance" of Castells. Dussel's work can be seen as an attempt to reintegrate archive and territory; by applying a new set of distinctions to an expanded archive, he is able to give a new explanation to spatial practices.

### *The "Third Part": The Irruption of the Other and The Redemptive Function*

Nature has neither kernel nor shell; she is everything at once.<sup>35</sup>

Enrique Dussel's Latin Americanist critique of the theory of modernity is that ideas about the historical and geographical genesis of modernity are Eurocentric, that the universal liberation it promises has been unevenly envisioned, constructed, and distributed. Recognizing the value of reason and rationality, he also demands that the irrational and culturally blind components of modernity, such as its "sacrificial myth," be recognized. Since Dussel comes out of the tradition and perspective of liberation theology, it is not surprising that he also sees a possibility for the redemption of the idea of modernity, if it can be made more inclusive.

Dussel's critique of modernity and its possible redemption is parallel to the (fictional) redemption of Lope de Aguirre in *Daimón*. Each suggests that their respective demons have left scars outside Europe and that redemption is possible through cross-cultural openings (what Dussel calls the "transmodern"). Both authors present the possibility there may be a way out of what has been blind, crass, and ugly about the "West's" interaction with the other (as represented by the historical Aguirre and the early Aguirre of *Daimón*) through a re-visioning of modernity as being a global process that has been distorted by European intellectual and economic hegemony. They each attempt to address what Michel de Certeau sees as a "structure belonging to modern Western culture;" that is that "*intelligibility is established through a relation with the other; it moves (or "progresses") by changing what it makes of its "other" – the Indian, the past, the people, the mad, the child, the Third World.*"<sup>36</sup> They thus want to begin to acknowledge (and begin the process of ending) "a problematic form basing its mastery of expression upon what the other keeps silent, and guaranteeing the interpretive work of

a science (a “human” science) by the frontier that separates it from an area awaiting this work in order to be known.”<sup>37</sup>

Posse’s *Daimón* and Dussel’s *The Invention of the Americas* share a vision for the redemption of the spirit of modernity and a method for realizing that vision—an ethics of liberation, the method of which entails “the rupture into and transformation of totalized life worlds by the creative and appellat epiphany of the Other, not as mere *difference* but as the truly *distinct* . . . ”<sup>38</sup> The epiphanies of Posse’s Aguirre come about only when he allows the rupture of his self and the irruption and call of the Other. For all their polemics, both Posse and Dussel see the possibility for forestalling the universe of absolute fragmentation through redemption. Although Posse’s Aguirre doesn’t fare too well after his personal epiphany (he chokes on a wishbone of a swan, a final inability to get beyond his Greco-Roman roots, cooking Zeus’ swan but unable to digest and assimilate desire), Dussel sees opportunity:

Unlike the postmoderns, I will not criticize reason as such; but I do accept their critique of reason as dominating, victimizing, and violent. I will not deny universalist rationalism its rational nucleus, but I do oppose the irrational element of its sacrificial myth. I do not then deny reason, only the irrationality of the violence of the modern myth. I do not deny reason, but rather postmodern irrationality. I affirm the reason of the Other as a step toward a transmodern *worldhood*.<sup>39</sup>

A possible form that Dussel’s “transmodern worldhood” could take comes from an unlikely source—that of the global systems theory of Niklas Luhmann. Unlikely, because Luhmann’s view of the inaccessibility of reason in a global system is in some ways more radically relativistic than Dussel himself. Luhmann, however, would consider such a criticism to be irrelevant; he is only interested in what he considers to be the practical limitations of societal self-understanding, not the wishful thinking for a privileged perspective outside the system:

If we understand “postmodern” to mean the lack of a unified cosmography, a universally applicable rationality, or even just a collective attitude toward the world and society, then this results from the structural conditions to which contemporary society delivers itself. It cannot abide a final word, and therefore

it cannot abide authority. It knows no positions from which society could be adequately described for others within that society. What is important here is not the emancipation of reason but emancipation from reason. This emancipation need not be anticipated; it has already happened. Whoever believes himself to be reasonable and says as much is observed and deconstructed . . .<sup>40</sup>

Just during “the historic moment in which the unity of a world society seems unavoidable” disturbing questions such as “But do the many now simply replace the one? Do the unity of the world and the unity of society dissolve in a multiplicity of systems and discourses? Are relativism, historicism, pluralism the final answers when we speak of freedom?” arise

For Luhmann, the very fact that Dussel’s critique of traditional modernity is possible, that Dussel’s critique of the obfuscating reason of the West is speakable and has an audience, that Dussel’s argument “can be observed with regard to the distinctions that it chooses or avoids choosing . . . is the source of relativism.”<sup>41</sup> For Luhmann, the distinctions that are asserted to be significant for an observer or a set of observations establish the parameters of otherness. Paradoxically, the “social communication” of these distinctions, or sets of distinctive differences, “*produces* the unity of the social system” as a whole through the production of a coherent set of elements.<sup>42</sup> Since there is no exterior point of view possible for Luhmann, the production of otherness within the global system is the only way for it to observe itself, even approximately. “The problems of contemporary society,” he writes, “are not problems in maintaining a heritage, whether in education or elsewhere. Much more important is the constant creation of otherness.”<sup>43</sup>

It is possible to integrate the perspectives of Posse, Dussel, and Luhmann, because each assumes the possibility of redemption for the discourse on modernity. Posse examines the constraints placed on the discourse modernity through the interplay of archive, place, and spirit made possible through fiction. Dussel, on the other hand, works through the interplay of history and theory made possible by the archive itself. (Dussel’s theoretical discourse is more amenable to comparison with Luhmann than is Posse’s fictional one, so I will concentrate on that comparison here, and return to the interplay of archive, theory, and fic-



tion later.) Dussel's posited "transmodern" system of discourse, in the terminology of Luhmann, would "oscillate between self-reference and external reference, thereby keeping access to the other side of the distinction open."<sup>44</sup> The oscillation between "self-reference" and "external reference" produces the systemic possibility for what Dussel terms the "transmodern" – the establishment of "a dialogue with the reason of the Other, as an alternative reason."<sup>45</sup>

In Dussel's view, this new perspective should avoid "the facile optimism of rationalist, abstract universalism that would conflate universality with Eurocentrism and modernizing developmentalism," which he ascribes to the Frankfurt School. Neither should it "lapse into the irrationality, incommunicability, or incommensurability of discourses that are typical of many postmoderns . . ." Instead it "must deny the irrational sacrificial myth of modernity as well as affirm (subsume in a liberating project) the emancipative tendencies of the Enlightenment and modernity within a new transmodernity."<sup>46</sup> In his characterization of the "facile optimism" of the Frankfurt School, Dussel seems to be missing some of the oppositional thinking to emerge from that body of thought, especially the negative dialectics of Adorno, and the pessimism about progress and development coming from Benjamin, for example, and seems to equate Habermas' communicative reason with developmentalism. Dussel actually is similar to Habermas in that Dussel presents a redemption through a "liberating project." As he himself recognizes, the "transmodern" would include this element of the modern.

Luhmann, on the other hand, does not present a self-conscious project of modernity at all, but posits the notion of a redemptive "function" as a component of a self-observing system:

Contemporary society and its functions systems replace an impossible breakthrough to a final unity—be it society, be it the world—with the distinction between reference and coding—reference in the sense of the distinction between self-reference and external reference, coding in the sense of the distinction between positive code value and negative code value.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of this situation, Luhmann argues, "Society must be satisfied with this possibility and with the combinatorial latitude it provides. It can no longer refer to a final thought, to a reference-capable unity, to a metanarrative . . ." <sup>48</sup> However, he is not suggesting that Foucault's postmodern "heterotopia" is the only alternative. As Harvey explains, "By heterotopia, Foucault means the coexistence in 'an impossible space' of a 'large number of fragmentary possible worlds' or, more simply, incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other." <sup>49</sup> In contrast, for Luhmann, the inability to achieve a "breakthrough to a final unity," rather than producing fragmentation, is replaced by an oscillation between sets of distinctions — an optimizing (we hope) feedback mechanism for a self-observing system. The question of optimizing for what or for whom is irrelevant in this formulation — what is being optimized is the systems capability for observing itself.

Luhmann's formulation also allows (or finesses) an answer to the question, "What is doing the observing in a 'self-observing' system?" Since there are actors (observers or groups of observers applying sets of distinctions), he is able to avoid somewhat the teleological and idealist charges directed at earlier systems formulations. His updating of his earlier functional-systemic approach with the new self-organizing systems approaches coming out of physics <sup>50</sup> at least gives analogical reference to a non-tautological systems approach. By including the perspectives of actual observers, Luhmann is able to dodge Habermas' charge that in systems theory "subject-centered reason is replaced by systems rationality." <sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, it is still possible to see in Luhmann a bias toward homeostasis when compared with a more subaltern perspective of the workings of a global system. Luhmann's learning through oscillatory feedback, whereby "the operations of the observed system are constantly subjected to two different sources of information, internal and external," assumes a desired progression toward systemic ability to process and absorb larger amounts of "irritability." However, he argues, it "is impossible in the midst of all this to thematize the unity of this two-sided form of distinction in its application. *The third part remains self-exclusive.* Distinctions can be distinguished nonetheless." <sup>52</sup>

Luhmann has apparently given up his earlier argument that a system, through internal communication, can “thematize” itself for itself.<sup>53</sup> However, he demonstrates the desire for orderly systemic evolution through the processing of “irritability” – a utopian social process that includes and subsumes dissent – a functional social systems approach that assumes the components of the system can be flexible and accommodating of difference. Compared to Alberto Moreiras’ more oppositional view of global systems, where “there is tendentially no conceivable exterior or outside of the global system, then all our actions are seemingly condemned to reinforce it.” Moreiras goes on to ask, “[W]hat good is it to engage in a metacritics of intellectual activity if that very metacritics is ultimately doomed to become absorbed in the systemic apparatus whose functioning it was once thought designed to disrupt?”<sup>54</sup>

Luhmann’s terminology – the self-exclusive “third part” of the system of distinctions – is interesting in that it demonstrates his belief in the possibility for redemption. It may also be seen as the residual of a utopian desire in Luhmann’s systems theory; it is this “third part” that brings out the similarities in the arguments of Luhmann and Dussel, and between Luhmann and Posse’s qualified redemption for Aguirre. The three come together in presenting the possibility, beyond the horizon, of a redemption of the historical relationship with the Other. Dussel’s “transmodern,” Posse’s transformation of the Hegelian spirit and its “fertilizing” the body of the other, and Luhmann’s “third part” each posit the possibility of a moving beyond, a way of getting outside historical discourse.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the critique of this possibility comes from Moreiras:

A number of contemporary theorists have made similar points, and they all have a Hegelian genealogy . . . All of these thinkers come to the far side of their thinking by opening up, usually in a most ambiguous manner, the possibility of a thinking of the outside that will then become a redemptive or salvific region . . .

. . .<sup>55</sup>

“This messianic trace,” as Moreiras describes it, “turns up in contemporary thinking as the need to find the possibility of an outside to the global system, a point of articulation permitting

the dream of an oppositional discourse, has been expressing itself, ever since Hegelian dialectics, as the very power of the metacritical or self-reflective instance in the thinking apparatus."<sup>56</sup> Moreiras goes on to posit not only "that metacritics will always be reabsorbed by the system that first opens up its possibility," but also the possibility that "metacritics could throw a wrench into the reabsorption machine, arresting it or paralyzing it even if only temporarily. Such is, perhaps, the utopian dream of Western thinking in the age of mechanical reproduction."<sup>57</sup> Moreiras does not dismiss the possibility of a redemptive site for modernity; however, he does think that Western critical thinking, such as that of Adorno, displaces that possible site "to the improbable but still ever more dimly perceivable future of utopian redemption." Instead, they are to be found in "in something other than a thinking that must be called Western," in "alternative presents, in the different temporality of alternative spatial locations."<sup>58</sup> In other words, in the transmodern space of alterity that Dussel wishes to open.

### **The Site of Redemption: An "Orientalism of the Heart"?**

In all of the above arguments, the site for "progress" in culture is still in some "other" place. What is gained, if after critique of the Western "spirit's" relation to the Other—a relation that created a desire and a place for its own expansion—the place for progress is still "out there"? If, as Moreiras asserts, "insofar as globalization is not yet accomplished . . . the possibility of alternative localities of enunciation will remain dependent upon an articulation with the singular, the vanishing, the archaic,"<sup>59</sup> is this not still pushing the possibility of redemption to an impossible "beyond" and simply continuing the practice of placing an expansive future in the realm of the Other?

Chris Bongie, in a discussion of the place of the Other in *fin de siècle* colonial literature, argues that the projection of an exotic Other is itself a product of uncertainty about the modernist enterprise. Bongie defines "exoticism"

as a nineteenth-century literary and existential practice that posited another space, the space of an Other, outside or be-

yond the confines of a “civilization” . . . that, by virtue of its *modernity*, was perceived by many writers as being incompatible with certain essential values—or, indeed, the realm of value itself. What modernity is in the process of obliterating “here” might still prove a present possibility in this alternative geopolitical space: such is the primary credo of the exoticist project.<sup>60</sup>

Bongie notes that “The initial optimism of this project . . . gives way in the second half of the century to a deep pessimism stemming from the rapid spread of colonial and technological power. How can one recuperate ‘elsewhere’ what civilization is in the process of eliminating if this same process has already taken on global proportions?”<sup>61</sup> Bongie distinguishes “imperialist exoticism”, which “affirms the hegemony of modern civilization over less developed, savage territories,” from “exoticising exoticism,” which “privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity.” What these modes of exoticism have in common is that they are “both grounded in [the] common belief . . . that there still exist places on this earth that are Other than those in which modernity has come to hold sway.” “The autonomy of alternative cultures and territories,” Bongie continues, “is the one requisite condition of exoticism: only given this difference can the individual hope to exercise—be it for imperialistic or exoticizing ends—the heroic sovereignty denied him in post-revolutionary Europe.”<sup>62</sup>

Moreiras terms phenomena similar to Bongie’s “exoticizing” exoticism “orientalism of the heart.”—a phenomenon that is

the *mythical* other side of the kind of politics the CIA itself . . . would rightfully pursue, according to their criteria . . . Within this discourse, orientalism of the heart comes close to being the only possible explanation for an opening to alterity in global times.<sup>63</sup>

“Mythical,” because it reduces the actions of those attempting to create a new kind of dialogue within the global system to “the level of affect: their desire, it can always be said, is only obscure love, and therefore neither epistemologically nor politically viable.”<sup>64</sup> How is one to distinguish between an “opening to alterity” and, say, cultural tourism? The first, perhaps too easy,

answer is to look at the direction of hypothesized emancipation. If historically the West has looked to the Other as a free space into which to expand and towards which it was carrying emancipation, then an authentic opening might be in the opposite direction.

Upon reaching the horizon, filling planetary space, the cultural assumptions of capitalism, dependent upon having that horizon "out there," have come into question. From Bongie's point of view, one possibility is a globalism that subsumes local culture in the demands of a global economic and cultural system, in which local culture within a global system becomes "an immense construction site of traces and residues." This globalism is accompanied by a "politics of survival" that "has as its end a taking-into consideration of these traces and residues, and of the past in whose absence they emerge."<sup>65</sup> Local resistance becomes more and more involved in the global system, even if only to use that global system to organize its resistance (via the Internet, for example). Moreiras, on the other hand, presents a more activist possibility that local culture

would understand itself as an epistemic social practice of solidarity, with singular claims originating within whatever in . . . societies still remains in a position of vestigial or residual exteriority, that is , whatever actively refuses to interiorize its subalternization with respect to the global system.<sup>66</sup>

The dismissal of efforts to support such activities as romanticized "orientalism of the heart" misses the intersection of interests of disparate "communes of resistance" that will be discussed later in the chapter. However, the question of maintaining cultural residual exteriority in a global marketplace of culture and lifestyles is a difficult one. Avoiding an "orientalism of the heart" would entail constructing practices to take into account not only Bongie's considerations, but also actively work to enable "exterior" voices and avoid building the "problematic form basing its mastery of expression upon what the other keeps silent."

### *Spatial Practices: The Cultural Production of the Archive*

Identifying the foundations upon which the space of each particular society is built, the underpinnings of that space's gradual development, is only the beginning of any exploration of a reality that to begin with seems transparently clear. Thus representations of space, which confuse matters precisely because they offer an already clarified picture, must be dispelled.<sup>67</sup>

The colliding of spheres. Waters of the seas mixing with the winds of space. The horrifying mingling of the dead with the living.<sup>68</sup>

It is perhaps no accident that Posse and Dussel are both from Argentina. Their re-examination and re-assessment of the content of the New World archive required not only that they have access to the materials to be able to analyze that "diachronic and supranational" form, but also to have particular relationships with that form itself. Those relationships include the literary tradition of the archival novel, the modern form of which begins with the work of Borges; a cultural background that allows them to see the lacunae of the archive and the geopolitical reasons for those lacunae; and access to regional and global systems of education, publishing, and authorship that enable them to produce legitimate works.

The multiplicity of facts that make up the "diachronic and supranational structure" of the Orinocan archive is itself a subset of the archive that includes descriptions of all Latin American encounters with the West. Posse, in *Daimón*, explicitly uses that subset to arrive at the same conclusions that Dussel comes to for the set as a whole. Posse and Dussel are both participants in a process whereby, as Fernando Coronil has observed, the "familiar map of modernity is being redrawn by global transformations in culture, politics," a process that "makes more visible both the social constructedness of space and the geographical

grounding of histories."<sup>69</sup> As these constructions become more visible, he continues,

Contemporary empires must now confront subaltern subjects within reconfigured spaces at home and abroad, as the Other, once maintained on distant continents or confined to bounded locations at home, simultaneously multiplies and dissolves. At an increasing pace, collective identities are being redefined in new social places that cannot be mapped with antiquated categories. This reconfiguration of space/time makes it more difficult to sustain the old Eurocentric narratives of universal history, but also creates conditions for a decentered universality.<sup>70</sup>

As the archive expands to include more comprehensive source material, history becomes a field of battle. The archive functions as the literary field of possible distinctions made by observers. As Luhmann notes, "An individual in the modern sense is someone who can observe his or her own observing."<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, "observation must and can choose distinctions, and . . . can be observed with regard to the distinctions that it chooses or avoids choosing. This is the source of relativism."<sup>72</sup> The selection and arrangement of archival data become political statements and positions, as in Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire* trilogy, in which archival fragments are arranged and juxtaposed in such way as to produce a damning history of the legacy of the West in Latin America.<sup>73</sup> Galeano's collage would not be nearly as effective without the twentieth-century expansion of the archive to include more indigenous sources.

As a repository of observations, the archive envelopes the field of (current) possible distinctions, and enables the comparative observation of observations. The romance of discovery can be transmuted into the legacy of genocide and exploitation. The contents of the archive as a diachronic structure change, as does an observer's focus and selection of over time and space. Oscillation from one position to another, a state change based on the position of the observer, produces contradictions within individuals, disciplines, and global cultural systems. For example, Alberto Moreiras' discusses two apparently contradictory possibilities for work in areas studies in general, and Latin American studies in particular. On the one hand, area studies "works as an instantiation of global agency, insofar as it ultimately wants



to deliver its findings into some totality of allegedly neutral, universal knowledge of the world in all its differences and identities." The purpose of areas studies from this perspective is to "capture . . . American difference in order to release it into the global epistemic grid. It therefore works as a machine of homogenization, even where it understands itself in terms of promoting or preserving difference." However, in opposition to that work, it "can also conceivably expect to produce itself as antirepresentational, anticonceptual apparatus" that could be "a disruptive force, or a wrench, in the epistemological apparatus . . ." In this latter case, it could appeal "to an epistemic outside, to an exteriority that will not be turned into a mere fold of the imperial interior."<sup>74</sup>

The work of Posse and Dussel shows these dual aspects of articulating the voices of the other. In *Daimón*, Posse makes extensive use of archival sources to not only show how limited traditional notions of inclusiveness have been (by including the voices of the Inca pantheon, for example), he also presents the radical option of getting outside the system of Western discourse altogether (through Aguirre's hallucinogenic encounter with "the Vast," and by having the spirit of Aguirre die and be reborn in the Moorish girl). Dussel also takes the position that the archive, as historically constituted, is a misrepresentation of a broader reality that exists outside its discursive system, but takes the more "conservative" position of arguing for the transformation of the system from within – however, this transformation from within is dependent on the admittance of voices "external" to the system.

Posse's text presents the radical possibility of a move beyond the discursive system of the West, but his text itself (the novel as cultural product) remains solidly within global systems of cultural production (authorship, publishing, translation, markets for the possibility of radical change). Dussel assumes that change requires change to the discursive system itself, which somehow must allow external speakers without subsuming them. For both writers, there is an oscillation – for Posse, an oscillation between the possibilities within the text and the possibilities external to it, for Dussel, between the need to address the system on its own terms and the desire to transform those terms themselves. For

both writers, it is the existence of the archive itself that enables this oscillation to occur, and that provides the possibility of redemption.

### A New Map for Modernity

The mode of production of the space of modernity—an expansion into the space of a *necessary* other—has meant that the voice of the other is *de facto* an irruption into that space. Perhaps this very fact contains some redemptive possibilities in itself. As Harvey notes, “Modernism entails, after all, the perpetual disruption of temporal and spatial rhythms, and modernism takes as one of its missions the production of new meanings for space and time in a world of ephemerality and fragmentation.”<sup>75</sup> As the domination of space by global capital becomes more complete, it seems that paradoxically the technology enabling that completion may also enhance the ability to appropriate of the history of that process by voice of the dominated, which may in turn lead to the production of new spaces with different meanings.

The appropriation of modernity and its space is Dussel’s proposal. Given that the sources of his story are so similar to those of archival fictions, perhaps it would be worthwhile to direct González Echevarría’s question about their future to Dussel:

Is there narrative beyond the Archive? Do archival fictions give way to new kinds of narrative that announce a new masterstory? What would the new hegemonic discourse be? . . . [T]here seems to exist a desire to break out of the Archive, one that is no longer merely a part of the economy of the Archive itself. Is a move beyond the Archive the end of narrative, or is it the beginning of another narrative? Could it be seen from within the Archive, or even from the subversions of the Archive? Most probably not, but if one form of discourse appears to be acquiring hegemonic power it is that of communication systems.<sup>76</sup>

The distinction between self-reference and external reference, writes Luhmann, prevents “the system from confusing itself and its environment. It also prevents the system from confusing its own map with external territory, or from attempting to fashion its own map in such a complex manner, as Borges has

postulated, that it corresponds with its territory point for point."<sup>77</sup> The "oscillation" between sets of distinctions that Luhmann postulates may allow for areas of congruency among very different maps, but the "totalizing vision" of a known spatial and cultural order is for many a vision of technologically closed, global sterility rather than a vision for the rational ordering of the unknown.

Luhmann's unreferenced (but not uncoded) allusion to Borges is interesting in that the postulation of a map that corresponds to its territory point for point would be an exact model for Luhmann's oscillating system of distinctions: the territory and the map are the same, and only the position of the observer distinguishes which is reference and which coding. Who is the builder and who the inhabitant of such a territory? "The globalizing world-system reaches a limit with the exteriority of the alterity of the Other," writes Dussel.<sup>78</sup> At the point where further subsumption is impossible, recognition of the new territory may begin.

If expanding the archive to include other voices is a subversion of its traditional role, then that has already happened. If one "function" of the archive is to enable different observers to construct sets of significant distinctions, then that is also happening. González Echevarría's answer that communication systems may acquire the status of a new metanarrative does not preclude the continuing role of the archive as the field of literary possibility, because it can always expand to include new forms. The role of the expanding archive within expanding global communication systems, directed toward and created by audiences with varying oscillatory allegiances, may in fact present the most probable area for cultural contestation.

With the advent of global communication systems and virtual global repositories for information, the notion of global archive begins to take on a material reality in addition to a conceptual aggregation of diverse sources. The Latin American case is significant, though perhaps not unique, because it shows the extent to which an existing archive can enable the critique of emerging and historical global systems. In a situation where culture is mirrored back to itself through cyberspace, where archival sources, theory, and fiction interact in elaborate scriptural os-

cillations, the application of Borgesian labyrinths and mirrors, as Certeau observes, “is not merely a game.” “The model of a productive reason is written on the nowhere of paper,” writes Certeau. “The meaning . . . of scriptural play, the production of a system, a space of formalization, refers to the reality from which it has been distinguished *in order to change it* . . .”<sup>79</sup> The genetic field of the archive is a necessary precondition for the observation of society as distinctions are made between the past, the present and a future.

How that archive is itself produced and disseminated in a global system of observers is a political act—an act of creating the field in which voices can be recorded and retrieved. It provides the constructive possibilities for models of productive reason; it also allows the production of distinct, fragmented universes. However, the map is not the territory; the model is not its implementation. The map, the model, and the archive exist in order to change that from which they are distinguished.

### ***Conclusion: Displacements and Appropriations of Modernity***

If space . . . is always a container of social power, then the reorganization of space is always a reorganization of the framework through which social power is expressed.<sup>80</sup>

The semantic contestation over what to call the realm of the other—the Third World, the periphery, dependent, developing—in retrospect foreshadowed Dussel’s critique of the spatial pretensions of modernity. When capitalism reaches its spatial limits on the globe, the conception of the space of the other as “exotic” and “external” is undermined (since the external no longer exists). This has two main cultural consequences.

The first is the “return of the repressed,” or what I have been calling the irruption of the other into the system (or, seen from another perspective, Friedman’s “implosion of modernity”). Here the “third world” and its topological synonyms become real—the global economy no longer permits the conceit that “center” economies are separate from their “periphery.” The “exotic”

emerges or irrupts into the everyday life of the “center” as Mexicans in San Diego, Turks in Germany, and Algerians in France walk across the lines, some real, some imaginary, that separate their homelands from the lands of excess consumption. As Moreiras writes, “the spatial relationships between center and periphery, between home and abroad, between the locality of knowledge production and its site of intervention” are problematized.<sup>81</sup> One place that this problematizing is addressed is through the formation of what Vicente Rafael calls an “immigrant imaginary,” that “opens the possibility of Latinamericanist counterimaginings to historically constituted Latinamericanism.”<sup>82</sup> As the various categories of “orientalized” others question the categories that have historically constituted their otherness, the central sites of the dissemination of those categories come into question as well.

The second consequence is the expansion and extension of the colonization of the lifeworld. As the resources and opportunities for expansion into physical space diminish, capitalism and the instrumental rationality that fueled its spatial expansion direct more resources toward other realms: everyday life-space is more subject to the abstract space of exchange; leisure time becomes more instrumentalized; communities based on spatial proximity vie with encounters with the virtual other of cyberspace; commercial exchange becomes less a neighborhood encounter and more an element in a global transaction space.

These two consequences merge in the global marketing of culture. The already occluded romantic longing for the other is reproduced ad infinitum as tourists trek to Nepal and the latest world music beat. The houses of the merely rich are furnished with “authentic” rustic French or Balinese or New Mexican farmhouse antiques, while those of more moderate means are furnished with reproductions of the “authentic” ones, often made expressly for that market by people (somewhere) who are simply the best wage value for mobile capital. The frenzy of the international labor market to find just the right combination of wage, worker rights, and access to cheap shipping is mirrored by the frenzy of the consumer markets in the churning of stocks, houses, neighborhoods, and cultural fashion.

The archive from which the *topos* is produced becomes ever more dense and layered, eventually allowing many contradictory ideas of the *topos* to exist at once. The informational strategy of global capital has been to increase the complexity of the archive and to market *topoi* appropriate to its regional goals. This informational strategy has been cumulative, with the long-term effect of enabling capital to produce specific *topoi* for specific target markets, so that, for example, ideas of cultural diversity can be reduced to consumer choices about clothing style, vacation destinations, and academic majors. The production of regional *topoi* allows a global system to thematize itself so that cultural images of specific regions are constantly projected and re-integrated into the culture of global capitalism and serve to reinforce cultural stereotypes and capitalist ideology.

The contradictions that are becoming apparent with the emergence of global capitalism—an international division of labor together with a globally mobile population, a system of regional development based upon a core-periphery model that is coming into question, and systems of cultural production based on national stereotypes and spatial separation from the Other even when increasing diversity of local populations is the norm—may be, at least in part, explainable by taking a close look at the genesis of modernity. Capitalism has successfully used spatial and cultural otherness as its main strategy of expansion for four centuries. However, global capital is currently entering a crisis of completion in which the production of the spatial and cultural other is becoming problematic, because cultural and spatial separation is necessary for the continuing maintenance of the various *topoi* of otherness.

The postmodern critique of the systemic self-criticism made possible by the mutual self-definition resulting from separate sets of observations would be that the fragmentation of global culture only allows momentary respite in some particular *topos*. This is a false respite because the postmodern self is constantly having, or able, to shift its point of view—the “archive of the self” is so flexible that any number of personal *topoi* are in contention at any one time. In such a state of affairs, assuming that there is no “self-regulating system” at some higher level than the global system of interactive fragments, what organizing princi-

ple or function is available? The place of narrative emerges as a bimodal operation in any positive reformulation of modernity—as the means for the expression of narratives of healing—revealing past scars and the occlusions of history—and as a means for the positive expression of new forms of social life—the construction of new global *topoi*.

### **Narrative, the Scars of Modernity, and the Unarchived**

These vast nondescript areas as large as provinces were once, and for a short time, occupied by man. Then he moved on, leaving behind him a battered landscape, cluttered with traces of his past activities. And on these battlefields, where he grappled for several decades with an unknown land, a monotonous vegetation is slowly re-emerging in a confusion which is all the more deceptive since it preserves, beneath a falsely innocent exterior, memories and patterns of former conflicts.<sup>83</sup>

One of the unexpected outcomes of this look at narratives of the Orinoco over time is how Africa emerges as “the figure in the carpet”—Dussel’s re-envisioning of the Columbian beginnings of modernity as the result of Spain not having access to an African route to the center of the system, Behn and Defoe’s displacements of African characters, Humboldt’s route to the New World through St.-Pierre’s African journey, Posse’s construction of the Moorish girl as the impossible object of desire and as the source for transformation of the system—in each of these sets of narratives the space of Africa is the warp across which the woof of narrative is written. The conspicuous absence is in the narratives of modernism presented in Chapter Four—an absence perhaps significant for the corresponding absence of Africa in the successes of development and modernization.

Colin Leys, the noted African development theorist, notes that the “character of African economic development in the twenty years 1960 to 1980 is strangely obscure;” he further argues that this obscurity is the result of “the extraordinary degree to which African reality has been overlaid by theory. It is as if the poverty of so many millions in Africa were too painful to contemplate without being immediately set in the context of a

theory that can somehow explain it, and at the same time show the way to ending it."<sup>84</sup> The sidelong glance, the difficulty in facing directly the scars of modernity, of which slavery in Africa and the genocide of Native American populations and cultures should surely be the most visible, is reflected in the odd displacements of Africa that occurs in Orinoco narratives.

One role of narrative, and particularly fictional narrative, in the space of global flows is the uncovering of the lost totality of history. Bostells, Mirella, and Schilling assert that the narrativity in the magical realist mode of apprehension, which includes Carpentier and Posse, "replaces the analytical categories of philosophy in the evaluation of experience, truth, and reality," and helps "to provide . . . a 'critical ontology of ourselves.'"<sup>85</sup> They argue that

What might be needed, then, to understand the political and ideological functions of magic realism is a poetics of the scar. A visible, physical trace of past wounds suffered by the body, the scar always represents a site of the in-between: above all, between nature and history, and between past and present. Tokens of inscription, scars literally define what is the body politic . . .

[Scars] also mark the beginning and partial completion of a healing process. The inscription of scars thus sketches out the possibility of a meaningful totality, without erasing the historical traces of the underlying rifts.<sup>86</sup>

In magical realism, "the uncovered totality tends to be couched historically, ethnologically, and anthropologically in terms of the mythical and autochthonous strata partially or wholly extirpated in the processes of colonization and modernization."<sup>87</sup> The archive enables the recovery of these strata.

Magical realism thus becomes one agency "voicing identity projects aimed at changing cultural codes," to return to Castells' terminology. The writers of alternative narratives of history become "symbol mobilizers" who "act on the culture of real virtuality that frames communication in the network society, subverting it on behalf of alternative values, and introducing codes emerging from autonomous identity projects." Castells' "culture of real virtuality" subsumes the traditional world of publishing and image production by expanding it to include new net-



worked communities enabled by networks of decentralized activity that are both “mirroring, and counteracting, the networking logic of domination . . .”<sup>88</sup> Magical realist narratives have played a major role in subverting the existing archive, by expanding it to include (and remember) parts of the totality of history from which dominant interpretations of it had turned away.

### A Narrative Topology of Globalism

The breakup of modernity’s “principles of organization” also includes the breakup of its principles of spatial organization. Bringing narratives of the scars of modernity into the archive breaks up existing *topoi* and enables the process of constructing new ones to begin. One of the insights available through Dussel’s evaluation of the history of modernity is that conceptions of modernity themselves are the results of a series of displacements. The space of modernity is itself a *topos* populated by elements from the archive, and thus amenable to a positive reconstruction as the “transmodern.” These new narratives of global interpretation form the basis for the formulation of new *topoi*.

The work of Posse, Dussel, and Luhmann each appropriate conceptions of modernity and attempt to “reorganize the framework through which social power is expressed.” However, for such conceptual reorganizations to be realized, they have to be more substantive than a continuation of a utopian impulse, which could be argued is the case for Posse and Dussel, and more than the systemic operation of an assumed redemptive function, which could be argued in the case of Luhmann. In the emerging spaces of globalization, the place of narrative emerges as a means for the positive expression of new forms of social life.

Manuel Castells argues that localized “identities of resistance” emerging in opposition to the global “space of flows” of capital become the sources of global social transformation:<sup>89</sup>

The communes of resistance defend their space, their places, against the placeless logic of the space of flows characterizing social domination in the Information Age. They claim their historic memory, and/or affirm the permanence of their values, against the dissolution of history in timeless time, and the

celebration of the ephemeral in the culture of real virtuality. They use information technology for people's horizontal communication, and communal prayer, while rejecting the new idolatry of technology, and preserving transcendent values against the deconstructing logic of self-regulating computer networks.<sup>90</sup>

Castells argues that it is the "dominant logic of the network society" itself that "triggers its own challenges" in the form of communes of resistance. Power in the information age "lies in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions, and peoples build their lives, and decide their behavior."<sup>91</sup> But as Harvey notes, and as was mentioned in the previous section, this process is not without paradox: "the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital. The result has been the production of fragmentation, insecurity, and ephemeral uneven development within a highly unified global space economy of capital flows."<sup>92</sup> The result of this fragmentation, according to Castells, is that "victories may be ephemeral, since the turbulence of information flows will keep codes in a constant swirl."<sup>93</sup>

"The meaning . . . of scriptural play, the production of a system, a space of formalization, refers to the reality from which it has been distinguished *in order to change it* . . ." <sup>94</sup> Only through creating a space within the world and creating a system of formal story telling about that world can the "observation of observations" occur.

For this to occur, I would adopt the requirements posited by Young: "A condition of our communication is that we acknowledge the difference, interval, that others drag behind them shadows and histories, scars and traces, that do not become present in our communication."<sup>95</sup> Perhaps this and the accompanying "moral humility" Young envisions can enable the narrative construction of new global *topoi*—already prefigured in ecological movements, in the realpolitik of global trade agreements, and the growing realization of the connections between the local and the global. Perhaps the poetics of the scar may even become part of the functioning of the global system in a Luhmannesque redemptive function. The narratives built from

the archive, such as the novels of Latin American magical realism, which attempt to recover forgotten aspects of the past, and narratives built from the experience and analysis of contemporary social movements,<sup>96</sup> which attempt to map an uncertain future, will form the foundations for such future global constructs, both real and imaginary. Their narrative topology will be at least as convoluted as the narrative flow of the Orinoco.

### Notes

1. Georg Simmel, "The Conflict in Modern Culture," in *The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays*, trans. K. Peter Etkorn (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1968 [1918]), 12-13.

2. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 3.

3. Niklas Luhmann, "The World Society as a Social System," in *Dependency & Inequality: A Systems Approach to the Problems of Mexico and Other Developing Countries*, ed. R.F. Geyer and J. von der Zouen (New York: Pergamon, 1982), 298.

4. Dussel's works significant for this discussion are *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the Other and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as (1995); *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation* (1996), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as (1996); "Eurocentrism and Modernity," *Boundary 2* (1993, 65-76); and "Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity," in Jameson 1998, hereafter referred to as (1998). The latter essay is a recent attempt to integrate the previous works, and most of the following summary will be drawn from it.

5. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

6. Barber may be using 'jihad' "as a metaphor for antiuniversalist struggle" (*Jihad vs. McWorld*, 207), but metaphors have meaning, and Barber's are particularly polarizing. For example, Barber writes that "it has not been too difficult to contrive a civil religion for Americans or French or Swiss, since these 'peoples' actually contain multitudes of subnational factions and ethnic tribes earnestly seeking common ground" (6). Barber contrasts those traditional locations and agents of progress to those for whom he finds no room: "But for Basques and Normans? What need have they for anything but blood and memory? And what of Alsatians, Bavarians, and East Prussians? Kurds, Ossetians, East Timorese, Quebecois, Abkhazians, Catalonians, Tamils, Inkatha Zulus, Kurile Islander Japanese—people without countries inhabiting countries they cannot call their own? These are frightened tribes running not to but from civic faith in search of something more palpable and electrifying. How will peoples who define themselves by

the slaughter of tribal neighbors be persuaded to subscribe to some flimsy artificial faith organized around abstract civic ideals or commercial markets?" (10) Condemning terror and slaughter is one thing, but condemning whole peoples, or reducing them to stereotypes, as in, for example, Barber's doubly insulting comment that "many Indonesians make a living out of converting their jungles into toothpicks for fastidious Japanese diners" (13) is unlikely to be reconstructive of civil society.

7. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 405-6.

8. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 219-20.

9. Manuel Castells, *End of Millennium*, (London: Blackwell, 1998), 352. Castells develops his analysis of emergent global societies in the three-volume *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* of which *End of Millennium* is the third.

10. Iris Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 50. Young's reference to Levinas as being influential in the development of her thinking, reinforces this linkage, as Levinas was also a major influence on Dussel. See below.

11. Dussel, *Invention of the Americas*, 12-13.

12. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*. (London: Blackwell, 1997), 11.

13. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 67. Castells explicates in detail the processes and participants of reflexive modernization that Beck outlines: "... there will not be a revolution but there will be a new society." Beck, Giddens, and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, 3.

14. Luhmann, Niklas, *Observations on Modernity*, trans. William Whobrey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), ix.

15 See Stephen Wolfram, *A New Kind of Science* (Champaign, IL: Wolfram Media), 2001.

16. Luhmann, *Observations*, x.

17. John Tagg, "Globalization, Totalization, and the Discursive Field," in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony King (Binghamton, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 157.

18. Luhmann, *Observations*, ix.

19. Claudio Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 337.

20. The discussion of Dussel's biography is drawn from Eduardo Mendieta's introduction to Dussel's *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996).

21. Guillén, *Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 321.

22. Guillén, *Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 337.

23. Guillén, *Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 322.

24. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 388.

25. Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, 59.

26. Quoted in Anthony Smith, *Explorers of the Amazon* (London: Viking, 1990), 133.

27. See Smith, *Explorers*, 111-113, and Stephen Minta, *Aguirre* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1993), 150-151.

28. Minta, *Aguirre*, 1993, 151.

29. Abel Posse, *Daimon*, trans. Sarah Arvio (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 5. Subsequent references will be given as parenthetical page numbers in the text.
30. Fernand Braudel, *On History*. (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 74.
31. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 129.
32. Mendieta, "Introduction," xxvi.
33. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, 19 and "Beyond Eurocentrism," 3-4. Emphasis from Dussel.
34. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). 108.
35. Goethe, in Heller, *The Disinherited Mind*, 11.
36. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 2-3.
37. Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 2-3.
38. Mendieta, "Introduction," xvi.
39. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, 26.
40. Luhmann, "Modernity in Contemporary Society," in *Observations*, 18.
41. Luhmann, *Observations*, 18.
42. Luhmann, *Observations*, 18.
43. Luhmann, *Observations*, 3.
44. Luhmann, *Observations*, 10.
45. Dussel *The Invention of the Americas*, 132.
46. Dussel *The Invention of the Americas*, 132.
47. Luhmann, *Observations*, 11.
48. Luhmann, *Observations*, 11.
49. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 48.
50. Luhmann makes specific reference to the work of physicists Ilya Prigogine (*Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* [1984]) and Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (*The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* [1992]), the systems theoretical work of Gregory Bateson, as well as cyberneticists W. Ross Ashby and Heinz von Foerster.
51. Jürgen Habermas, "Excursus on Luhmann's Appropriation of the Philosophy of the Subject through Systems Theory," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 385.
52. Luhmann, *Observations*, 10-11. Emphasis added.
53. In his work in the early 1980's, Luhmann characterized systemic self-reflection, or "self-thematization" as occurring when "a system becomes a topic within itself," which "makes the unity of a system accessible to the system's parts. . . To this extent, reflection is a form of participation. While a part certainly cannot be the whole, it can *thematize* the whole in so far as it perceives it as a meaning-generating system." Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society*, trans. S. Holmes and C. Larmore (New York: Columbia University. [1982]), 327- 328. This argument was modified, possibly as a result of criticism by Habermas referred to in the note above.
54. Alberto Moreiras, "Global Fragments: A Second Latinamericanism," in *Cultures of Globalization* Jameson and Miyoshi, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 92-93.

55. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 93.
56. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 93.
57. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 93.
58. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 92-95.
59. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 90.
60. Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Culture, and the Fin de Siècle*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 4.
61. Bongie, *Exotic Memories*, 4.
62. Bongie, *Exotic Memories*, 17.
63. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 85-6. Emphasis added
64. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 86.
65. Bongie, *Exotic Memories*, 28.
66. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 97.
67. Lefebvre, , *The Production of Space*, 188-9.
68. Posse, *Daimon*, 10.
69. Coronil, *The Magical State*, 394.
70. Coronil, *The Magical State*, 394.
71. Luhmann, *Observations*, 7.
72. Luhmann, *Observations*, 18.
73. Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire*, 3 vols., trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Pantheon, 1985-1989).
74. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 86-87.
75. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 216.
76. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*, 186.
77. Luhmann, *Observations*, 10.
78. Dussel, "Beyond Eurocentrism," 21.
79. Michel de Certeau, "The Scriptural Economy," Chapter X. of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 131-153.
80. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 255.
81. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 83.
82. Moreiras, "Global Fragments," 84.
83. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 93-4.
84. Colin Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 107.
85. Bruno Bostells, Loris Mirella, and Peter A. Schilling, "The Politics of Totality in Magic Realism," in *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*, ed. Michael J. Shapiro (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996), 111.
86. Bostells et al., "The Politics of Totality," 128-9.
87. Bostells et al., "The Politics of Totality," 113.
88. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 360-361.
89. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 354-362.
90. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 358.
91. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 359. Emphasis in original.
92. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 295-6.
93. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 360.
94. Michel de Certeau, "The Scriptural Economy," Chapter X. of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 131-153.
95. Iris Young, *Intersecting Voices*, 53.

96. See, for example, in addition to such as Castells' *Information Age* trilogy, Alberto Melucci's *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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