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LATIN AMERICAN COLONIAL STUDIES: A MARXIST CRITIQUE
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Preface

The present work gathers together a series of articles published since 2000 in a variety of journals, together with several inedited pieces that belong to the same period. While some degree of cross-referencing was possible, this serial mode of production resulted in a certain amount of repetition, self-imposed to some extent, as I sought to spell out on each occasion the theoretical underpinnings of my work, but also dictated in part by editorial fiat. My first thought, when considering the idea of a collected volume, was that some kind of rationalization would be required. And such has proved indeed to be the case: the most obvious redundancies have been surgically removed. However, I gradually came round to the view that any kind of radical reconstruction would be not only impractical but also inadvisable. Impractical because it could never have been a question of simply omitting seemingly otiose passage, given the structurally destabilizing effects that were bound to ensue; and inadvisable because there did appear to be definite virtues to the periodic restatement of my theoretical position, within an unfolding narrative. I have therefore chosen to leave each contribution more or less as it stands, reworking only those passages where I felt the argument to be faulty or in need of clarification.

It is sometimes said that in politics a week is a long time. And it is certainly true that, had I been writing this preface but a short time ago, its tone would have been far more apologetic and self-deprecating. Notwithstanding its explanatory capacity and the continued vigor of its research program, the Althusserian problematic, I would have been conceding, now enjoys only a marginalized status within the context of an Anglophone Hispanism whose colonialists appear to have embraced wholeheartedly the postmodern consensus as to the exhaustion and irrelevance of the traditional left. But at the time of writing, in the winter of 2010, a global capitalism in total disarray continues to teeter on the brink of crisis, following the total collapse of its banking system, the latter salvaged only by hand-outs of public money on an unprecedented scale. Was it really only yesterday that the heavens rang out to triumphal cries of the neo-liberals? There is a certain satisfaction in seeing a culture of greed and selfishness get its come-uppance, but we would be wise not to over-indulge. To begin with, nobody should under-estimate the recuperative powers of capitalism, least of all Marxists, who, on the evidence of history, have had a distinct penchant for celebrating prematurely the arrival of a post-revolutionary, that is to say, post-class, post-gender, post-ethnic,
post-racial society. Further to which, it could well be argued, these same Marxists would have been well advised to heed the message of the Master himself, to the effect that capitalism would not enter into terminal crisis until the global dominance of the market was complete. Proclamations as to the imminence of its fall have too often occurred at points when, to all but the most willfully self-deceived, capitalism was clearly girding its loins in preparation for one more giant leap forward. That said, there can be no doubting that, with the onset of the current depression, something has gone and, hopefully, gone for good. Already the specter of "financial socialism" walks abroad, and as the dole lines grow and the "real economy" folds, who is to say where the process might end? Perhaps, then, the moment is ripe for assessing more actively than we were doing yesterday, and with the benefit of hindsight, the historical role of the various postmodernisms and post-structuralisms of the 1980s and 90s. Could it be that their main function was to provide left cover for a multinational capitalism that was in the process of imposing its economic agenda? If that is so, then it is not only the pathologies of global capitalism that now need to be scrutinized for their irrationalism but those of the ideological movements that greased capitalism's mechanisms and that lent it support.

This is an opportune moment, as I approach the end of my academic career, to thank, firstly, those graduate students who, over the years, have taken an interest in my ideas, critically embraced them, and lent me their support, sometimes at great personal cost to themselves; secondly, those scholars and authors whose ideas have been a source of joy and inspiration to me, and have made my life one that I would willingly live again; and last, but certainly not least, those people without whose ongoing labor I would not have had the time or space to work my own ideas or pursue my own unmistakably artisanal interests. To all of them I dedicate the present volume.

Introduction

I

At its origin the present work took shape, firstly, as an act of resistance, vis-à-vis the "post" movements that began to dominate Spanish colonial studies from the mid 1980s, and secondly, as a project that puts to the test a theoretical approach refined in the study of 16th and 17th-century Spain. More specifically, and simplifying somewhat, it could be said to be the product of a specific conjuncture, involving three texts: Steven Stern's "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," Robert Paul Resch's *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, and Juan Carlos Rodríguez's, *Teoría e historia de la producción ideológica*. Stern set out to review the scholarship on modes of production to come out of the '70s and '80s, on the occasion of the recent publication of the second volume of Immanuel Wallerstein's classic *The Modern World System*. His focus was upon the latter's relatively unenthusiastic reception in Latin America, to be explained by Latin America's prior familiarity with Frank's dependency theory, which, Stern argued, detracted somewhat from the novelty of Wallerstein's work. The lesson to be learned, with respect to Spanish colonialism, was that entrepreneurs were driven to experiment with diverse forms of labor relations, which frequently co-existed on the same site. In Stern's own words: "Repeatedly in colonial Latin America and the Caribbean, one encounters a shifting combination of heterogeneous relations of production in a pragmatic package" (Stern 870). Labor strategies that were exclusive and sequential in Europe were, the argument ran, typically combined in more variegated patterns in its colonies, and possibly with greater variation than was to be found in the "long" early modern period of European history.

In a key footnote to his article, Stern noted the extent to which the innovations of "our Latin American colleagues" had been largely neglected in the United States, whose historical profession, he suggested, was strongly anti-theoretical compared with its Latin American counterpart (836) and whose intellectuals were rather more reluctant to identify their work as "Marxist" (842). He does concede, however, that, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, "a certain disillusionment with the mode of production concept set in among some intellectuals on the left, including Latin Americans, who had once used the concept more readily" (872). No reasons are offered for the apparent shift in "scholarly fashion" (872) – in 1988 the relevant developments were still
barely discernible – although with the benefit of hindsight the extent of the change and identities of its protagonists are clear enough. The key theoretical move was made by Ernesto Laclau, who began by critiquing the dependency theory of Frank as insufficiently attentive to the relations of production (Laclau). At this point, the terms of reference remained recognizably Marxist, and were still contained within the economic sphere, but by the time of his later work, co-authored with Chantal Mouffe, Laclau had entered a recognizably post-Marxist phase. The struggle for socialism became not so much a class struggle as a more diffuse "democratic" campaign, organized along non-class lines. The focus of attention was displaced onto ideology, now increasingly identified with the "discursive" and burdened with the task of bringing about unity where no prior unity existed. From the Marxist perspective, such a political tactic could only be viewed as deeply suspicious, if not specifically reformist, and requiring refutation in the strongest possible terms. Which brings us, by virtue of an intertextual linkage, to the second book that I have singled out as decisive to the writing of the present text, namely Paul Resch's interdisciplinary re-assessment of Althusserianism.1

As is well known, Althusserianism falls emphatically within the mode of production analysis, indeed, defines a social formation as a "totality of instances articulated on the basis of a determinate mode of production" (Althusser and Balibar 207n5). The "instances" in question are distinct levels of social relations, principally economic, political and ideological, each characterized by a relative degree of autonomy but bound together in a contradictory ensemble by the matrix effect of the whole. The relevance of such considerations to instances of "dependency" should be obvious, and explains Resch's attempt to play down the opposition between global approaches (whether of the dependency or world-system variety) and his own version of Althusserianism: "The problematic I am defending here has a place for both levels of analysis; indeed, despite important and obvious differences between national, regional, and global structures, this approach insists on the necessity of analysis of each of them for exactly the same reasons it insists on different structural levels of analysis within individual social formations" (Resch 375n12).

By way of contrast, Resch rejected emphatically Laclau and Mouffe's view of political and ideological discourses as free-floating, autonomous systems, detached from the class struggle and unrelated to economic determination. Such an irrationalist view of discourse, he argued, was not only unable to explain the absence of democratic control over the means of production and the distribution of the social surplus but was also "unable to

1 Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory (1992). Resch refers to Stern's text in his discussion of "Feudalism and the Transition to Capitalism" (131 ff).
move beyond the level of postmodern populist sloganizing or even to begin to articulate the material conditions for an alternative vision" (369-70n13). More specifically and, from our perspective, more crucially, Laclau was guilty of "grossly misrepresenting the subtle indirect determination of the matrix effect," which, while far from reducing the other levels of the social formation to the economic instance, assigns to politics and ideology their "relatively autonomous" positions, together with their secondary and tertiary roles, within the context of the complex whole (370n13, 386n2).

These were not the only insights to be gleaned, through Resch, from Althusserianism, and carried over into our study of Spanish colonialism. Also relevant to our own concerns was the importance attached to the co-existence of multiple modes of production within a single social formation. Perforce our own interests focus upon the transition from feudalism to capitalism, in terms of the uneven development and shifting relations of domination and subordination between the two modes. Possible articulations, according to Resch, include situations in which feudalism might occupy first a dominant and then a subordinate position, although every allowance needs to be made for periods of regression, in which feudalism re-asserts its dominance. We will follow the lead of Althusserianism in attending closely to the internal logic of each mode, through which to capture the processes of development and dissolution, but not to the exclusion of an external logic. The latter is of relevance to a situation in which the conditions of one mode influence the internal rhythms of the other, decisively so in the case of the subordinate mode, whose operations may be circumscribed by a dominant mode set upon raising the level of exploitation.

Clearly, then, there was much to be gained from a rehabilitation of Althusserianism with respect to colonial studies. But it was in the sphere of ideology that its contributions promised to be most important.

II

Ideology was conspicuous by its absence from the article of Stern, in which it was relegated to a footnote reference to García Márquez's humor (Stern 845-46n43), as from mode-of-production analysis in general. The same is true of dependency theory as practiced by Gunder Frank, not to mention Wallerstein and the World System theorists, who had insisted explicitly and, one is bound to say, somewhat astoundingly, that the early world system had operated without the support of an ideology (see Shannon 205-07). This was doubtless a state of affairs only to be expected from bodies of research indebted for the most part to historians, as opposed to literary or cultural critics. But it was one that was to have lamentable consequences, not least of all when, against the
backdrop of the sudden reversal of political fortunes, Marxism found itself
challenged by a post-Marxist tradition more than willing to pick up the slack.
The exception that proved the rule when it came to ideology was
Althusserianism, which counted among its students, even as it failed to
appreciate his achievements, the Spanish scholar Juan Carlos Rodríguez, whose
Teoría e historia de la producción ideológica (1974, 1990) is the third of my seminal
texts.

Rodríguez made a number of crucial contributions to the Althusserian
schema briefly adumbrated above. His first was to radically historicize them.
Each mode of production – slave, feudal or capitalist – is characterized, he
argued, by its own ideological matrix, which possesses an internal logic of its own,
sustained by certain key notions. Thus, the slave mode operates in terms of a
master/slave opposition, together with the notion of what constitutes a
"natural slave"; the feudal mode foregrounds the notion of "service," rendered
by a serf/servant to a lord, the latter characterized by his "blood" and
"lineage"; whereas capitalism imposes the notion of the "free subject," free,
that is, to exploit (in the case of the employer) and to be exploited (in the case
of the employee). Bourgeois ideology needs, it follows, to turn the slave and
the serf into the proletarian, that is, into a free subject that possesses his/her
own interior truth, otherwise their own labor power, to be sold in exchange for
a wage, etc. Rodríguez elaborates: "si la lógica del sujeto sólo puede existir a
partir de las condiciones objetivas inscritas en tal matriz ideológica, si el
'sujeto,' pues, es una invención de esta 'matriz,' resultará perfectamente inútil
tratar de encontrar tal lógica en el interior, por ejemplo, de la ideología
'esclavista'" (Rodríguez 1990: 7). By the same token, it will be impossible to
find the same logic at work in feudalism; "substantialism," the latter's dominant
ideology, does not operate via the notion of the subject. This subject only
begins to appear in the form of the "beautiful soul," otherwise the key
category of "animism," the ideology of the emergent bourgeoisie, in the
transition from feudalism to mercantile capitalism. At this point the
contradictions internal to each mode of production, which find the serf, say,
rebellious in the face of lordly exploitation, are compounded by the presence,
during a period of transition, of other modes.

Rodríguez’s next crucial intervention concerned the Ideological State
Apparatus, regarding which his chief complaint is not so much with Althusser
as with some of his followers, notably Renée Balibar and her associates. His
target was not their claims regarding the relationships between culture and
class structure, between literature and the public school system, and between
all of these and ideological hegemony. On the contrary, he was the first to
admit that, in the light of their work, nobody could seriously doubt the role of
the School and subsequently the University in the maintenance of the class
structure. But as Rodríguez explains, there is a fundamental objection to their fixation upon the School, qua ideological state apparatus, and, to be more precise, upon the way in which the critics in question extrapolate from the individual case of Marsault/Camus:

   En una palabra, la objeción básica a tales planteamientos no puede ser más que ésta: ¿quién educa a los educadores? O de otro modo, y más drásticamente aún: si la "escuela" es un aparato Estatal no es ella la que "crea" la ideología, sino, en todo caso, y únicamente, la que la materializa y reproduce. (23)

The point, Rodríguez believes, cannot be emphasized enough: in the last instance it is not the experience of individual agents that counts as much as the relevant ideological unconscious, operative on an ontological level that transcends that of the individual. Thus:

   [...] la dialéctica inscrita en los textos literarios (la que los produce como tales, su lógica interna) es la plasmación de un inconsciente ideológico que no "nace" en la Escuela, sino directamente en el interior de las relaciones sociales mismas y desde ellas únicamente se segrega, etc. (23)

From Balibar's emphasis upon the school, as the original site of ideology, the royal road lies open to the "institutionalist sociologism" of Weber, which completely cuts the ground from beneath Althusserianism, as from beneath any Marxism worthy of the name. The school, Rodríguez insists, is more appropriately envisaged as one of sites at which the ideological unconscious is formalized, legitimized and, needless to say, inculcated through the appropriate disciplinary mechanisms. Other sites include the family and the church, under whose influence an ideological unconscious is accepted and admitted by everyone as their own "skin," as the truth of nature.

   One final contribution of Rodríguez: his emphasis upon the importance of contradiction, which follows logically from the above. The ideological conflicts that characterize any society, he will demonstrate through his analysis of literary texts, are as contradictory as those of the relations of production themselves, which, to repeat, are internally and externally conflictual.

   Such, then, were the major influences to weigh upon me during the writing of the present work, although some mention should also be made of the work of Roy Bhaskar and, through Bhaskar, the tradition of Critical Realism with which Bhaskar's name is associated. It was Critical Realism that proved crucial in immunizing me against the plague of discourse theory to which I was exposed, on a daily basis, through my readings of what currently passes for Hispanic colonial theory. While specific references are duly recorded, my more indirect debts to the realist philosophical tradition will be obvious to anyone at all familiar with the body of works in question, since they
are in evidence on virtually every page of my work.

III

The nature of the present project defines itself in the light of the above. We set out to critique a body of Spanish colonial criticism that, drawing upon the post-Marxist tradition, embodied in the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), defines political and ideological discourses as free-floating, autonomous systems. Such a view, we will be arguing, promotes a species of political voluntarism that, by collapsing the base into the superstructure, regresses to the liberal view of history as the "story of liberty," in which "indigenous peoples" find themselves pitted against their European cultural masters. The tactic in effect is to invert the process of "othering" characteristic of the masters, so as to homogenize a European society that, its internal differences notwithstanding, finds itself circumscribed by a common cultural horizon. In place of this vertical, geographical split, which opposes the colonizer to the colonized, we have theorized, from an Althusserian standpoint, the reality of horizontal, social divisions, in a way that complicates the European legacy. The latter, we insist, should be understood as consisting of social formations structured on the basis of conflict, which manifests itself at the ideological level in the struggle between dominant and emergent ideologies.

The first task, then, in chapter one, is to retrieve the thread of mode-of-production analysis where it was prematurely curtailed, in the 1970s and '80s, and to do so through an engagement with the work of the Spanish Althusserian, Juan Carlos Rodríguez. Spanish history, the latter argues, is to be understood not in terms of some Hegelian spirit, pervasive of each and every phenomenon within the social totality, but as the product of contradiction, between (at least) two modes of production, namely feudalism and mercantilist capitalism. This contradiction is generative in turn of an opposition between the public and private spheres, conducive in the long term to the dynamics of capitalism but, in the short term, through the nobility's control over the public sector, to a resurgence of the forces of feudalism. The latter, we insist (following Rodríguez), privileges not the ideological category of the subject but that of the servant of the lord, in which respect the mechanisms of substantialism, the dominant ideology of feudalism, largely escape the comprehension of recent colonial theory, which may be described as subject-centered. The importance attributed to the subject needs to be understood historically. In point of fact, it first manifests itself in the emergent ideology with which substantialism must compete, namely animism, in which subjectivity assumes the embryonic form of an individualized "beautiful soul." The defining characteristic of the latter is its capacity to view reality in literal terms,
as opposed to reading it, in the substantialist manner.

The conclusions reached in our first chapter prepare the ground for our second, in which we press the need, logically enough, to "change the subject," not simply in the sense of refocusing the discussion of subjectivity but of reconfiguring Latin-American colonial studies, to which end I consider, by way of critique, a number of articles by Rolena Adorno. Theoretical leverage is sought and found, as in chapter one, in the Althusserian project of Juan Carlos Rodríguez, which, by breaking with dominant categories of Kantian-inspired scholarship, has been able to avoid the ahistorical and consequently idealizing dichotomies that recent (post)colonial criticism continues unthinkingly to assume and to deploy. I then proceed to extend my critique of colonial studies through a consideration of Beatriz Pastor's *The Armature of the Conquest*, which, like the aforementioned articles of Adorno, is considered for its paradigmatic status. The focus of discussion is the famous account by Pedrarias de Almesto and Francisco Vázquez of the Marañón expedition down the Amazon, which, I argue, needs to be understood as a fundamentally literalist work, of animist provenance, but one that is over-determined by substantialism, the dominant ideology of feudalism. The claim is that Rodríguez's concepts of "animism" and "substantialism" offer greater objective purchase on the relevant texts than the corresponding traditional, ultimately phenomenological categories of "Medieval," "Renaissance" and "Baroque." The effective demise of animism in the second half of the 16th century, in the face of a resurgent feudalism, leads to further discursive compromises, notably a non-organicist Aristotelianism that, as illustrated with reference to Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias*, lends itself to a variety of ideological purposes.

Chapter three completes our first tour through Spanish colonialism by focusing on a concept that has figured prominently in recent postmodern scholarship, namely incommensurability, specifically in the form of the opposition between the "European" and its "Other." While recognizing the damage inflicted by the various imperialisms through the marginalization and suppression of regional cultures, we warn against the converse danger of riding roughshod, firstly, over the very real capacity of people from different cultures to overcome linguistic barriers on the basis of a shared humanity, and

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2 The same applies to the work of other scholars to be discussed in the pages that follow. Texts are valued to the extent that, through the sheer rigor of their argument, they concentrate and bring into focus contradictions that are more broadly based. Further to which, we take seriously the principle that history is a process without a subject, which makes a nonsense of any attempt to personalize our narrative.
secondly, over the equally real structural similarities that historically characterized absolutist states envisaged as a world-wide phenomenon. In order to problematize still further the modish insistence upon cultural diversity across geographic space, we proceed to focus upon the existence of ideological incommensurabilities within Europe or, more specifically, within Spanish culture, whose forced resolution, in favor of the metropolis and the dominant social classes lodged within it, was every bit as inhumane and, on occasions, genocidal as anything to be found overseas.

IV

The remaining chapters review the work respectively of four leading colonialists within the field of Hispanic studies. We begin with what is, in effect, a sequel to an earlier piece on Walter Mignolo that addressed the semiotics of culture. From the mid '80s, colonial studies surrendered its interests in modes-of-production analysis for an emphasis upon issues of identity, viewed from the perspective of discourse theory of Foucauldian and, ultimately, of Nietzschean extraction. The shift was politically, as opposed to intellectually, motivated – it was a period of terrible defeats for the left – and the present chapter does not hesitate to undertake a retrospective evaluation of the new paradigm from the perspective of the old, whose riches were far from being exhausted and which continued to be mined, albeit from a more marginal location. One effect of the linguistic or discursive turn, I argue, was to transform ontological questions into epistemological questions about knowledge – what Roy Bhaskar refers to as the "epistemic fallacy." Politically, this fallacy translates into a species of voluntarism that assumes the form of an obstreperous, seemingly revolutionary rhetoric that has, at the same time, shunned involvement with the mass political movements traditionally associated with the socialist left. Amongst other things, it is unable to sustain the notion of science or, for that matter, the existence of an external world, other than in the form of an implicit positivist ontology consisting of "things" and "events."

Chapter five further locates the new discursive turn within the context of a globalizing capitalism. Our attention will focus on the neo-Kantian claim that what is involved in the comparison of one theoretical paradigm with another is the simple juxtaposition of one "fiction" with another. Whether post-structuralists always mean exactly what they say is a moot point, but the fact that they feel the need to talk in such terms is undoubtedly significant. Discourse theory argues that social practices are structured as an arbitrary and autonomous system of differential signifiers that are related only obliquely, if

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3 See Read 2005.
at all, to an objective reality. We will be critiquing this post-structuralist position, given particular prominence in the work of the colonialist, José Rabasa, from the standpoint of a critical realism that theorizes the existence of social structures irreducible to, although necessarily mediated by, discourse. Such structures, it will be argued, following Roy Bhaskar, are separated from the discursive realm by an ontological hiatus, recognition of which precludes their conflation with language.

In chapter six we turn to consider the colonialist, Anthony Pagden, whose work enjoys considerable prestige among certain sectors of the North American academy. While Pagden has not been able to remain entirely aloof from the recent linguistic turn, the several nervous references to Lacan and Foucault, who symptomatize that turn, never amount to anything more than intellectual "cover," which fails to mask the historian's fundamental allegiance to that other branch of the classic idealist tradition, namely British empiricism, as it is mediated through the work of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. The present chapter explores the details of this allegiance, as it operates through the agency of the ideological unconscious, by way of contrast with its Althusserian counterpart. The latter's relationship even to Marxist history has been fraught with difficulties, ever since, it will be recalled, Althusser condemned the discipline's illusion that it could do without theory (see Althusser and Balibar 109). The reaction of historians was immediate and, in the case of E. P. Thompson, brutal, which in turn provoked a heated exchange among British Marxist historians, notably Perry Anderson and Christopher Hill. From within Althusserianism, the most thoughtful response came from Juan Carlos Rodríguez, who argued that the British historians were collectively culpable of failing to break with the notion of the subject as the source of history (Rodríguez 1990: 379-84). As might well be anticipated, subjectivity, and the empiricism that underpins it, figures even more prominently in the liberal historian, such as Pagden, with consequences that we proceed to weigh through a comparative analysis with Rodríguez's work.

Our final chapter focuses on the question of slavery under Spanish imperialism and, more specifically, on the work of Las Casas, as received by Benítez Rojo. In this particular case, the influence of the new “post” movements manifests itself in the importance attached to the libidinal unconscious, which the Cuban critic deploys in an attempt to throw light, psychoanalytically, upon a number of Las Casas’ private obsessions. The Dominican Father, it is argued, is haunted by his unwitting contribution to the imposition of slavery in the Caribbean and the castration complex that shadowed his relation to his Father in Heaven. Our own approach has been to utilize the same textual evidence to substantiate the notion of the ideological unconscious and, by way of elaboration, to throw into relief those social
mechanisms that transcend the psychology of the individual.

From Organicism to Animism

In many respects Patricia Seed's review essay, "Colonial and Postcolonial Discourses" (1991), together with the "Commentary and Debate" (1993) it called forth from several of North America's leading colonialists, captures the state of the art, with respect to Hispanism, in the 1990s. A common thread is a post-structuralist decentering of the subject, combined with a postmodernist concern for "otherness" and popular, as opposed to high, culture.⁴ Seed's argument is that only the theorization of the fragmented subject can offer the necessary purchase for the analysis of (post)-colonial societies, particularly when it comes to salvaging local histories and identities. While they expressed some doubts as to the relevance of recent theories to earlier periods, respondents failed to challenge Seed's basic post-structuralist assumptions. Indeed, there was an almost clubbish, self-congratulatory air to the ensuing exchange, a sense that discussion was being carried on very much among the like-minded. Somewhat emboldened by the reception of her work, Seed proceeded to posit the superannuation of traditional leftist discourse, as a viable oppositional force:

Communism has collapsed, and along with it the powerful political force undergirding the major moral critique of capitalism. But the story of the collapse of communism cannot be explained by the heroic efforts of a few "resisters." Although Anglo-American journalists have tended to mythologize "resisters" according to the conventional hero-worshipping framework, a sense of unease lingers about the way in which these tales cannot explain why communism failed and why its power to engender moral critique has simultaneously been exhausted.

⁴ "Postmodernism," unlike "post-structuralism," is not addressed as such by Seed, although standard postmodernist works are listed in her footnotes. Among her commentators, Hernán Vidal is critical of the uninhibited application of the term "postmodernism" to Latin America, whereas Rolena Adorno is skeptical of its value as applied to Bernal Díaz. See Vidal (113); Adorno (1993: 142). For a particularly insightful discussion of the relationship between postmodernism and post-structuralism, see Huyssen (1988). Huyssen argues convincingly that European post-structuralists are best seen as the theoreticians of high modernism, on the grounds that few of them have shown much interest in postmodern art. He believes that, in contrast, there are definite links between the ethos of postmodernism and the North American appropriation of post-structuralism (Huyssen 178-221 and passim).
Seed largely has in her sights essentialist notions of the stable, autonomous subject, which, she rightly argues, is of limited use when it comes to theorizing the pan-European demise of the hitherto dominant forms of historical Communism. But what exactly is implied by the "exhaustion" of "communism" as a source of critique? Clearly, there can be no gainsaying the splintering of traditional parties of the working class or the loss of political leverage that this has brought about. But if more is implied, if the very viability of class politics is being questioned, if, more importantly, an attempt is being made to implicate Marxism in the fate of a moribund Stalinism, then much more is called for in the way of detail and substantiation.5 We prefer to see the failure of the political dynamic of the Third International as an opportunity not to bury communism but to assess Marxism's theoretical heritage, on the assumption that the analytical value of social class for understanding the political processes of imperialism, past and present, remains undiminished.

A Marxist tradition that has proved, and continues to prove, particularly productive is that associated with the name of Louis Althusser, among whose most gifted students is numbered Juan Carlos Rodríguez. The association between Rodríguez's research program and Althusserianism meant that his Teoría e historia had virtually no impact on North-American Hispanism even in the 1970s, when the climate was more propitious to Marxist scholarship. The particular conjuncture of the 1980s, not excluding the "fall" of structural Marxism (and the personal fate of its progenitor), obscured the continuing vitality of Rodríguez's program, a situation compounded by the eventual implosion of Stalinism.6 The Spanish scholar has yet to benefit from the resurgence of interest in Althusserianism in the 1990s.7

We will be deploying Rodríguez's work to prosecute the claim that, when it comes to theorizing Spanish "(post-)colonialism," which necessarily involves the analysis of pre-modern societies, the post-structuralist

5 For what any such attempt would betray is, firstly, a remarkable degree of historical amnesia vis-à-vis the long tradition of Marxist critiques of Stalinism, which include, for example, L. Trotsky (1937); secondly, a lamentable ignorance of the diverse Marxist analyses of the collapse of Stalinism, such as, for example, Callinicos (1991), which demonstrates Marxism's capacity for comprehending the very political and ideological processes that Seed believes to be beyond its methodological scope; and thirdly, a politically motivated refusal of the class-riven nature of capitalism's continued global depredations, which include the "occasional" (!) occupation of, and intervention in, parts of Central and South America by the USA.

6 The exception that proves the rule is George Mariscal's Contradictory Subjects (1990). Although Mariscal was heavily influenced by Rodríguez, he was significantly unable to take on board the Spaniard's notion of an ideology that is not subject-centered.

7 Consider, for example, the collection of essays entitled Depositions: Althusser, Balibar, Macherey, and the Labor of Reading (1995).
preoccupation with historical macro-schemes – from Plato to Heidegger – offers little purchase on the relevant phenomena. The focus of our attention will be on the "ideological unconscious," which, as theorized by Rodríguez, secretes a number of ideological discourses, not all of which operate through the category of the subject. Necessarily, questions will be raised not simply regarding the "free" subject (including its fragmentation) but also regarding the very status of the subject, as an ontological category. Our conclusion will be that Rodríguez's "transitional discourses," taken together with the conceptual framework of Althusserianism, offer the possibility of a far more insightful analysis of Spanish (post)colonial culture than does the notion of "postcolonial discourse," as proposed by Seed. There is also a moral to be extracted, namely that in moving forward, theoreticians do not always advance.

Modes of Production Analyses: the Latin American Tradition

As was to be expected, Hernán Vidal was the first of Seed's respondents to take issue with her uninhibited, uncritical enthusiasm for the most recent Parisian intellectual fashions. Leaving aside its questionable separation of social, cultural and political dimensions, he reasonably argues, colonial and postcolonial discourse ignores long-established categories of Latin American historiography and literary criticism, whose achievements it is important to weigh against more recent, still largely unsubstantiated claims (Vidal 114). However, Vidal also gives evidence of a certain reticence, a reluctance or inability to carry the attack to his opponents, in the face of what is, within the academy, a triumphant postmodernism. Our first task, therefore, must be to give some idea of the range and direction of this proven tradition, as a springboard to our subsequent discussion.

Fortunately, our task has been made somewhat easier by the existence of Steve Stern's excellent review of Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System* within a Latin American and Caribbean context, a review that offers a panoramic perspective on the long tradition of scholarship towards which Vidal gestures rather ineffectually. As Stern describes it, an emphasis in the nineteenth and early twentieth century on the feudal-like past of Latin America gave way to a reaction in the 1940s, which, side-stepping the traditional thesis, focused on the commercial enterprise of the original colonizers. This reaction culminated in the 1960s in "dependency theory," which found its most eloquent spokesman in the person of Gunter Frank. Frank emphasized the exploitative chain of international commerce that linked feudalizing regions of Latin America to European capitalism from virtually the beginnings of colonization. Ernesto Laclau was one of the first to undermine Frank's position by suggesting that underdevelopment was caused not only by the extraction of surpluses but by tying relations of production in Latin America
to an archaic mode of extra-economic coercion. The focus since Frank, as Stern proceeds to explain, has been on the manner in which archaic technologies and social relations in the Third World were harnessed to the First World economy. Increasing importance is attached to the interaction between local conditions and the pressure of the international market, to which, even at an early stage, the Latin American economy was undeniably bound. Stern argues persuasively in terms of the tendency to combine diverse relations of production (slavery, share-cropping, wage labor, etc.) into an optimal package, determined by local conditions.

The value of Stern's work lies in the problems that it perceives in any emphasis upon the capitalist component of the American colonial economy. For given this emphasis, how does one explain the subsequent appearance, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of the classic features of the transition to capitalism (involving the substitution of forced by wage labor and the development of an internal commodity market)? Moreover, and more importantly in the context of our own concerns, there is the question of an apparent feudalization of some agrarian regions earlier in the nineteenth century. How precisely is one to conceptualize such cases of regression? Their very possibility is something that neither Wallerstein nor his critics, including Stern, seem conceptually prepared to contemplate. Cyclical, periodic crises are one thing, reversions to feudalism are another. The latter "would make capitalism a concept so elastic as to border on meaninglessness" (Stern 867).

Stern does not elaborate his argument, which clearly relates to the complex problem of theorizing social formations in transition or characterized by the absence of a consolidated mode of production in the usual sense. It is not clear to me why the kind of regression in question is not feasible, at least in the early stages of a transition. After all, have not the former degenerate socialist states of Russia and Eastern Europe recently undergone precisely such a transformation. Less debatable – after all not all would agree by any means as to the exact nature of the former Soviet system – and more relevant to the present context, is the case of Spain, which, following the Comuneros rebellion (1520-21), exhibits all the features of a regressive system, involving mercantile capitalist and feudal formations. Such at least is the conclusion of an ongoing research program within Spanish scholarship, led by Juan Carlos Rodríguez, which I intend to review below. The time is ripe, I believe, for a serious attempt to weigh the explanatory power of this tradition against the more modish claims of the various "post-Marxisms." Anticipating our final assessment, we will take our cue from Stern's own concluding remarks: "The old universal theories were replaced not by conceptual break-throughs commanding broad assent but by a plethora of theoretical schemes and political agendas whose rapid multiplication and varied quality reinforced a
sense of intellectual fragmentation and limited comprehension" (Stern 872n103).

Spain in Transition

It is not my intention here to enter into the complexities of Rodríguez's program, sustained through a series of major works, but simply to sketch in its general parameters and to isolate those aspects of it that are germane to the current colonial debate among Hispanists. In typically Althusserian fashion, Rodríguez conceptualizes a social formation as a hierarchy of heterogeneous, unequal, yet interrelated instances or levels, on the basis of a mode of production. In the case of 16th- and 17th-century Spain, there is one dominant structure: a public/private dialectic operative at the political level but impacting upon social relations at other levels. The economic function exerts an ultimate determination, not directly, in reflexionist terms, but indirectly, through the "matrix" effect of the structured whole on its elements, whose distinct and unequal effectivities are simultaneously at work. The single public/private dialectic is complicated in the case of the transitional social formation that existed in Spain by the presence of two ideological optics, that of the bourgeoisie and that of the nobility. Even as it controls the state apparatus, the nobility is unable to neutralize the impact of the bourgeoisie, whose incontrovertible presence not only explains the formation of the Absolutist State but the existence of the public/private dichotomy, to which the nobility must adapt. The result is a body of literature, that of the Golden Age, which consists, fundamentally, of at least two literatures, corresponding to the existence of two optics:

Sólo en las formaciones de transición se da el fenómeno que venimos analizando porque en ellas no hay propiamente hablando una sola matriz ideológica (esto es, una contradicción fundamental localizada en el nivel de las relaciones sociales), sino una lucha de modos de producción, que sólo logra su configuración en las relaciones sociales gracias a la cohesión que impone el especial funcionamiento del nivel político. (56-57)

While the transitional formation is tendentially favorable to the bourgeoisie – the public/private dichotomy is particularly amenable to the latter's mode of operating – the nobility is able to delay and block development ("con la amenaza incluso de retroceso al viejo sistema" (57)). In fact, the political defeat of the bourgeoisie opens the way in post-Tridentine Spain to a resurgence of feudal values to the extent that, while the nobility lacks the power to liquidate the public/private split, it is sufficiently hegemonic to fill existing forms – the theater, for example – with its own ideology of "blood," "honor," etc.: "El verdadero problema de las relaciones sociales
mercantiles (burguesas) en España radicará siempre en su incontrovertido sometimiento a la hegemonía feudalizante social sobre el espacio de lo público" (353). In other words, development at the economic level will be constantly thwarted at the ideological and political levels. The result, in textual terms, is a constant interaction and over-determination of forms, such that it becomes difficult to distinguish between residual, dominant and emergent ideological currents.

Within Althusserianism, history is a process without a subject, in the sense that the real protagonists of history are the social relations of economic, political and ideological practices. It is the latter that assign contradictory places to the human protagonists within the complex and unevenly developed structure of the social formation. However, contrary to claims by its opponents, structural Marxism, in its broad design, does not ignore problems of agency. Rather, it explores the different ways in which we are constituted as social and historic individualities, including the tensions and contradictions between the forces of submission, inherent in our adaptation to the roles assigned to us, and the forces of empowerment, stemming from our capacity to exert power and influence by virtue of our structural locations. It was Rodríguez's contribution to this theoretical debate to radically historicize its terms of reference, with regard to the Transition. Fundamental to his work is the distinction drawn between two basic ideologies, organicism and animism, associated respectively with a dominant feudal nobility and an emergent capitalist bourgeoisie. Animism is distinguished by the production of a "beautiful soul," subsequently to become the "individual" or full subject. Rodríguez insists that "la matriz burguesa se califica siempre [...] por su producción continua de la noción de 'sujeto'" (59). This animist proto-subject will subsequently pass through various transformations, encompassing Galilean mechanicism, Cartesian rationalism, Roussonian naturalism, British empiricism, not to mention the classic Kantian and Hegelian traditions and, eventually, structuralism and post-structuralism.

The contrast with feudalism is stark. Here, the ideological notions that define historic individualities are those of noble, vassal, serf, sinner, member of the faithful, etc., all contained within the serf (servant)/lord relationship. Rodríguez explains: "La matriz feudal podemos decir que se detecta en primer lugar por su específica visión de la sociedad como cuerpo orgánico" (59). This organicism is lent a substantialist bias through the notion of forms that tend towards their natural place and consequently towards a condition of rest. (The importance attached to stasis by Aristotelian science will be increasingly contested by neo-Platonism, whose predilection for movement will be incorporated into the new science.) The emphasis is not upon the subject but upon the notion of reading: "Este sustancialismo había permitido, además, la
lectura orgánica de los signos inscritos tanto en el libro de la Naturaleza como en el Libro Sagrado, en cuanto que entendidas tales 'Escruturas' como sustancias aparentes reenviando siempre a una estructura – la voz de Dios – superior que las desvelaba" (60). The body, as the place where signs are most confused but most urgently in need of interpretation, occupies a key position within organismism, since it is dominated by the notion of "blood" and lineage.

Subject to Change
Before proceeding to unpack these notions of literature as ideological production, with respect to certain colonial texts, we might pause to consider the contrasting direction taken by post-structuralists. The exchange within Hispanic colonial scholarship, to which we referred earlier, begins with Seed's celebration of Barthes, Derrida, Foucault and Rorty, loosely grouped under the rubric of post-structuralism, in the context of a review of a number of books, including Beatriz Pastor's The Armature of Conquest. The demise of narratives of resistance and accommodation, Seed argues, has taken place as writers have become more alert, under the impact of the above-mentioned scholars, to the "polysemic character of language." She emphasizes (a) the extent to which the new emphasis upon discursivity "has enabled natives of colonized territories to appropriate and transform the colonizers' discourses" (Seed 1991: 183); and (b) the way post-structuralism has dislodged the author's "intention" or "original meaning" from a central role, "allowing literary critics and others to consider ways in which the text is appropriated by different textual communities" (184). It has been the tendency of imperial critics, Seed continues, to privilege the authorial intentions behind texts, at the expense of the reception of texts by colonized cultures.

The problems regarding "intention," it has to be said, are complex (see Hawthorn 74). Provisionally, it does not seem wholly eccentric, except perhaps to a few stray post-structuralists, to claim that part of our humanity, as individual agents, consists not only in having intentions but also in acting upon them. Indeed, intentional behavior is traditionally held to distinguish the social from the natural sciences. The task is not to ignore it, as post-structuralism wishes to do, but to theorize its status, vis-à-vis the intransitive effects of structural causality, operative through the matrix effect of the social formation. From such a standpoint, the significance and range of the recent skirmishes that so excite Seed seem rather less impressive. Consider, to begin with, the frequency with which post-structuralists relinquish the subject and its intentions in one move, only to reintroduce them with their next (see Hawthorn 68), not to mention the fact that, as Rolena Adorno rightly argues, the current demise of the subject seems to be of greater relevance to the ideological complexities of modern society than to colonial texts.
Such is the basis from which Seed proceeds to posit an antithesis between the production and reception of literary texts. We are asked to choose between a production model that (allegedly) favors imperialists and a reception model that (allegedly) facilitates colonial resistance to imperialism. Framed in these terms, of course, the choice is already made. Rather less obvious is what these terms exclude as opposed to what they include. We have in mind, firstly, the notion of the text as a determinate production, in the sense of being dependent upon conditions of existence that are profoundly ideological, and secondly, the fact that the relationship between the text and reality has, arguably, nothing to do with what contemporary readers feel about the text. We would further suggest that, by focusing exclusively upon the text's interpellative function, the reception model empties it (the text) of any relation to the real, to the extent that, to judge by Seed's comments, any sense of objective existence simply dissolves into a hermeneutic fog of subjective interpretation (cf. Resch 290).

The confusions to which Seed's approach gives rise are particularly apparent in her discussion of Pastor's work. Initially, Seed appears to hint at some objective sense in which the conquistadors themselves exhibit, within their narratives, a blindness towards the colonial other: "The problem with all of the forms of critique identified by Pastor is that they clearly reside within the limits established by sixteenth-century Spanish colonial orthodoxy. The critique of the grasping encomendero plays on a traditional Hispanic critique of motives of 'interest' typical of a lament for an imagined earlier, less materialistic world" (Seed 1991: 188, italics added). Soon, however, the fault seems to lie not in any objective properties of the text but with the manner of its reception, notably by Pastor herself: "But in characterizing these narratives as those of failure and rebellion, the perspective remains wholly European; they fail or rebel against European ambitions. As in all Orientalist discourse, the natives in these narratives remain a blank slate on which are inscribed the frustrations as well as the longings of the Europeans for the imaginary lost Eden of their own past" (188, italics added). That Pastor herself is considered to be at fault is indicated by the unfavorable comparison drawn by Seed between her and Peter Hulme, whose Colonial Encounters is also under review. Hulme, it seems, is more alert to the political subtext in each work in the canon, "which emanates not from the author's biography [...] but from the political and historical position of the state in which the texts were composed" (189). The irony of this position is that Hulme's work is the product of a British tradition of cultural Marxism, a Marxism that Seed wishes to disqualify along with equally outdated forms of Humanism.

Seed's impatience with Pastor's inability to tease out of her primary sources evidence of specific sensibilities is symptomatic of a basic failing in
the post-structuralist and hermeneutic traditions that currently sustain colonialist discourse. Seed privileges the authority of tradition and demands a criticism capable of revealing the phenomenal essence of art (its openness to other "interpretive possibilities") that transcends the vagaries of time and circumstance. The result is an overarching "aesthetic experience" that enables the critic to move with ease between different "textual communities."

Unfortunately, the drawbacks are considerable. What goes by the board is not simply the scientific concept of literary product, but of literary effect. An aesthetics of reception flows in to fill the gap and to mark the site of the class struggle in art: "The corollary effect of this criticism has been to open the door to examining the ways in which a colonized people's reception and appropriation of a text has been shaped by different social and political experience from that of the authors of a text and its orthodox 'high-culture' interpreters" (184).

Let us be clear as to exactly what we are objecting to. Not to the undeniable claim that colonial texts have been systematically requisitioned by ideological apparatuses to reproduce prevailing class or imperial relations. What is wrong with Seed's approach is that it is blind to all internal contradictions within the dominant ideology, as a consequence of which the colonialist succumbs to a species of political voluntarism. In turn this voluntarism leads her less to explain texts, in terms of their cognitive relation to the real, than to value them, as experiential and, consequently, as ideological statements. Attention has been displaced from authorial intention, but only to the conscious designs of a (collective) reader(ship), as the critic, in her desire to emphasize the imperial struggle, simply reduces literature to its modes of reception. It is at this point that the post-structuralist is joined by the Marxist critic for whom literary practice is not so much pervaded with evidence of the class struggle as it is itself a direct expression of class dominance (Resch 289 ff). For such a Marxist, literature is, reductively speaking, an attribute of ruling-class domination. The damage thereby wreaked upon materialist positions cannot be sufficiently emphasized. The way is open to irrationalist, gauchist positions that valorize political practice at the expense of objectively real conditions of existence.

**Salvaging the Subject**

Adorno is the interlocutor who most clearly senses the drift of Seed's bias towards reception, which she herself counterpoises with a productive model: "If the 'linguistic turn to the human sciences' is to mean anything to scholars in literary studies, it is precisely to avoid divorcing texts from the circumstances that produced them – however irretrievable these circumstances may be" (Adorno 1993: 139, italics added). One might object to this as an interpretation of a
postmodernist approach notable for its ontological skepticism, towards which Adorno darkly alludes, but not to the critical leverage that it furnishes. Seed, Adorno perceptively observes, faults the author of The Armature of Conquest "for what are precisely her virtues" (144). Rather than range across the entirety of some imagined tradition, in a typically hermeneutic fashion, Pastor has confined herself to a "coherent" phase of Spanish political, cultural and literary history and avoided a theoretical ground "that does not require the writings she studies to respond to perspectives that they could not possibly reflect" (144). Hence Adorno's own critical restraint before the various post-structuralisms. By her own reckoning, she has retreated from her former enthusiasm for the concept of "colonial discourse," at least as regards its application to Spanish America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She argues, after Klor de Alva, that "postcolonial" was in fact a term tailor-made for the British imperial venture, beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century and extending into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a fundamentally different enterprise from its earlier Hispanic counterpart.

At root, however, Adorno's is a residual humanist attachment to history and a professional determination to remain within her own specialized "disciplinary perspective." The converse of her objection to postmodern anachronism, as indicated above, is not an insistence that science construct its own theoretical object. On the contrary, her critique exhibits all the symptoms of a desire, on the part of an empiricist subject, to collapse into its object, with the result that, sooner or later, she is reduced, like Seed, to asking only how to receive a given text. Such attachment to "pre-theory," and to the literary text as an object of consumption, was never an effective strategy against the sweet charm of postmodernism. On the contrary, it is highly compatible with Adorno's own determination to take on board the bulk of postmodern baggage, only provided that allowance be made for "the conceptual mediations and historical transformations that separate us from the sixteenth century" (142-43). Given humanism's otherwise universalizing zeal – Díaz "created an eternally vivid picture of sixteenth-century New Spain" (143) –, such provisos would prove mild obstacles to what promised to be a happy (re)union.

In truth, humanism and postmodernism were made for each other. Amongst other things, both share the conviction of traditional hermeneutics that the social world is not simply produced by individual agents but is explicable only in terms of the meanings attached to their intentional activity by agents themselves. Thus, even as she distances herself from postmodernist ahistoricism, Adorno reintroduces a subject that betrays its historically belated provenance in a period of petty-bourgeois ascendance; "Bernal Díaz was among the writers who defined what was unique about Spain's early experience in America, and he sought precisely to impose himself as a writing subject
imbued with legitimacy, authority and power. Thus, although post-
structuralism may question traditional humanism and expose its heroes (which
may well be our approach to twentieth-century intellectual life), we cannot
attribute the same sensibilities to these early modern voices" (143). "Intention,"
as I suggested above, could very well be attributed to 16th- and 17th-century
writers, but "sensibilities" are certainly another matter. The term is redolent of
ideologies that we associate historically with the Enlightenment, notably of the
Roussonian variety, and may very well be deemed inappropriate to early
colonial Latin America. What Adorno lacks is any notion of the historical
development of the subject, from its early beginnings in Petrarchan lyric
poetry through its more classically bourgeois variations. Her key critical
concepts converge on the issue of value or "greatness," which is always a
question of class-based reception/consumption: "Bernal Díaz exemplifies the
amateur writer whose achievements far transcended his efforts" (143). Implicit
in aesthetic rhetoric of this kind is the idea that art is somehow "true," leading,
in turn, to the valorization of certain works as "universal" and "eternal."

We will be arguing later that such views are radically misconceived, in
the sense that any text, not excluding Díaz's Historia veridada, is necessarily true
to its ideological origins; and that, furthermore, the task of the critic is to
understand these origins, as they are grounded in real history. We are
predisposed in principle to oppose any attempt to project the text into some
subliminal space, or to explain it in terms of a "genius" who, by some
mysterious process, manages to unhitch himself from his material conditions.
However, before proceeding to elaborate our claims, let us pause to consider
the nature of the substantialism that Díaz's brand of literalism will
subsequently aspire to displace.

The Substantialist Text: Amadís de Gaula
We will begin by considering a passage, selected more or less at random, from
Amadís de Gaula, which describes how King Perión and his sons were forced to
return to Britain by bad weather, after embarking for Gaul, but not to the point
from which they had started. The text proceeds, in a seemingly straightforward
manner, to narrate how, after ascending a valley, the protagonists come across a
fountain, at which a splendidly dressed young maiden, in the company of a
hunting party, is watering her horse. The young maiden, it transpires, is dumb,
notwithstanding which she is able, by means of appropriate gestures, to issue
an invitation to King Perión and his sons to be her guests at a nearby castle.
On their arrival at the latter, the knights are feasted and entertained in a
chamber with three beds, upon which they are eventually left to recline and to
sleep. They awake the following morning to discover that the chamber in
question is literally sustained by a cranking mechanism that allows the whole
chamber to be lowered some twenty cubits into a pit. It is at this point that a sudden semantic switch occurs, by which we are asked to understand the text allegorically:

A esta donzella muda, hermosa, podemos comparar el mundo en que bivimos, que pareciéndonos hermoso, sin boca, sin lengua halagándonos, lisonjándonos, nos combda con muchos deleites y plazeres, con los cuales sin recelo alguno siguiéndole, nos abraçamos; y perdiendo de nuestras memorias las angustias y tribulaciones que por alvergue dellos se nos aparejan después de los haver seguido y tratado, echámanos a dormir con muy reposado sueño; y cuando despertamos, seyendo ya passados de la vida a la muerte, aunque con más razón se devría dezir de la muerte a la vida, por ser perdurable, hallámonos en tan gran fondura que ya apartada de nos aquella gran piedad del muy alto Señor, no nos queda redención alguna; y si estos cavalleros la ovieron, fue por ser ahún en esta vida, donde ninguno por maledicente, por pecador que sea, debe perder la sperança del perdón, tanto que, dexando las malas obras, sigua las que son conformes al servicio de aquel Señor que jelo dar puede. (Rodríguez de Montalvo 637)

*Amadís de Gaula* might seem a pretty obvious point of departure for any consideration of Bernal Díaz's *Historia verdadera*. The latter's debt to the chivalric romance, legitimated by intertextual reference, has become, on Adorno's own reckoning, a "commonplace" of colonial criticism. However, it is significant that this same criticism has shown itself remarkably reluctant to engage the Spanish text directly, doubtless for reasons of obscure professional etiquette and specialization that prevail in the North-American academy. In contrast, the Althusserian model quickly moves from the hermeneutic to a symptomatic reading, aimed at explaining the structural principles that constitute the text's objective reality as a socio-historical production. Such a reading is governed by a problematic grounded not in the experiential world of the subject – the intentions of its author are not primarily at issue – but in the explanatory world of science.

Viewed on this basis, *Amadís* exhibits a number of interesting, highly significant features. Specifically, we have in mind the manner in which the narrative's literal level of meaning is surrendered, more or less hurriedly, to its symbolic counterpart, in accordance with a more generalized practice, in evidence in feudal epics, that sees the physical confrontation between knights raised from the level of their material ambiguity to that of symbolic clarity (cf. Adorno emphasizes the extent to which chivalric romance functioned as a negative reference in writing about the New World. Her concern throughout is with authorial intention and reader response: European attitudes are collapsed into a "dominant ideology" (see Adorno 1985: 17-19). The basic text regarding the impact of chivalric romance in the New World is Ida Rodríguez de Prampoloni (1948).
Read 1983: 8-9). The effect is to confirm the possession, on the part of the knight, of certain innate qualities, the existence of which we, unlike the knight himself, have been aware all along. To be sure, this strong essentialist bias is not unalloyed – the notion of courtly "virtue," "courtesy" and the "gentle heart" that pervades Amadís gives evidence of a medieval animism that will subsequently blossom, within the context of a different problematic, into radically different forms (see Rodríguez 1990: 78-80). However, the pressure of concern for feudal etiquette is so overwhelming in the above text that its allegorical turn, far from departing from the semantics of the physical encounter between knights, can be said to unfold the latter's inner logic. At all points, the problem that Amadís will finally raise is one of reading, of deciphering signs, confirming thereby that what we have before us is a quintessentially substantialist text.

Rodríguez, whose ideas I am following closely at this point, believes that such texts exhibit a semantics that is "unitariamente dual." What he means by this is that they see this world as a symbolic reflection of another world. There is only one book, the book of God (otherwise the World as a Book), of which other writers are condemned to produce glosses. This way of thinking lends to the world of chivalry its curiously abstract quality. Amadís knows no chronology, as an ideological category, and has little sense of specific geographic space or place. In other words, it is characterized by an absence of true literalness. In feudalism, there is no "eye" and no "thing." As Rodríguez succinctly and enigmatically asks: "¿Cómo un no-yo con una no-escritura podía usar un no-ojo para construir una no-cosa?" (Rodríguez 2001b: 122). Nor, by the same token, can such texts possibly relate to "private lives," for the simple reason, as Rodríguez continues to explain, that the logic of privatization does not exist for them. The idea is never posed of intimate "action" bound to private relations. Amadís' main objective is to promote the cause of "honor," not on the public stage but in the World, a fact that will emphatically make the work not a "novel," a distinctively bourgeois genre, but a "book" of chivalry, distinguished by trenchantly seigneurial, organicist values.

The Literal Eye/"I"

Now let us turn to an extract from Bernal Díaz, like that of Amadís de Gaula, selected more or less at random. We join the narrative at a point when the Indians have the Spaniards cornered in a bog:

"Y ellos todavía haciendo muchos fieros, y que no saltásemos en tierra, sino que no nos matarían; y luego comenzaron muy valientemente a flechar y hacer sus señas con sus tambores, y como esforzados se vienen todos contra nosotros y nos cercan con las canoas con tran gran rociada de flechas, que nos hicieron detener en el agua hasta la cinta, y..."
Clearly, we are in another world compared to that of *Amadís*. Cortés' lost shoe is an object of the "literal gaze," literal in the sense that it invites no symbolic decoding. The contrast with the substantialist text has nothing to do with authorial intention. Rather, it is to be explained by a loss of legitimation, with the disappearance of the World as a Book and the absence of God as a source of authority. The deity’s legitimizing function now falls to the free autonomous subject, conceived not as a double of the narrated "I" but as its support: "El yo que se narra en los textos legitima a su vez (último proceso de legitimación) al yo enunciador (al autor, digamos) que escribe los textos" (Rodríguez 2001b: 31). Crucially, this narrative "I"/"eye" is not completely and immediately established but unfolds in the text itself.

Of course, Bernal Díaz remains in important respects feudalizing. A residual predilection for reading survives, for example, in his obsessive concern with topographical names and their capacity to *embody* the places to which they refer. In this respect, it is significant that, following the passage cited above, Díaz describes how the Spaniards subsequently took symbolic possession of the land in the vicinity of the battle, by marking trees with sword cuts and recording the event in writing. Likewise, an organicist bias is encapsulated in the textual foregrounding of "we" rather than "I," in other words, in the author’s conception of social groups as consisting not of separate, independent individuals but of a collective body of men. This had led some to contrast Díaz’s organicism with the humanistic, intellectual individualism of López de Gómara (see Rodríguez and Salvador, 23). What this perspective misses, however, is the crucial distinction that even this "we" rests upon
individual experience – "con muy cierta verdad, como testigo de vista" (Díaz del Castillo 14) – and upon Díaz's ever-present willingness to record his own personal impressions: "Acuérdome que aquellas reñidas guerras que nos dieron de aquella vez fírieron a catorce soldados, y a mí me dieron un flechazo en el muslo, mas poca herida y quedaron tendidos y muertos diez e ocho indios en el agua adonde desembarcamos; y allí dormimos aquella noche con grandes velas y escuchas. Y dejallo he por contar lo que pasamos" (68).

"Y dejallo he por contar lo que pasamos." The material analysis of the kind we are advocating needs to attend closely to this and other such formulae: "Quiero volver a mi materia"; "Volvamos a nuestro cuento"; "no tocaré más esta tecla, y volveré a decir," etc. A device so persistently bared, to the extent of becoming the text's dominant, to borrow a term from Russian Formalism, must perform some crucial function. Our suspicions are confirmed by Althusserian discourse analysis, as deployed by Michel Pêcheux, which suggests that syntactic mechanisms of this kind serve to create the relationship of the subject to other subjects and to the Subject. For Pêcheux they are instances of intradiscourse, a "thread of discourse," an intricate network of co-reference through which the process without a subject constitutes the subject (Pêcheux, 116). As such, they are to be considered alongside the mise-en-scène, exemplified by the use of the present for the past tense ("se vienen [...] cargan"), the power of which "depends on the implicit condition of a displacement (décalage) of origins (of the "zero points" of subjectivities), a displacement from the present to the past, coupled with the displacement from one subject to other subjects, which constitutes identification" (119).

One further effect of the discursive mechanisms under review is to promote the emergent autonomy of the individual and, thereby, to mask the proto-subject's subordination to the Subject or Lord. The radical limitations upon Díaz's own freedom to say what he wants become more evident if we contrast his own situation with that of Cervantes el Loco. I am referring to an incident related early in the Historia verdadera, at a point before the Cortés expedition is fully underway. Cervantes el Loco, it will be recalled, confronts Diego Velázquez, the Governor, with the prophecy regarding Cortés' future acts of betrayal. Indications are that Cervantes was in the service of relatives of Velázquez out to embarrass Cortés. But, as Díaz himself observes, the irony was that the fool touches upon a truth, albeit in a degraded manner: "Dicen que los locos algunas veces aciertan en lo que dicen" (47). Such low-life characters indicate the limitations placed on the servant within the confines of organismism. A certain license or authenticity is granted to a fool or "gracioso"
on the grounds that he is attached to a noble and operates strictly within the confines of the nobility. Outside this hierarchy, the fool loses permission to speak and thereby disappears from social life (cf. Rodríguez 2001b: 303-04).

It would be difficult to over-emphasize the novelty of Díaz's position in comparison to the fool's. He is an example of a new kind of writer, one who was trying, through his work, to have his merit recognized publicly. For such a writer, it could never be simply a question of telling the truth. His dilemma is that he must operate within a public sector increasingly dominated by the pen as opposed to the sword. Díaz's disadvantages in this respect were obvious enough, even to him: "porque yo no soy latino ni sé del arte" (Díaz del Castillo 14). The barriers were not simply linguistic – the use of Latin was opposed to the vernacular – but also stylistic, in the broadest sense. Díaz's cultural baggage consists of little beyond a proverbial tradition and a body of popular literature, notably the novels of chivalry. Everything suggests that, as a plain-speaking man, he felt intimidated by the existence of "courty norms," of the kind that would eventually issue into the more elaborate diction of the baroque. Of course, a resurgent organicism would never be able to dismantle the public/private split, which the pressure of the bourgeoisie had created, but it would effectively neutralize the "plain style" of animist ideologues and fill the public space, not to mention animist literary forms, with its own ideological obsessions (see Read 1992: 53).

Díaz's problems were further compounded by his own residual substantialism. His ideological horizons are, to reiterate, still largely contained within the serf (servant) / lord (Lord) dichotomy. Basically, he has performed services that, he believes, deserve to be recognized. And such recognition could only come, not from the market – hence the delay in writing and publishing the Historia verdadera – but from the king. Undoubtedly, Díaz has reasons to feel optimistic: the development of the Absolutist State had invested noble status and landed property with new guarantees. At the same time, his desperation is also a measure of the precarious situation of the encomenderos whose ranks he had joined. The centrifugal forces of Absolutism were drawing previously parcelized sovereignties into the ambit of the state, to the ultimate and obvious benefit of the latter's ennobled bourgeois functionaries. Díaz was not the only one to feel aggrieved.

Perhaps no other issue better captures the tensions in Díaz's text than that of the role of supernatural forces in the historical process. The supernatural per se, we should point out, does not necessarily betray a substantialist presence, contrary to what might automatically be assumed. Indeed, it could be (and has been) argued that the element of mobility integral to magic will constitute a key ingredient of animist ideology.10 As far as the

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10 Rodríguez maintains that the element of mobility inherent in the operations of magic
**Historia verdadera** is concerned, however, the textual evidence suggests that Díaz's skepticism symptomatizes a literalism at odds with Gómara's substantialist inclinations to continue to read the World as a Book. While he is not above the use of prophecies – for example, much is made of Montezuma's conviction that the Spaniards were the gods whose arrival had long been predicted in popular Aztec legend – Díaz operates, for the most part, within a literal world that is ruled by chance. In such a world, one's fate is determined not by supernatural forces, of whatever kind, but by individual initiative.

To lend substance to these claims, let us consider another passage from Díaz's work that again finds the Spaniards cornered by the Indians in a bog:

> Aquí es donde dice Francisco López de Gomara que salió Francisco de Morta en un caballo rucio picado antes que llegase Cortés con los de caballo, y que eran los santos apósteles Señor Santiago o Señor San Pedro. Digo que todas nuestras obras y vitorias son por mano de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, y que en aquella batalla había para cada uno de nosotros tantos indios que a puñados de tierra nos cegaran, salvo que la gran misericordia de Nuestro Señor en todo nos ayudaba; y pudiera ser que los que dice el Gomara fueran los gloriosos Apóstoles Señor Santiago o Señor San Pedro, e yo, como pecador, no fuese dino de lo ver. Lo que yo entonces vi y conocí a Francisco de Mortla en un caballo castaño, que venía juntamente con Cortés, que me paresce que ahora que lo que estoy escribiendo se me representa por estos ojos pecadores toda la guerra según y de la manera que allí pasamos. E ya que yo, como indino, no fuera merecedor de ver a cualquiera de aquellos gloriosos apóstoles, allí en nuestra compañía había sobre cuatrocientos soldados, y Cortés y otros muchos caballeros, y platicáraseello, y se tomara por testimonio, y se habiera hecho una iglesia cuando se pobló la villa, y se nombrara la villa de Santiago de la Vitoria, o de San Pedro de la Vitoria, como se nombró Santa María de la Vitoria. Y si fuera así como dice el Gomara, harto malos cristianos fuéramos que enviándonos Nuestro Señor Dios sus santos Apóstoles, no reconocer la gran merced que nos hacía, y reverenciar cada día aquella iglesia, y pluguiera a Dios que así fuera, como el coronista dice; y hasta que leí su corónica nunca entre conquistadores que allí se hallaron tal les oí. Y dejémoslo aquí, y diré lo que más pasamos. (Díaz del Castillo 72-73)

We would like to draw the reader's attention to a number of points. Firstly, while by no means immune to the substantialist attachment to the power of words and to the opportunities that supernatural explanations offer by way of legitimation, Díaz remains emphatic that he and his comrades depended for
their survival upon their own resources of wit, fortitude and intelligence. Secondly, Francisco de Morla's chestnut horse performs a key defamiliarizing function, in which respect it bears the burden of the passage's pervasive literalism: Díaz sees the events being narrated with his mind's eye. And finally, the passage finishes with the familiar attempt to guarantee the stable identity of the proto-subject and of other referents through the thread of discourse that connects them.

**Literalism as Moralism: Bartolomé de las Casas**

Why did Bernal Díaz write his history? Even prior to her encounter with Seed, Adorno had assayed a response to this question. Her basic argument is that Díaz's own self-confessed intentions – to contradict the untruths told, notably, by Gómara – are insufficient by way of explanation and that (unconsciously?) his real target was Las Casas, whose critique of the Conquest was threatening the encomendero status of the likes of Díaz. The latter's self-projection as a popular hero, she argues furthermore, is a rhetorical act, whose effectiveness is only too obvious: it has persuaded most modern readers to side with Díaz, the common soldier and eye-witness reporter, against the Court historian, Gómara. Gómara's loss was also Cortés': "We will allow ourselves to think of Bernal Díaz, but never think of Hernán Cortés, as a hero of a marvelous adventure, thanks in good measure to that commonplace about Bernal's alleged inspiration in the novels of chivalry" (Adorno 1988a: 256).

Now, I have no argument with the view of Díaz as driven basically by the economic motives of a slave-owning encomendero who was prepared to stoop to branding Mexicas as slaves. At the same time, it is clear that Adorno's theoretical attachment to issues of authorial intention leads her to miss crucial differences between Díaz and Las Casas, for the simple reason that these differences operate not at the intentional level but at the level of objective productivity. As an initial step, let us again begin by considering a specific passage, this time from *La Destrucción de las Indias*:

Una vez, saliéndonos a recibir [los indios] con mantenimientos y regalos diez leguas de un gran pueblo, y llegados allá nos dieron gran cantidad de pescado, y pan y comida con todo lo que más pudieron; súbitamente se le revistió el Diablo a los cristianos y meten a cuchillo en mi presencia (sin motivo ni causa que tuviesen) más de tres mil ánimas que estaban sentados delante de nosotros, hombre y mujeres y niños. Allí vide tan grandes crueldades, que nunca los vivos tal vieron ni pensaron ver. Otra vez, desde ha pocos días, envié yo mensajeros, asegurando que no temiesen, a todos los señores de la provincia de la Habana, porque tenían por oídas de mi crédito, que no se ausentasen sino que nos saliesen a recibir, que no les haría mal ninguno; porque de
las matanzas pasadas estaba toda la tierra asombrada; y esto hice con
parecer del capitán; y llegados a la provincia salíronnos a recibir veinte
y un señores y caciques, y luego los prendió el capitán, quebran
tando el seguro que yo les había dado, y los quería quemar vivos. (Las Casas
1946: 40)

Like Díaz's *Historia verdadera*, Las Casas' *Destrucción de las Indias* has manifestly
broken with the sacralized world of feudalism. It exudes a literalism in the
animist tradition, based on a direct knowledge of circumstantial detail. Twenty-
one lords and masters appear, not twenty-two, and for reasons that are very
literal, not symbolic, as would have been *de rigueur* in a substantialist text. The
impression we are given is of a colonizing experience that is "intensamente
vívida" (Rodríguez and Salvador 27). However, if Las Casas demonstrates
certain similarities with Díaz, the differences are equally striking. Confronted
by the uncompromising moralism of the *Destrucción de las Indias*, we suddenly
realize, retrospectively, that one thing the *Historia verdadera* never posed was the
problem of sin. Díaz's text, I am saying, is not "critical" and "moral" in the way
that Las Casas' is. Like *La Celestina* and the early picaresque, *Historia verdadera*
is an exercise in living in the present. Juan Carlos Rodríguez is particularly
insistent, within this context, on the dangers posed by our eminently petty-
bourgeois moralism, of the kind that, as exemplified by the work of Kant,
Rousseau and Hegel, leads us, *unconsciously* and in the most grotesquely
anachronistic manner, to oppose the purity of the "individual" to the impurity
of "society." Objectively, he explains with reference to the picaresque, we are
simply dealing with two varieties of animism, one that is lived from above, and
carries a moralizing overload, and one that is lived from below (Rodríguez
2001b: 127). While the former explains the tone set by Las Casas, the latter
would account for the essentially "amoral" and "acritical" feel to *Historia
verdadera*, judged by Kantian, empiricist or positivist standards, and for the
problem that we face in identifying the text from a bourgeois or petty-
bourgeois standpoint, in other words, from the standpoint of our own
ideological unconscious.

The distance between the texts of Díaz and Las Casas may seem slight,
but it corresponds to an important shift at the level of the ideological
unconscious. Moreover, it can be measured precisely: it is what separates the
two authors' respective accounts of the Cholulan massacre, defended on
tactical grounds by Díaz and condemned as gratuitous and morally offensive
by Las Casas (cf. Adorno 1988a: 246-47). Expressed more broadly: if the
*Historia verdadera* has points in common with *Lazarillo*, *Destrucción de las Indias*
shares with, say, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, an attachment to organicist notions of
natural places and what it is to sin against nature. One important consequence is
that Las Casas, in contrast to Díaz, *does* lend himself to assimilation to
Kantianism and accordingly to critical distortion (cf. Rodríguez 2001b: 128).

How is such Kantianism to be countered? By locating Las Casas more precisely (we would argue) in terms of his own ideological unconscious. Provisionally (since such issues await further study), Destrucción de las Indias cannot be characterized as either a humanist or an organicist text. It is rather a response to the crisis created by the exhaustion of organicism and the need to adapt religious thought to the new social reality that is being constructed. As Rodríguez and Salvador explain: "De cualquier modo, la figura del padre Las Casas es insólita porque, sin ser en absoluto un humanista, su concepción del mundo tampoco es medieval, organicista. En cualquier caso, responde a ese tipo de reacción religiosa, presente en el 'período de transición', que intenta dar soluciones a la crisis planteada por el agotamiento del organicismo y la necesaria adaptación del pensamiento religioso a la nueva realidad social que se está construyendo" (Rodríguez and Salvador 30).

On this basis, then, Las Casas' work is an example of Christian animism, the latter understood as an ideological formation that betrays the impact upon religion of the new social relations characteristic of the transition from feudalism to mercantile capitalism.

In celebrating the arrival of a new critical paradigm, one based on dialogue, the colonial critics of the '80s and '90s radically overestimate their originality. The truth is that bourgeois ideology, from its very beginnings, has found it impossible to imagine social relations other than in terms of an exchange between two subjects, or a subject and an object, in a market, in an academy: "Humanities scholarship begins with a reader and a book (or a viewer and a painting or a film, etc.) and is an entirely intimate thing" (Adorno 1994: 151). What they fail to realize is that the "dialogue," as a genre, along with the "free" subject or reader, not to mention the intimacy that is the dialogue's defining characteristic, are not universals, to be assumed, but historical phenomena to be explained.

One first step towards this explanation would be to unpack all the hidden assumptions entangled in this particular version of liberal contractualism. It would transpire that, by implication, the truth of an economic background ("matter") is envisaged as being "stamped" upon the internal subject ("tabula rasa") as a "form of conciousness." The individual is, as it were, "visited" by spirits. While not always stated in so many words, such a position assumes, theoretically, the existence of a dualism between Literature and the Economy, Literature and Society. There are, as Rodríguez points out, a number of variations, from British empiricism to phenomenology and Foucauldian post-structuralism. What we have tried to indicate, on the basis of

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11 See also Rodríguez 1990: 243 ff.
examples drawn from the Transition, is that such binary thinking needs to be rejected in its entirety. In the words of Rodríguez: "La complejidad del asunto es mucho mayor que la supuesta en tal dualismo, tal 'face à face.' O mejor dicho, es otra" (Rodríguez 2001b: 62). Viewed from an Althusserian perspective, social relations generate not material effects on a tabula rasa but an ideological unconscious that saturates texts, irrespective of the degree of consciousness or intentionality exhibited by the author. Hence our preference for viewing social subjectivity as a condensation of structural forces, with transitive effects but intransitively determined, as opposed to locating an autonomous subjectivity at the center of social theory.

It was never likely that such a theoretical model would ever be given a fair hearing within the North-American discipline of Hispanism, but for reasons that have nothing to do with the inherent qualities of Marxism as social theory. Much more relevant is the linkage between Soviet Studies during the Cold War decades and recent post-Marxist theory, as part of a broader collusion between the promotion of a "postcolonial discourse" and the brutal restructuring of the global capitalist economy. The possibility exists, and needs to be seriously considered, that the post-structuralist limitation to language and textuality actually serves to make this restructuring more palatable, by covering up the economic, political and social dislocation that it causes.

Changing the Subject

As Terry Eagleton has been the first to remind us, there is an irony to the urgency with which post-structuralists have undertaken to deconstruct the monadic unity of the contemporary subject. Why the rush to perform a task that has already been successfully accomplished by late capitalism? The gist of the argument is clear: meditations on écriture are anticipated by, if not causally related to, a consumerism that has "scattered our bodies to the winds as so many bits and pieces of reified technique, appetite, mechanical operation or reflex of desire" (Eagleton 1986: 145), which is another way of saying, more generally, that the dispersal of the subject is rooted in the conditions of postmodernity. It was the irrelevance of these conditions to a premodernity, as we have seen, that led Rolena Adorno to scrutinize more closely the credentials of the decentered subject with respect to early colonial texts. And reasonably so. The only danger for the colonialist lies, as we have also seen, in using the
same logic to justify a lingering attachment to the bourgeois humanist conception of the free, autonomous subject. Distinctions at this point are crucial, notably between the fragmented subject of postmodernity and its embryonic equivalent, as it emerged against the backdrop of the Spanish conquest. The shortcomings of post-structuralist theory, it is important to insist, should not be used to rationalize a resistance to theory per se, but as a reason to historicize, with an aim to reconfiguring, the theoretical terms of debate.

_The Resistance to Theory_

It may seem, to say the least, slightly perverse to attribute a "resistance to theory" to Rolena Adorno, in that few critics have shown themselves, on the face of it, to be more informed over theoretical issues and more amenable to taking on board theoretical wisdom, as it is currently conceived. Indeed, it could reasonably be claimed that her work is a carefully formulated response to a fundamental shift within literary studies whereby the quest for a "literature-in-itself" or "literariness" was abandoned in favour of a more broadly conceived textuality. It is a shift that Adorno celebrates and seeks to enlist for the cause of colonial liberation: "[…] la categoría reservada al sujeto se abre para incluir no sólo el europeo o criollo letrado sino los sujetos cuyas identificaciones étnicas o de género no reproducen las de la ideología patriarcal e imperial dominante" (Adorno 1988b 11). The implication is that, in the transition from literary history, as traditionally conceived, to the analysis of discourse, the grandiose claims of a transcendental aesthetic have been pinned back into a more empirical, refreshingly materialist concern with discursivity. In the process, the patriarchal subject that sustained literary aesthetics has dissolved into a multiplicity of subject positions that fosters a cultural and political pluralism entirely favorable to the colonized.

One issue that, on her own terms, Adorno struggles to resolve is the relationship between these subject positions and the social structures that transcend them. It is, to be sure, a familiar enough dilemma, but one that, if neglected, constantly threatens to rear its ugly head. Adorno throws some self-reflective light on her position in this regard, but leaves the details unresolved. Consider her claim that "el discurso surge como categoría tanto formal (pero no atada a la forma) e ideológica (pero no limitada a la ideología dominante), social, política e institucional – más grande que sus autores, más abarcador que sus intenciones. Estamos más allá de los conceptos de autor y obra, periodo, género y movimiento, que han provisto las categorías de análisis en la historia literaria tradicional" (18). I take such a statement to be a reminder that the transition from structuralism ("literature-in-itself") to post-structuralism (textuality) was preceded by an earlier break with paradigms that foregrounded
intentionality – the Stylistics of Spitzer would be a classic instance. To further characterize Adorno, we have to tease out the implications of the above and other such comments. Tentatively, I would suggest that this particular colonialist is an idealist to the extent that she treats cultural and social structures as the products of thought or discourse; and that she is anti-individualist in that she reduces human subjects to social selves, forged in social interaction. That said, at no point is the purchase on the subject relinquished. This qualification is important: Adorno is, among other things, an anti-holist, who "brackets" or otherwise "de-centers" overall systems of structural social relations in favor of the subject.

Developing this characterization still further, we would argue that Adorno constitutes an example of what can be called, to borrow a term from "critical realists," "central confflation," in which subjects and social structures are seen as the "same" thing, in the sense that subjects are simply the other face of structures and vice-versa (cf. Archer). The "same" thing except that, in the struggle for ontological pre-eminence, victory goes to the subjects, who, however fragmented, precede the social structures that they otherwise sustain or within which they are contained. The effect, in the last instance, is to reduce these structures to the status of virtual realities, which depend upon the activity of individual agents for their instantiation. Any potential conflict, between agent and structure, can be minimized if not eliminated entirely by focusing less upon individual than upon collective subjects. Thus Adorno:

"Este sujeto colonial no se define según quién es sino cómo ve: se trata de la visión que se presenta. No importa si el que habla es europeo o no; el criterio definitorio de este sujeto es la presentación de una visión europeizante, esto es, una visión que concuerda con los valores de la Europa imperial. A lo largo de esta discusión, 'el sujeto colonial colonizador' y el 'europeo' servirán como tipo de 'shorthand' para referirse no a algún yo particular, sino a cualquiera vision colonizadora" (Adorno 1988c: 56).

Now all of this seems, on its own terms and notwithstanding its imprecisions, altogether reasonable enough. Central confflation is, after all, a fairly widespread phenomenon, both within sociology, where it assumes explicitly theorized forms, and in literary criticism, where it is more frequently received unquestioningly, as part of a post-structural package (see Craven 18). Why, to return to our initial point of departure, the need to reconfigure it? Where precisely lies the alleged resistance to theory? To be succinct, if a little brutal, in our response: the category of the subject, as Adorno deploys it, is irrelevant to 16th- and 17th-century discourses and to the ideologies in which these discourses were rooted. We would argue, furthermore, that Adorno's refusal to relinquish the transhistorical category of the subject is precisely the source of her resistance to theory. It goes without saying that this refusal betrays
Adorno's own Eurocentrism. These are considerable charges, and I want immediately to anticipate and so neutralize certain misunderstandings. Most importantly, I am not critiquing Adorno for failing to reproduce the subjective perceptions or self-understanding, or the phenomenal forms of colonial society. Even less is she charged with distancing herself from the presumed object of her inquiry. The (human) sciences, we would readily concede, entail not the duplication of their object but the constitution of their object. Rather, our claim, regarding Adorno, is that her conceptual categories obscure rather than explain the historically specific, determinate character of the ideologies in question. But at this point, and to better illustrate our argument, let us turn to an actual passage from Adorno. It is a long one but takes us to the heart of her project:

El sujeto colonial [...] entró en los debates de los cuales era objeto el amerindio. Al lanzarse al foro público, este sujeto colonial no podía escribir en la lengua autóctona, es decir, la lengua doméstica (de la madre), sino en la lengua pública europea del "padre" (el español). Se esforzaba en representar la experiencia nativa no como ritos, costumbres, "folklore," sino como cronología, dinastías, en una palabra, historia. Podríamos decir que, para el focalizador que simpatizaba con el proyecto colonial europeo, el discurso colonial conquistador sería "científico" u objetivo, razonado, del dominio del intelecto, en una palabra, masculino. En contraste y desde esa misma perspectiva, el discurso nativo se vería como subjetivo, como el producto del dominio del apetito y de la sensibilidad, lo femenino [...]. En sus palabras, podemos ver cómo el sujeto colonial que ensalzaba lo americano logró "desfemenizar" la cultura nativa a través de dos estrategias: la racionalización y la erradicación de la "magia" y la "brujería," y la restauración de la historia, destacando la sociedad autóctona como agente activo (no como víctima) de su propio destino. (Adorno 1988c: 64)

One immediately striking feature of the passage is the unease that Adorno feels regarding certain key categories, symptomatic of which is the proliferation of scare quotes. It is, to be sure, an understandable unease: to take the most obvious example, "scientific," as understood in the 16th century, scarcely corresponds with modern usage. But its correlate, "rationalization" and cognate "rationalized" slip by, unobserved, as does, more crucially, its counterpart, "sensibility." Understandably, once the introduction of scare quotes begins, they start to break out over the whole body of the text, rather like mease spots. But if "magic" and "witchcraft" are to be singled out for reprimand, why should "experience," "intellect," "culture" etc. escape a beating? If most of these categories seem to float free of their historical
moorings, it is doubtless because they are presided over by "male" and 
"female," generic categories that, while manifestly mediated through culture, 
are grounded – or so the argument might run – in some biological substratum 
that enables them to function transhistorically.

What I am arguing, to be precise, is that Adorno's discourse is the 
secretion of a Kantian ideological unconscious, which opposes Reason to the 
Imagination as conflicting categories of a transcendental subject. At any 
moment, we fully expect Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde to materialize and 
wander across the pages of the colonialist's texts. I have taken one particular 
passage but my claim is that this Kantian unconscious underlies the whole of 
Adorno's work, in the sense that it transcends her status as author. This means 
that we could substantiate our claim by plugging into "her" texts at any point. 
Thus: "Así el sujeto colonial americano borraba los retratos ajenos que lo 
identificaban con la naturaleza, la pasión, lo femenino, lo doméstico, lo rústico, 
lo pagano, para identificarse con los valores contrarios: la cultura, la razón, lo 
varonil, lo público, lo cortesano o caballeresco, lo cristiano" (Adorno 1988c: 
66). One could scarcely imagine a more impressive list of ideologically laden 
categories, laden – and here is the rub – with Enlightenment and post-
Enlightenment baggage. Do post-Romantics understand "nature" and 
"passion" quite like a 17th-century writer such as Gracián? In what way does 
Scholastic reason differ from that of the Enlightenment? Can the "public" be 
said to function as an ideological category under, say, feudalism? Even a 
seemingly harmless term like "rustic" must be treated with circumspection, 
given the relatively belated emergence of its ideological counterpart, "urban."

There is a certain the irony, then, to the accusation, levelled by Adorno, that 
recent investigators "tienden a aplicar paradigmas teóricos o analíticos que 
tienen poco que ver con el complejo histórico-cultural investigado" (Adorno 

We could continue to give further examples – the concept of the 
"dialogic," for example, would need to be interrogated closely for its historical 
credentials – but surely the point is made. Our aim, to reiterate, is not to hold 
Adorno personally responsible for contaminating colonial studies with Kantian 
categories or, for that matter, with their post-structuralist off-shoots. To the 
extent that personal issues are relevant, it is significant that Adorno herself 
quickly began to have doubts about the relevance to colonial studies of 
notions of subjectivity refined in the late 20th century. What we are arguing, 
more substantially, is that, such personal disavowals notwithstanding, the 
ideological category of the subject extends its reach into the very substratum 
of critical texts, and predictably so insofar as it belongs to an ideological 
unconscious that precedes and determines their composition. After all, does 
not literary criticism, in its traditional guise, see itself as facilitating an
encounter – almost a lovers' tryst – between two "free" subjects, otherwise the author and the reader? Is not the critic charged explicitly with responsibility for promoting the immediacy of this transaction, modelled manifestly on its commercial counterpart, by removing the textual obstacles that threaten to interfere with the exchange? And are not these obstacles the textual form taken by historical and cultural specificities, of which, within the context of bourgeois ideology, the subject-form is the prime example? Maximally condensing our argument: Jakobson's notorious "I like Ike" is revealing, less for any linguistic, political or even sociological function that it may be deemed to illustrate, than for the extent to which it hinges *unconsciously* upon the presumed existence of a subject "I." In other words, the sheer prominence that such a statement lends to the subject-form is itself symptomatic of a specific ideological unconscious, which "informs" the statement, linguistically, and from which it (the statement) could be said to be emergent. We are indebted for the Jakobson reference to the Spanish Marxist Juan Carlos Rodríguez, to whose work I will now turn, by way of substantiating our broader claims.

**Substantialism**

Why the turn to Rodríguez? And what, precisely, is to be gained by substituting a central conflationist, Adorno, with a downward conflationist, of manifestly Althusserian extraction? Our response, as earlier, is succinct, if somewhat less brutally to the point: Rodríguez's signal achievement has been to challenge the otherwise eminently Althusserian view that ideology is the discourse of the subject. In other words, the Spanish Marxist historicizes the subject form to the extent of arguing not simply that it undergoes significant variation through time, but that, much more contentiously, it can be, and historically has been, absent, as an ideological category. These are considerable claims, but before we address them directly, let us remind ourselves of the broad parameters of Rodríguez theoretical apparatus.

While Rodríguez follows Althusser in envisaging social formations as structured in terms of three main levels, the political, economic and ideological, his practical application of the latter to a Spanish social formation in transition (between feudalism and capitalism) manages to circumvent the fallacy of "misplaced concreteness" and, by the same token, the temptation that has dogged so many Marxists to regress toward a Kantian distinction between empirical matter, otherwise the base, and a transcendentalized spirit. Each level is always already determined, intransitively, by the place and function assigned to it within the complex unity of the social formation. We are talking of the copresence of the other levels and the influence that these exert via the matrix effect of the social formation as a whole. That said, it remains true that each level operates with a degree of relative autonomy, in the
sense that it is characterized by its own internal structures and distinct rhythms, and as such, transitively determines the operation of other levels. Ideology, naturally, is no exception: "Cada nivel ideológico está estructurado, pues, a través de un núcleo clave que desarrolla el modelo de explotación necesario en cada caso para todo Modo de Produccion" (Rodríguez 1998b: 6). This nucleus is what Rodriguez refers to as an _ideological matrix_ ("matriz ideológica"), which is productive of its own internal logic even as it is determined, in the last instance, by the prevailing relations of production.

How exactly does this relate to Spain in the 16th and 17th century? In so far as transitional periods are, by definition, characterized by the presence of at least two modes of production, the ideological matrix operative during the colonial period must likewise have involved at least two ideologies. These are, according to Rodríguez, _substantialism_, the dominant ideology of feudalism, and _animism_, the emergent ideology of mercantilism, the conflict between which explains the contradictory ideological dynamism of the age (Rodríguez 1990: 59 ff). (Adorno, let us recall, distinguished only one European ideology, namely patriarchal ideology.) Only animism hinges upon the ideological category of the subject or, more strictly speaking, a proto-form of the subject, namely the "alma bella." Substantialism, in contrast, seeks legitimation through the signatures of God, inscribed in the World conceived as a Book. These categories are best appreciated as they work in practice. Let us begin by considering the opening lines of the _Poema de Mio Cid_, as an example of one of substantialism's favoured genres, the epic.

De los sos ojos tornava la cabeza y estava los catando.
Vio puertas abiertas e uços sin cañados,
alcandaras vazias sin pieles e sin mantos
e sin falcones sin adtores mudados.
Sospiro mio Çid ca mucho avie grandes cuidados.
Ffablo mio Çid bien e tan mesurado:
"¡Grado a ti, señor,
¡Esto me an buelto mios enemigos malos!"

Alli pienssan de aguijar, alli sueltan las riendas,
A la exida de Bivar ovieron la corneja diestra
y entrando a Burgos ovieron la siniestra.
Meçio mio Çid los ombros engrameo la tiesta:
"¡Albrícia, Albar Ffañez, ca echados somos de tierra!" (Smith 139)

The substantialist text tells a narrative, based on the notion of feudal order. The cause of the (his)story is the Lord ("padre que estás en alto") who
has written or inscribed the World as a Book, and that is simply reproduced or remade by each lord (the Cid, the Infantes de Lara, etc.), on a daily basis, in this life, with respect to his own lands and serfs/servants. In the Fall is written already the promise of Redemption, just as in the figures of this degraded and decrepit world, notably King Alfonso, are written the forms redeemed by God’s grace – the king who dispenses justice. To search in the past is not to seek the causes that account for current events, but only to "certify" the existence of an eternal truth, which continues to play itself out, today as in the past. Texts, then, must be seen as functioning on several different levels, which can be reduced to two, the literal and the anagogic. The former concerns a literality of a distinctly medieval kind, which provides access, through the process of an organicist reading, to the anagogic level. Feudal organicism does not know chronology in the strictest sense: the literal time that presses upon the Cid during his departure (‘Allí piensan de aguijar’, etc.) is quickly surrendered to a figural chronology that images this earthly time as a pilgrimage, and death as liberation. Nor can it readily accommodate the notion of chance. Celebrations ("¡Albriçia …!") are in order at the moment of the Cid’s otherwise tragic exile for the simple reason that, as the figure of the crow indicates (for those who possess the capacity to decipher appearances), the Cid’s future is already prefigured in the present.

For a mode of production to function, then, the key factor is not that individuals entertain certain political or philosophical ideas but that they create a form of ideological life, a "ser-como-soy," which, in the case of the tributary mode of feudalism, is naturally defined in terms of blood and lineage. Thus, "Yo soy Rui Diaz el de Vivar" defines not a subjectivity, which is "freely" made and re-made on a daily basis, but a lineage, already possessed in the present, as the seed of a permanent truth that unfolds through time. The Cid is not a subject but a "vassal," a category internalized within the dominant nobility but characterized by the same notion of "service" (to a lord). It is for this reason that the Cid could never see the crow literally, from the perspective of his own individuality, but was constrained to "read" it. The substantialist text knows no "I"/"eye" that can see the "thing," just as its protagonists can never have a "life," in the sense of a "private" realm of being. For the same reason, these same protagonists can have no inside, as opposed to outside. This is particularly true of the epic hero himself, who literally has nothing to say to the little girl who greets him in what many modern readers find to be the most lyrical moment of the poem. All of which explains why the plot dynamic of the Poema de Mío Cid seems to falter at those moments when protagonists are called upon to perform some act of deceit. The text always requires the existence of two Jews and two Infantes, because motivations, like emotions in general, must be visibly exteriorized in discourse or inscribed in the body, as
the very incarnation of meaning (see Read 1983: chap. 1).

Animism
Now let us turn to animism, still following throughout the ideas developed by Rodríguez.
The classic form of animism is Petrarchism, introduced into Spain by Garcilaso and involving an erotic relationship or exchange between two "beautiful souls." The latter are deemed to be superior by virtue of their sensibility or capacity to love, which draws them together sympathetically. The soul is driven by the force of this attraction to try and "express" itself, which requires that sympathy find the path along which it can flow outwards, towards union with the other. Expression is achieved through words and through the gaze – hence the importance attributed to eyes. Heat melts the material barriers that stand in the path of love. Tears and sighs are also an expression of love, although a less direct expression than the glance or words. The drying up of tears is viewed negatively within the context of a Petrarchan erotica since it implies an inability to express oneself. Dryness creates a material crust, which blocks the movement of spirits and therefore their fusion. This in turn creates a division between inside and outside, which frustrates attempts by the lover to penetrate the other with his/her gaze. This inside/outside division, we saw earlier, marks a crucial difference from substantialism, for which body and soul are inextricably intermingled and which, as a consequence, is unable to understand, let alone theorize, the existence of a hidden interior.

The same neo-Platonic philosophy that sustains the Petrarchan lyric also functions as an ideological support for the new theoretical discourse of Copernican science. The "soul of the world" is the Sun, whose beneficent rays penetrate and purify every part of "this world" and thereby dismantle the cosmic hierarchy on which scholastic Ptolemaic science was based. A social hierarchy remains but no longer structured in terms of "blood" and "lineage." The determining criterion is a certain spirituality that, imparted to the soul at birth, radiates from within, with varying intensity, in accordance with the relative sanctity of the individual concerned. Its effect is to render the material body transparent and translucent. As the sixteenth-century animist, Cristóbal de Villalón, explains: "Tiene por objeto y fundamento este amor celestial a la hermosura del anima: la qual es un resplandor del vulto divino que en ella dios infundio al prinçipio de su creaçion como en naturales hijos suyos. Y esta hermosura es aquella inclinaçion de obrar virtud: la qual aunque dios la imprima en todas las criaturas que son capaçes de amor mas perfectamente la infunde en las animas" (Villalon 204). To be sure, Villalón's beautiful soul is not yet the free subject, a category that will be secreted subsequently by more classically bourgeois formations. But that is not to say that it does not value
freedom, significantly defined by one of Villalón's dialoguists as the greatest good of which one can be deprived in this life (44).

Animism had its favored prose forms, notably the "dialogue"—La Celestina is steeped in animist ideology—and the picaresque tale or novel. As in the case of the epic, let us remind ourselves of the specificities of the latter genre by considering the opening paragraph of a particularly symptomatic text, namely Lazarillo de Tormes.

Pues sepa Vuestra Merced ante todas las cosas que a mí llaman Lázaro de Tormes, hijo de Tomé González y de Antona Pérez, naturales de Tejares, aldea de Salamanca. Mi nacimiento fue dentro del río Tormes, por la cual causa tomé el sobrenombre, y fue desta manera. Mi padre, que Dios perdone, tenía cargo de proveer una molienda de una aceña que está ribera de aquel río, en la cual fue molinero más de quince años; y estando mi madre una noche en la aceña preñada de mí, tomóme el parto y parióme allí. De manera que con verdad me puedo decir nacido en el río. (Recapito 100)

Animism is an eminently transitional discourse, designed to enable a rising bourgeois class to live with its "enemy," which means that compromises are always the order of the day, not least when it comes to the kinds of narrative that are spun. Thus, while Lazarillo is compelled to begin with a narration of the origins of his own lineage, the resemblance is ruptured in the very act of imitation. The effect is to turn the fact of Lazarillo's lineage into a joke, and thereby, quite radically, to call the whole issue of lineage into question, and with it the whole substantialist edifice. For what becomes immediately apparent is that the flow of the narrative presupposes a new ideological structure. The First Cause has gone, along with the idea of an Efficient Cause that intervenes in nature and dictates the unfolding plot of mankind. Of course, perfunctory references to supernatural beings continue, as is to be expected in any transitional text. (We will have to wait until the bourgeoisie becomes the dominant class for a vision of life's absolute meaningless.) But in essence there is no order contained within the narrative other than the literality of life itself, and this centers upon the new "disorder," caused by the impact of a radically new set of social relations upon the feudal structure. In the context of this new disorder, animism will assume an attitude of defence, which means that it shows a preference for marginality, poverty and the picaresque. In sum, its gaze falls to the level of hunger, a literal hunger, experienced at the level of a literal time.

If the soul is no longer legitimated by God, the inevitable question is: by whom or what is it legitimated? To which there can be only one possible answer: by an autonomous subject. For if lineage was the basis of the ideological form that greased the ideological mechanisms of feudalism,
"freedom" is what will keep the new relations functioning. In other words, narratives are now justified by the literal gaze of a free subject, in its early proto-form, just as, in a curiously dialectical interplay of specular images, the same narratives, in their exteriorized, discursive form, justify their authors. "I was there," "I have seen," "I have observed. Therefore it is true," etc. And because there is an "eye"/"I," there is now also a "thing," seen in all its literalness, as opposed to being "read," as it was under substantialism, and treated as the bearer of God's hidden signature. We are talking here, it should be emphasized, about the internal logic of the text, independently of whether the text happens to be fictional or non-fictional in form, an internal logic that will also manifest itself in other art forms, most notably in the perspectivism that was transforming the visual arts at the time.

Necessarily, modes of social interaction have been radically transformed: within the new urban space, people are bound by the ties not of "fidelity" but of "friendship," in the common pursuit of food and "gain." The serf, who has escaped into the city, "where the air is free," becomes successively the servant of many masters, to whom he is "freely" contracted and to whom he sells his labour power. Otherwise, he must join the new, unemployed poor who roam the streets, to the despair and annoyance of civil authorities. And now it is that the splits start to occur, beginning with that between the public and the private, between the street and the home. These are the new circumstances, in which Lazarillo prospers but in which the feudal escudero, marooned in time and space, struggles to survive. Likewise, whereas the archpriest, to whom Lazarillo addresses his text, never utters a word "in public," Lazarillo does not hesitate to "publish" his innocence as part of his "life." And needless to say, the divisions are also internalized: if the Cid coincides absolutely with his exterior person, the new subject learns never to take things on their face value, and is himself a devious schemer. Lazarillo's survival skills, his capacity to outwit the chance that governs the world, rest precisely on the knowledge that all codes lie.

**Rodríguez and Adorno**

Let us pause to consider some of the key differences between Adorno's patriarchal theory and Rodríguez's particular brand of Marxism, as we have outlined them both, by way of (a) substantiating our concerns about the ahistoricism of the the former, and (b) elaborating and extending our discussion of the latter. Our aim, in this second respect, is to further prepare the ground for an application below of Rodríguez's ideas to certain key colonial texts.

To initiate the comparison, we would point to the importance that Rodríguez attaches to the historical transformations that medieval traditions
undergo internally (see Rodríguez 1990: 66 ff). The breach with the feudal order effected by Augustinianism, he argues, makes possible the irruption of a feudal animism that, when combined with a chivalric emphasis on interior virtue, will facilitate in turn the solidification of the bourgeois matrix of the first phase. It was no longer sufficient, given this combination of animism with chivalry, to possess lineage, be a good vassal or a generous lord, etc.; nobility, true nobility, increasingly depended upon the possession of a gentle heart. It is precisely such transitional phenomena and nuances that Adorno's over-arching categories cannot accommodate. She proceeds by collapsing the courtly, chivalrous tradition into imperial ideology, and thereby obscures the ideological complexities and contradiction of Spain's ideological legacy to the colonies (see Adorno 1988c: 66).

Much the same applies to Adorno's and Rodríguez's respective views on "magic" and "witchcraft." For whereas in Adorno, magic is defined in logical, binary terms, in relation to reason (Adorno 1988c: 64), Rodríguez always argues historically. And in historical terms, the rebirth of witchcraft, together with the resurgence of interest in alchemy, contributed crucially – or so Rodríguez suggests – to a new valorization of the living spirit of things, whose manipulation lay at the heart of the supernatural arts. In combination with the ideology of certain religious movements (notably Augustinianism and Franciscanism), magic and alchemy not only helped prepare the ground for the break with a hegemonic scholasticism but would provide a source of legitimation for the new forms, once this break had occurred. These medieval currents do not yet constitute bourgeois ideology – to begin with, the crucial ingredient of neo-Platonism is lacking – but there is little doubt as to the direction in which they point (Rodríguez 1990: 80-81).

Similarly with regard to "reason" and "science," two notably ideological categories that Adorno unhesitatingly parades as masculine archetypes, arrayed alongside their feminine counterparts, but which Rodríguez complicates, through a number of historically nuanced distinctions, of fundamental importance to an understanding of the transition (see Rodríguez 1990: 61-66). The first such distinction concerns the opposition between scholastic rationalism and its bourgeois counterpart. The latter, in the form of Cartesian "Reason," differs radically from its scholastic predecessor, amongst other things through the importance that it attaches to the beautiful soul, now transformed into a Cartesian subject (which is not to say that Cartesianism does not also compromise with scholasticism, residual elements of which abound in the texts of Descartes). The second concerns mechanicism, an ideology that represents the phase most removed from substantialism. Here, continuities are shown to be as decisive as ruptures, in that mechanicism never breaks entirely with earlier ideologies during the Renaissance – Galileo, for
example, is contaminated by Platonic irrationalism. Finally, Rodríguez also argues for the existence of a species of rationalism intermediary to scholasticism and Cartesianism, which he calls "non-organic Aristotelianism," secreted by mercantile relations during the resurgence of feudalism in the second half of the 16th century (348-50).

But it is over the public/private dichotomy that the greatest discrepancies between patriarchal theory and Marxism occur. For Adorno, as we have seen, the "public" and the "private" function as transhistorical categories, alongside those of "masculine" and "feminine." For Rodríguez, feudalism refuses to acknowledge the existence of the "private," as an ideological category, and will equate its "public" counterpart, when it is constrained to confront it, with the (fallen) "World." The ideological matrix of the transition, he argues, secretes a political thematics based on the opposition between the public and private spheres, registered at the ideological level in the form of two major systems, dictated respectively by the interests of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. Necessarily, the basic structure functions differently from country to country. In Spain, the Absolutist strategy of "unity" ignores the public/private split and tries to recuperate feudal "unity" by filling the public sphere with feudal notions of "blood" and "lineage." The Protestant north, by way of contrast, situates religion in the "private" sphere, while controlling it at the public level – hence the creation of "national" churches (see Rodríguez 1990: 31 ff).

As far as the category of the feminine is concerned, Rodríguez's position is correspondingly historicizing. Substantialism generates its own ideological image of Woman, as an embodiment of the matter that rots the soul and is the source of sin. Animism not only generates an image of woman as transfigured by the cleansing impact of the soul, but also opens up a private or domestic space, in which this soul can operate with ease. Within this space, groups of privileged souls will meet to discuss, to pray, to read (literature, the Bible), in short, cultivate their inner sensitivities. Upon entering the public sector, woman runs the risk of degenerating into "una mujer pública," to be bought and sold along with all the other commodities proliferating in the capitalist market. In the transition from the feudal lineage to the nuclear family, the marriage contract will be reconfigured as a contract between "equals," that is to say, between two free subjects (see Rodríguez 1990: 103 and passim).

**Lineages of the Absolutist State**

There has been much discussion about the character of west-European society during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and of the different paths that western nations took into modernity. The classic portrait of the Absolutist State is that of Perry Anderson, in a work that appeared in the same year as
Rodríguez’s *Teoría e historia*. Anderson argues that the Absolutist State represented, in essence, "a redeployed and recharged" apparatus of feudal domination, designed to discipline a restless peasantry (Anderson 1979: 18). The Absolutist State, in other words, reorganizes and strengthens a feudal domination threatened by mercantilism. In Rodríguez, the emphases are significantly different. Beginning with his focus on ideology and economics, and moving thence to politics, Rodríguez portrays Absolutism as a compromise formation, with respect to a dominant aristocracy and an emergent bourgeoisie. Ideological conflict and contradiction, broadly between substantialism and animism, are central to the Absolutist State because the transitional society, by definition, consists of both feudal and capitalist forms of exploitation. And just as these forms intermingle, sometimes inextricably (feudal lords invest in commercial adventures just as merchants often sink their money back into the land), so do their corresponding ideologies. (The latter, it is pertinent to recall, do not float in mid air, nor drop down out of the sky, but are secreted at the level of social relations.) Thus, it is sometimes impossible to judge whether animism is impacting upon substantialism, or vice-versa (see Rodríguez 1990: 106).

Given the balance between the warring classes, state power, as an ostensible mediator, acquires a certain degree of autonomy. State administrators had an interest in the continuation of feudalism, in that part of their income came also from, say, the monarchy's own lands, and also in the development of overseas trade and commerce, which provided an expanding tax base. But there was no denying the conflicts of interests: whereas for feudalism, the military machine aimed to secure territory, however scattered, merchant capitalists were concerned to open up and defend trading routes and therefore to foster embryonic notions of the nation state. In the political struggles that follow, bitter clashes occur between rival exploiting fractions of the dominant class, as well as between exploited and exploiting classes. In Spain the bourgeoisie suffered an early and damaging setback through the defeat of the Comuneros and, in consequence, of the cities, which led, in turn, to the resurgence of feudalism at all levels in the second part of the 16th century. Literary genres that were indebted, in their origins, to the impulse of animism – the sonnet and the novel are obvious examples – were filled with substantialist ideology. *Guzmán de Alfarache*, to take but one example, is a very different work from *Lazarillo*. While clearly based on the "life" of a picaro, the late picaresque novel has regressed to the dualistic semantics of substantialism. Indeed, the distinction between poverty and sin is now fudged, to the extent that a reversion to an earlier moral order is promoted as the solution to the new "disorder."

This, then, was the political, economic and ideological legacy
bequeathed to the Spanish colonies, as theorized by Rodríguez. To test out the latter's concepts provisionally, we propose to focus on Almesto's and Vázquez's *Jornada de Omagua y Dorado*, with particular attention to Beatriz Pastor Bodmer's influential reading of the text.\(^\text{12}\) Initially, Pastor appears to draw some kind of distinction between the "baroque" narrative of Almesto-Vázquez and the documents by Lope de Aguirre that this narrative frames. Whereas the former, along with Alvar Núñez's *Naufragios*, "mark[s] the beginning of a transition from an epic mode to a novelistic approach to the representation of reality," the latter celebrates the mythical, heroic values of a by-gone age (Pastor 193-94, 196). As Pastor's analysis proceeds, however, distinctions become blurred. Thus, "through the desperate nostalgia that shapes his design of spiritual 'reconquest'," Aguirre's letters "clearly anticipate the earliest forms of the problematics of Spanish baroque thought" (199). The metaphorical transformation of the Marañón journey, the argument runs, is consistent with the increasingly anthropocentric perception of reality, as experienced by Aguirre, "that was to become one of the most fundamental characteristics of the Baroque" (201). This experiential component allegedly contaminates the Almesto-Vázquez text as a whole, notably through the medium of the narrative's central characters, who assume all the psychological trappings to be expected, on the authority of Maravall, from a baroque text. Pastor's reading concludes with evidence purportedly to suggest that, from the standpoint of their newly discovered interiority, Aguirre's proto-baroque protagonists discover in subjectivity the only basis of certitude.

Clearly, "medieval," "Renaissance" and "baroque," in the hands of the traditional literary critic, mean everything and nothing. In order to achieve some degree of precision, we need to descend from the heady realm of what are manifestly Hegelian epochal spirits and achieve a greater purchase on objective reality. Here, our earlier consideration of the *Poema de Mio Cid* can be of assistance. How does the "epic" narration of the Marañón expedition by Almesto-Vázquez compare with the feudal work? The ideological resemblances are striking to an extent that suggests both derive, at least in part, from the same ideological unconscious. Belated organicists, just as much as their forebears, serve their masters before the market, and have to be compelled to write: "[...] porque los señores Oidores me mandaron hiciese esta relación por la vía y orden que yo pudiese" (Almesto 212). Their documents are submitted not to the public – organicism does not recognize the validity of an autonomous public norm – but to the lord-Lord. Likewise, the *Jornada de Omagua* begins as we would expect any organicist narrative to begin, with the

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\(^\text{12}\) Almesto's account is a copy of an original report by Francisco Vázquez, with a few minor additions and alterations. I have used the edition by Rafael Díaz, which only marks the more important changes.
mapping of the hidden essence of its protagonist, otherwise his lineage or blood: "Fue gobernador Pedro de Orsúa, de nación navarro; era caballero, y Señor de la Casa de Orsúa" (101). And insofar as Orsúa tends towards his natural place or condition, the narrative must end as it began: "Al principio desta relación se dijo cómo el gobernador Pedro de Orsúa era caballero, y del reino de Navarra; agora trataremos aquí algo de su persona, condición y costumbre" (129). In the organicist narrative, all is said beforehand, all enclosed as within a shell, at the moment of birth.

Orsúa, then, like the feudal knight, possesses an enduring essence, otherwise those personal qualities that define his being and that resist the ravages of fortune during the pilgrimage that is "this life." Any significant or "substantial" change, such as that which transforms Orsúa from an efficient to an inefficient leader, must be accounted for supernaturally. Thus is Orsúa's tragically thwarted nature attributed to Doña Inés' magical arts. Any hidalgo, such as Almesto, needs to believe in the organic reality of blood, of lineage, in order to exist. He reads the "signs" of Orsúa's failure, which he interprets with reference to a sacralized, albeit demoniacal order of witchcraft. Indeed, it is perhaps not going too far to see in Almesto's antagonism towards Ursúa and Inés something of the horror – understood not psychologically but "substantially" – of the hidalgo towards the private sphere. Within their domestic space, created in the depths of the Amazonian jungle, the two lovers play out the "madness" (as substantialism sees it) of Desire, a desire that simply re-enacts the damaging effect of exchange relations, as these prevail, amongst other places, within the realm of the market. In this way Orsúa simply fosters the kind of social relations that will eventually destroy him.

We would be surprised if the Almesto-Vázquez narrative entirely escaped the transition unscathed, and it does not. The events that it records are not, strictly speaking, "adventures" in the sense of those encountered by Amadís. Their narrative literalism ("yo, como testigo de vista," "yo vide por vista de ojos," etc.), to echo Rodríguez's remarks regarding the picaresque, does not forgive (Rodríguez 2001b: 153 ff), in the sense that the gaze drops to the level of lowly "things." In contrast to the Book of God, in which everything, but everything, has a meaning, the transitional narrative is carried along by chance: each member of the expeditionary force, once cut adrift, needs to rely on his native cunning and human wit. We may be a long way from the urban world of the picaresque, but the conquistador's itinerant quest for food, from master to master, preserves in its essential outlines the picaresque narrative structure.

In sum, Almesto's narrative exhibits all the profound contradictions of a transitional text. While it portrays a world divided between the spheres of the private and of the public ("públicamente se dijo," "se publicó la muerte," etc.),
the latter remained filled with "blood," "tyrants," "lies," "betrayal," "service," "words and deeds," "vassals," etc., in other words, with substantialist ideology. It is this ideology that, during the course of the expedition, is corroded from within, and finally overwhelmed, by individual attempts to engage in the activities of trade, commercial transaction and exchange. Significantly, Orsúa himself seems to have sensed the dangers of a bartering mentality that knows no fixed relationships, no natural, God-given positions: "[...] ciertos indios venían a vernos y a rescatar con nosotros, aunque si no era ascondidamente no osábamos rescatar con ellos, porque el Gobernador lo había mandado, no sé a qué efecto" (117-18). Possibly, he feared its destabilizing impact on "gente baja y de poca suerte y los más oficiales de oficios bajos" (123). The freedom of market exchange easily slides over into freedom of another kind – "luego tuvieron por apellido libertad" (126), which sweeps Ursúa away and replaces his world with Aguirre's denaturalized counterpart. That is why, wherever market relations prevail, those implicated in them will be found to teeter on the edge of "treachery." The concept of personal gain, it should never be forgotten, comes at a price.

**The Dynamics of Absolutism**

The narrative that the bourgeois critic weaves around Aguirre is sustained by familiar conceptual categories and follows a predictable course. It begins with a subject, the Christian warrior, opposed to an object or outside – the Absolutist State and the body of bureaucrats that it is spawning in increasing numbers. At this level, the Marañón rebellion is "unequivocally reactionary and anachronistic," containing "not a single progressive – let alone revolutionary – element" (Pastor 198). Replaying the causal chain backwards, the critic regresses towards the ultimate source of all cognition, otherwise the "personal consciousness" of Aguirre, towards his individual awareness of solitude and isolation, towards a "mind," "the pronoun I," sometimes an "intense feeling." In a final move, this individual subject, together with ill-defined "contradictions," is projected back onto the level of the collective, where it assumes all the trappings of a "baroque consciousness" or "world view."

The conceptual apparatus that the Marxist critic brings to bear on such "personal" issues is altogether different. It postulates contradictions, not between a subject and an object, or between a psychic inside and outside, but between operatives at the level of structural relations, within a complex social formation. Its ontology is not one of personal psychology but of general mechanisms that mesh together in the field of social life. The relations that it postulates hold between positions and practices, not between the individuals who occupy these positions or who conduct the practices. From such a perspective, "cults of personality" are not (or should not be) the issue:
attention needs to focus instead on the historical conditions of possibility of, say, class fractions. While the latter are sometimes envisaged, metaphorically, as collective actors, they consist in reality of existing sets of social relations that conflict with newer sets arising at specific historical conjunctures.

Such emphases produce an altogether different reading of the Marañón rebellion. True, like Pastor, it begins with the opposition between a residual feudalism and new types of social relations, but it refuses Pastor's subsequent psychologizing impulse. In matters of textual production, the Marxist argues, individual intentions are quite beside the point. What Almesto's narrative symptomizes is the conflict between, on the one hand, the parcelized sovereignty and conditional property relations characteristic of feudalism and, on the other, the centralized sovereignty and private property relations promoted by the Absolutist State and the urban bourgeoisie (see Resch 154-55). The result is a compromise formation, otherwise the "monetized caricature of personal fief" to which, allegedly, Aguirre so objected:

Decía este tirano que tenía prometido de no dar vida a ningún fraile de cuantos topase, salvo a los mercenarios, porque decía él que estos solos no se extremaban en los negocios de las Indias, y que había asismismo de matar a todos los presidentes y oidores, obispos y arzobispos y gobernadores, letrados y procuradores, cuantos pudiese haber a las manos, porque decía él que ellos y los frailes tenían destruidas las Indias; y que había de matar a todas las malas mujeres de su cuerpo, porque éstas eran causa de grandes males y escándalos en el mundo, e por una que el gobernador Orsúa había llevado consigo habían muerto a él y a otros muchos. (Almesto 166)

A structural, as opposed to psychological, explanation of Aguirre's flight down the Amazon will need to hold in play and explain the contradictions to which Almesto's text alludes. Clearly, the increasing distance from centers of colonial administration, on the part of the expeditionary force, promised shelter at a feudal economic level from an increasingly intrusive, centralizing state. That is to say, distance offered the possibility of independent pillage and conquest along traditional lines, perpetrated notoriously by "thugs on horseback." At the same time, textual evidence suggests that this same isolation also opened the door to market activity that escaped the feudal control operated by the state (cf. Lope de Vega's El villano en su rincón). As we have already suggested, trading contributed to the dissolution of "natural" bonds amongst the members of the expeditionary force and thereby to a crisis of legitimation. Following the murder of Orsúa, Fernando and Aguirre seek to offset this crisis not only by the feudal oath of allegiance but also – and in typically bourgeois fashion – by a signed "social" contract: 

"[...] que el que quisiése seguir la guerra del Pirú, en que él y sus compañeros
estaban determinados, habían de firmar y jurar de la seguir [...] bajo su fe y palabra [...]. Todos los del campo, y algunos, a más no poder, por temor que tenían que no los matasen, firmaron y juraron la guerra del Pirú, salvo algunos que, disimuladamente, se quedaron sin firmar" (Almesto 137-38). The contract constitutes an attempt to break the cycle of illegitimacy – for such it was bound to seem, to a substantialist mentality – set in motion by the "unnatural" denial of allegiance to Spain and of vassalage to King Philip.

In sum, the Almesto-Vázquez narrative illustrates only too well the tensions and contradictions within an Absolutist State that functioned not only as a feudal war machine but as a promotor of law as well. By the same token, it registers the extent to which mercantilism, the dominant economic philosophy of absolutism, reflected the contradictory adaptation of a feudal ruling class to an integrated market within the context of a predatory imperialism. In evidence throughout is not only a preeminently modern state interest in productivity, along with state intervention in the economy, but also the feudal idea of economic expansion by independent military conquest. Such complexities are only to be expected in a social formation in a state of transition between competing modes of production, and any analysis of them that aspires to theoretical adequacy needs to be framed accordingly.

The Epic versus the Novel
The Almesto-Vázquez narrative, we have said, is rooted in the literalism of the early picaresque, a generic form that lends itself to the narration of real, historical events, as opposed to knightly "adventures." As such, it is also perfectly adapted to the description of Aguirre's activities. But at the same time, we are also talking about a text that is firmly rooted in an organicist ideology, which, as we have already had cause to insist, equates the public sphere with the World, conceived in substantialist terms as a place of sin and chaos:

Y en todo este tiempo que digo, no contaban suceso malo ni contrario que les pudiese acaecer, ni consideraban el gran poder de Dios, que aunque por algún tiempo permita los semejantes crueles tiranos para castigo de los pecados de los hombres, al fin los castiga y da el pago que sus crueldades y malas obras merecen; y menos se acordaban que, aunque su Majestad el rey D. Felipe, nuestro señor, esté con su persona lejos de estas partes de los indios, tiene en ellas muchos y leales servidores y ministros. (141)

In contrast to Lazarillo, who is simply poor, Aguirre, like subsequent picaresque heroes, such as Guzmán, is presented as a "sinner." In the context of a resurgent feudalism, the picaresque is interpreted as a sinful deformation. Aguirre, like the new picaro, tends towards sin substantially, as a result of his
fallen nature – he is bad because he "likes" to be bad.\footnote{What Rodríguez says of Guzmán de Alfarache could well be said of Jornada de Omagua y Dorado: "Así podemos comprender por qué el Guzmán se construye como un texto donde forzosamente debe aparecer una escritura 'literal' presentada siempre (como ocurría en los Autos Sacramentales o en los libros hagiográficos) como la transparencia de otra escritura interior más verdadera; de ahí la referida estructura 'dual' del libro y su alternancia entre 'narración' y 'digresiones' morales" (Rodríguez 2001b: 221).} And, as Aguirre himself confesses, it is the sheer weight of his fallen organic body that destroys him in the end, insofar as, under any organicist regime, it is this body that rots the soul:

Yo no niego, ni todos estos señores que aquí están, que no salimos del Pirú para el río del Marañón a descubrir a poblar, dellos cojos, y dellos sanos, y por los muchos trabajos que hemos pasado en Pirú, cierto, a hallar tierra, por miserable que fuera, paráramos, por dar descanso a estos tristes cuerpos que están con más costuras que ropas de romeros: mas la falta de lo que digo, y muchos trabajos que habemos pasado, hacemos cuenta que vivimos de gracia, según el río y la mar y hambre nos han amenazado con la muerte.\footnote{Pastor interprets such passages as privileging baroque "experience," on a personal level. We suggest an alternative reading, to the effect that Aguirre, like the protagonist of Góngora's \textit{Soledades}, not to mention Ercilla in the closing sections of \textit{La Araucana}, is a residual relic of an earlier ideology, animism, whose "yo," under pressure from a resurgent substantialism, has become a "pilgrim." The animist journey of the soul was always one that involved denuding, cleansing, otherwise "extraction" from matter. It is Aguirre's misfortune, against the background of a resurgent feudalism, to find that process totally blocked. His fate, accordingly, was to "bog down" in his own corrupt body.}

While Pastor is appropriately alert to a subjective presence in Almesto's narrative, she predictably – such is the pressure of the bourgeois ideological unconscious – equates what is, in effect, an embryonic subjectivity – that secreted by animism at the mercantile stage of capitalist development – with its full-blooded, modern counterpart. In the process, fundamentally substantialist components are misrecognized and cast anachronistically in a modern guise. Particularly symptomatic in this respect is Pastor's interpretation of an obscure passage in which Aguirre comments on appearances that cannot be "saved":

Es río grande y temeroso: tiene de boca ochenta leguas de agua dulce, y no como dicen: por muchos brazos tiene grandes bajos, y ochocientas leguas de desierto, sin género de poblado, como tu Majestad lo verá por
una relación que hemos hecho bien verdadera. En la derrota que corrimos, tiene seis mil islas. ¿Sabe Dios cómo nos escapamos deste lago tan temeroso! Avísote, Rey y Señor, no proveas ni consentas que se haga alguna armada para este río tan mal afortunado, porque en fe de cristiano te juro, Rey y Señor, que si vinieren cien mil hombres, ninguno escape, porque la relación es falsa, y no hay en el río otra cosa, que desesperar, especialmente para los chapetones de España. (200)

Pastor reads this passage as enacting the "gradual replacement of an objective geographical mode of characterization by one that is subjective and emotional" (Pastor 202). In other words, as marking a crucial stage in the transition from an epic narrative that privileges the exterior to a baroque narrative directed towards the exploration of the "inner self." Now Aguirre, it is true, is as much located within the new literalism as is Almesto: hence his destruction of the sacralized ideology of natural places, together with his promotion of the arbitrary, artificial and interchangeable. There is also the fact that his text foregrounds the "logic of the subject" – significantly, his thoughts are couched in the form of a "letter," a genre that embodies the notion of a voice originating in a unique individuality. Having said which, this animist presence – and this is what Pastor cannot "see" – is subverted by a regressive substantialism. By this we mean not simply that Aguirre writes to a "lord," whom he imagines himself as "serving," as a faithful "vassal," but that the text is animated by a substantialist unconscious that compels its author to think in terms of the technical means of reading and writing. This textual obsession is not symptomatic of its author's modernity but, on the contrary, of his continuing attachment to the feudal ideological matrix. To construct a Book (in imitation of the Sacred Book or the Book of Nature) is the determining image, in the last instance, of feudal literature.

Let us pause to consider more precisely the nature of such feudalizing exegetics. What Rodríguez says of Don Quixote is perfectly applicable to Aguirre, namely that he is perfectly able – pace generations of Kantian critics – to distinguish objects for what they objectively are, namely rivers as rivers (and windmills as windmills). It is just that rivers can, and should, be read, as something else, just as windmills can be read as giants. There is nothing mysterious about this, just as, within the context of the Catholic mass, there is nothing mysterious about wine being wine and the blood of Christ. Aguirre's real dilemma, again like Don Quixote's, is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to read the world as a book, which meant that he can no longer live according to organicist values. In its pure form, substantialism finds it

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14 To quote Rodríguez: "La intervención de la literalidad narrativa sobre la problemática organicista supone, pues, tanto la puesta en solfa de la dualidad inscrita en el organicismo como la justificación de cualquier
difficult to accommodate chance because chance is precisely what a full interpretation of God's signs eliminates. This changes when, as in Aguirre, organization is forced to recognize an opposition between appearances and the spirit, and between the inside and outside, otherwise the public and the private. The organicist feels called upon spontaneously to heal the breach. His substantialist ideological unconscious has been corroded by the knowledge, bequeathed by such forebears as Lazarillo, that all codes lie. The Amazonian jungle was a nightmare text in which appearances could no longer be "saved," in the medieval manner, and from which Aguirre found it impossible to awake. It is hard to imagine a more feudal existential crisis.

The Almesto-Vázquez narrative itself, let us note, within which Aguirre's text is contained, cannot remain wholly unaffected by the rebel's ideological crisis. As we have already noted, what begins as a literal text, recounting "real" events, is progressively undercut, until it assumes the proportions of a confessional text. Finally, in other words, Almesto prefers to follow his own unconscious and not accept the new relations. Digressions act as a necessary "guide to reading," in the sense that Almesto mediates between two languages, that of appearances and that of God. The result is a moral treatise, as opposed to, say, a humanistic letter or dialogue: "[...] y así murió [Aguirre] sin confesión [...] habiendo dicho infinitas herejías, sin ninguna muestra ni señal de arrepentimiento ni de cristiandad; por donde se puede entender qué tal estará su ánima, pues murió hereje descomulgado, sin haber absolución de sus excomuniones" (220). Such passages blend, almost imperceptibly, into the text's literalism, as in the late picaresque, except in one respect: the narrative structure that they impose, namely that of the Fall, the Promise, and Damnation (as opposed to a possible Redemption), lends itself less to the narration of actual historical events than the resurrection and reproduction of the past in the present. Which explains why chronological time is finally surrendered to scatalogical time, with its images of the Last Judgement.

Of course, the Jornada's literalism continues throughout to subvert the organicist logic whose interests the text would otherwise unreservedly promote. For when all is said and done, what is being related is the "life" of Aguirre, and lives are always "private," as a result of which substantialist mechanisms are being dismantled just as rapidly as they are constructed. Like Aguirre, as he contemplates the Amazon, Almesto must grapple with a situation in which the world has seemingly been robbed of its transparency. The signs of things have ceased to function as signatures, which correspond with the World. In the new disorder, language has been cut adrift, so as to assume an independent density.

dualidad siempre que esté anclada en (y segregada desde) el organicismo" (Rodríguez 2001b: 322-23).
and opacity. The substantialist can only retrieve this situation by attributing the lack of correspondence to the work of the Devil, a device already deployed to explain the fate of Orsúa. But such a solution can never be totally persuasive or adequate to the new disorder. Feudal mentalities may well fantasize about the possibilities of regressing to feudalism, but the success of such an enterprise was never very likely.

*Non-Organicist Aristotelianism: Fray Diego Durán*

While all texts during the transition are ideologically over-determined, they tend towards a particularly complex discursivity from the mid-16th century onwards. Indeed, Rodríguez has distinguished a special ideological variant, otherwise a "non-organicist" Aristotelianism that characterizes both literary and non-literary texts during this period onwards (Rodríguez 1990: 349). Originating in Italy, it spread to Spain, where it is to be found, for example, in the "rationality" that, as liberal critics have otherwise established, characterizes the work of Cervantes. Rodríguez, needless to say, theorizes its appearance in terms of his own conceptual categories: "[…] desaparecido prácticamente el animismo (en tanto que estructura aceptada y legitimada), sólo un 'aristotelismo' no organicista parece ser posible frente al organicismo feudal" (349). Non-organicist Aristotelianism, his argument runs, is able to assume the already existing rationality of strictly Scholastic extraction at the same time as it is able to cater, for all practical purposes, for a residual humanistic bias, and thereby grease those mercantilist relations that continue to exist at the economic level. In order to test the legitimacy of these claims, let us turn to Fray Diego Durán's *La historia de las Indias*. We will begin by considering the following description of the eagle whose appearance, at a crucial point in their wanderings, traditionally determined the destiny of the Mexica people.

[…] y andando de una parte en otra, divisaron el tunal, y encima de él, el águila, con las alas extendidas hacia los rayos del sol, tomando el calor de él y el frescor de la mañana, y en las uñas tenía un pájaro muy galano, de plumas muy preciadas y resplandecientes. Ellos, como la vieron, humilláronsele casi haciéndole reverencia, como a cosa divina. El águila, como los vido, se les humilló, bajando la cabeza a todas partes a donde ellos estaban.

Ellos, viendo humillar el águila y que ya habían visto lo que deseaban, emprezaron a llorar y a hacer grandes extremos y ceremonias y visajes y meneos, en señal de alegría y contento, y en agimiento de gracias […]. (Durán: II, 48)

From our own standpoint, this is a useful entry point into Durán's text in that it immediately invites comparisons with the crow that, as we have seen, presided over an equally auspicious moment in the career of the Cid. What
immediately strikes us about Durán is his ability to "read" the eagle's appearance anagogically and, by the same token, empathize with its reception by the Mexica, evinced in their rituals and celebration. Everything is treated as if were part of "la misma Escritura," whose signatures were inhabited by the voice of God (II, 15-16). However alien the indigenous culture, at the descriptive level, Durán found himself perfectly in tune with its enunciative logic, which was none other than that of substantialism. From the standpoint of the latter, it is immaterial that the signatures involved are recorded orally, graphically (in the form of "pinturas"), or otherwise. They are still "Writings," in the sense that they are, to use Rodríguez's phrase (applied in another context), "unitariamente dual."

It follows, therefore, that Durán is haunted less by the disparities between his own and Mexica culture, overwhelming though these could be when it came to such matters as human sacrifice, than by the similarities. How were these similarities to be explained? Quite simply, by earlier historical contact between the two cultures, as a result of the Jewish diaspora, a view with which, in broad terms, Aztec culture itself appeared to collude and to which indigenous legends lent support. The advantage of the Jewish connection was that it also helped explain the "unnatural" transformation or degeneration that the same cultural material had undergone during the course of time (cf. I, 35). For the substantialist mentality, let us recall, all change corresponds with a fall from grace, attributable, in the last instance, to the work of the Devil.

But this is only half of the picture, the substantialist half. The incommensurability between Durán's (European) culture and its indigenous counterpart does begin to bite, and with a vengeance, where non-organic Aristotelianism exhibits features that cater for animist interests. The influence of animism, we have seen, materializes in the presence of literalism, and invariably involves some kind of ideological "break," such as occurs at those moments when Durán is called upon to legitimate his interpretations. This he will do not by appealing to the authority of the Lord (or indeed any lord), but to the evidence of his own senses ("puedo afirmar, como testigo de vista," "Y vide afirmar, demás de haberlos visto en la pintura, [...]" etc.) or that of some other individual of equally reliable credibility ("me certificó un conquistador [...]" etc.). The same spirit lies behind the novelistic episodes that fall naturally and repeatedly from Durán's pen: "Porque sé digo verdad, quiero contar lo que en cierto pueblo me aconteció [...]", "Yo como la vi y la experiencia me ha abierto los ojos [...]"; "A mí aconteció lo que aquí contaré: Salí una mañana de mi convento [...]" etc. Such literalism extends to Durán's observations on the behavior of the bird known to the Mexica as the "huitzitzilin" and to the Spaniards as the "zunzón," which, their mythological, ritualistic dimension
notwithstanding, still demonstrate the operations of the eye that sees the thing:

Y porque he visto este pájaro con mis propios ojos en el invierno, metido el pico en la hendidura de un ciprés y asido a una ramita a él, como muerto, que no se bullía, y dejando señalado el lugar, volví a la primavera, cuando los árboles retoñecen y tornan a brotar, y no lo hallé. Lo oso poner aquí y creo lo que los indios de él me dijeron, y alabo al todopoderoso y omnipotente Dios, que es poderoso para hacer otras mayores misterios. (1, 19)

Modern scholarship, in its enthusiasm to emphasize cultural otherness, has seen in Spanish ethnocentrism evidence of a covert, and at times not so covert, attempt, on the part of an imperial power, to reconfigure the culture of the conquered, in conformity with its own. That such forces were at work is undeniable, of course, as indeed was the natural tendency to misrecognize strange artifacts and objects in terms of familiar categories. At the same time, we believe that the current preoccupation with reproducing, phenomenologically, the self-awareness of indigenous peoples, with the corresponding emphasis upon cultural incommensurability, has obscured the very real structural resemblances between otherwise autonomous cultures. The transition from lineage to tributary modes, it is worth recalling, was a global phenomenon, evinced by shared productive modes, of the kind that depend upon the capacity of the ruling class to limit the economic and political strength of other fractions and classes, in the process of extracting surpluses from peasant populations (see Haldon 157-200 and passim). Prevailing forces of production, it should be added, impose limits where they do not determine, in any absolute sense, the empirical forms taken by prevailing social relations. By the same token, they impose structural similarities between cultures, to be explained as the product not of direct influence but of cultures working within the constraints of common modes of production. From all of which it would follow that the processes of "subjection" and "vasallage," which Durán observes within indigenous society, were grounded in the existence of a global tributary mode; and that the coincidence between, on the one hand, indigenous categories and, on the other, "grandes," "duques," "condes," "hidalgos," "gente plebeya," etc. not to mention "pechos," "tributos," "servicios," "galardones," "Mercedes," etc, was anything but the fevered product of the Spaniard's own imagination. But these, and other such issues, raise the whole question of cultural (in)commensurability, and it is to this that we now turn.
Re-Considering the Other Ways

While anxious to stay abreast of recent developments in their discipline, colonialists working within Hispanic studies have demonstrated a commendable caution in their recent reception of critical insights forged within postcolonial theory. And not unreasonably so, in that a body of theory refined for the purpose of investigating (largely British) imperialist expansion in the modern world can be but obliquely relevant to a Spanish imperial venture that took place in the transition from pre-modernity to modernity. However, as we have argued above, this has not saved these same scholars from succumbing to certain idealist prejudices, of the kind that have afflicted colonial studies in general, most notably with respect to the notion of subjectivity. One further example, to be considered below, is the unalloyed zeal with which colonialists have recently promoted the notion of incommensurability. We specifically have in mind the situation in which an ill-defined notion of a disembodied Other has been opposed to an equally ill-defined notion of European unity. Our approach will be to diverge sharply from such modish intellectual fashions through a detailed consideration of certain classic texts of the Conquest, notably those by Columbus, Las Casas, Fernández de Oviedo and Cabeza de Vaca, against which, in their wide-ranging but determinate and finite collectivity, critical judgement can be appropriately assessed and evaluated. Hispanic culture, it will be argued, offers a double challenge to theoreticians of (in)commensurability in that while, by definition, Hispanic imperialism presupposes an encounter between non-European and European cultures, it also raises with respect to the latter the specter of an internal break, between the premodern and modern. This premodern/modern opposition has faded from view in more recent scholarship, which has largely abandoned analytic methodology, at the level of modes of production, for a descriptive preoccupation with the sheer variety of cultural production. The effect has been to foreground cultural incommensurability between the native and Spanish cultures, viewed against the backdrop of an allegedly unitary European tradition. Our aim, by way of contrast, will be to emphasize the wide range of structural features that social formations rooted in the same (European or non-European) tributary mode of production have in common, while at the same time highlighting the conflictual nature of a European formation in transition between two contrasting modes.

There exists an unashamedly political dimension to our debate but one which, we hasten to add, others first placed on the agenda. Let us recall, in this respect, Greenblatt's prefatory remarks to Marvelous Possessions: "In any case,
after the momentous events of 1989 and 1990, it is easier than at any time since the late fifteenth century to perceive all of the ways that Europe has a common culture and destiny" (Greenblatt 9). Within a decade or so, it became rather harder to view the Old World in quite the same way. We have in mind not only the resurgence of regional nationalisms and the outbreak of racist and xenophobic violence throughout Europe, but the "terrorism" that has, more recently, rocked the First World. From the early 1990s, if not before, it was clear to some that while the emphasis upon Otherness had undoubtedly served its purposes in the past, in the struggle against neo-colonialism, the more recent preoccupation with ethnic identities lent itself to political reaction of the ugliest, most nightmarish kind. One outcome, within the academy, was the reinstatement of the unfinished project of the Enlightenment, in those areas where it had been prematurely abandoned (see Norris). By the same token, the celebration of cultural differences becomes much more problematic in situations that find "servants of their Lord" (also serfs of their lords), originating in the "evil" heartland of the Middle East and Afghanistan, pitted in literal and ideological battle against the "free subjects" of the "civilized world."

Some re-considerations, then, are urgently required. Has not postmodernism been guilty of reducing the problem of signification to intra-discursive relations in abstraction from reference? While science is not an ideology-free zone, is it not absurd to claim that knowledge is nothing more than what consensus decrees? If our knowledge cannot be privileged, what makes the knowledge of others immune to criticism, even if they belong to another culture? In the absence of some kind of ethical naturalism, how is it possible to invoke shared, extra-discursive human capacities for suffering? Our aim is to address these and related issues from within the context of Spanish imperialism. We will begin by assaying an indirect approach.

**Along Other Lines**

There is, we are bound to agree with Serge Gruzinski, something profoundly arresting about the Codex of Tlatelolco, with its stark juxtaposition of two contrasting styles. On the one hand, the remorselessly two-dimensional figures of Mexica inspiration, whose bold contours hold unknown psychic forces at bay; on the other, the central figures of the viceroy Luis de Velasco and the Archbishop of Mexico Alonso de Montufar, betraying in every line the reach of their original Italian models, looking strangely adrift within a spatial frame that respond to the exigencies of the native norms. Likewise, it is hard to resist the logic of an argument that finds in such phenomena proof of the existence of social instability and dynamism (Gruzinski 284). But it is precisely at this point, when we are called upon to question the anthropological myth of social
integration, that, by a simple inversion of the binary code, we are treated to the spectacle of a strangely uniform European civilization: "When the Italian quattrocento jiggled with modes of representation, using old or new systems according to the objects being painted, it drew from the same cultural source, in the same society; it took its inspiration from different but, despite everything, related sources" (62).

Doubtless, there are virtues to such inversions: by turning the tables, a whole series of imperial powers that for centuries unhesitatingly, and with impunity, lumped the most disparate cultures together under the guise of the "Other" are now cast as strikingly uniform. The tactic is one that, for example, Stephen Greenblatt, turns to good effect. Thus, while explicitly recognizing the diversity of national cultures and religious faiths that Europeans took to their colonies, the author of *Marvelous Possessions* also chooses to emphasize the communality of these same cultures when the moment came to juxtapose them to their colonial counterparts: "For European mimetic capital, though diverse and internally competitive, easily crossed the boundaries of nation and creed, and it therefore seemed to me a mistake to accord those boundaries an absolute respect" (Greenblatt 8). National and religious ideologies aside, the argument runs, Europeans combined to form an impressively unified "mobile technology of power," which indiscriminately subjugated all the territories with which it came into contact (8-9). At all points, the reflex is always the same. European diversity is conceded — "so many different and conflicting ways of seeing and describing the world" (23) — only to be retracted: "Europeans deployed a lumbering, jerry-built, but immensely powerful mimetic machinery, the inescapably mediating agent not only of possession but of simple contact with the other" (23).

Such a view, we believe, comes easily to writers whose knowledge of "Renaissance" culture is not matched by a knowledge of its "medieval" counterpart, and who, moreover, tend, by virtue of their scholarly formation, to view Europe through the prism of English culture. England's entry into modernity, it is pertinent to recall, was notably idiosyncratic. Centralization was achieved at a relatively earlier stage — by the 16th century national life was heavily focused on London, which functioned as a market for an agricultural system increasingly organized along capitalist lines. Likewise, at the political level, the effects of England's bourgeois revolution were only partially reversed by the Restoration (Wood 1999: 54-57). Students whose mind-set is dictated by this scenario are ill-prepared to grapple with European absolutism, particularly in the form that it assumed in Spain, whose transition from feudalism to capitalism was notoriously extended and fraught with every manner of setbacks, reversals and feudal revivals.

Bearing this in mind, let us return to the Codex of Tlatelolco, to
Consider again the principles of perspective and proportion, or rather their absence, which dictate its design. On the evidence of this and other such artifacts, Mexico culture seems to have viewed this world as little more than an elaborate dream, whose appearances, deceptive in their essence, needed to be scrutinized for evidence of the spiritual reality that lay beyond them. "Despite its fragility and inherent instability, this uncertain world remains a text: defective, incomplete, chronically mutable to human eyes, yet to be deciphered as a painted book is deciphered by those with the skill to ascertain something of the enduring sacred world it imperfectly mirrors" (Clendinnen 215). Now while this cultural baggage clashes with the literalism of the Quattrocento, which "looked" upon a world suddenly become sufficient unto itself, and which required no other-worldly legitimation, it would, as Clendinnen herself concedes, have been very intelligible to "our ancestors" who, with a passion comparable to that of the Mexica, focused upon "mere" appearances within a world that, notwithstanding its fallen nature, furnishes us with intimations of eternity (223).

Clendinnen never explains exactly what she means by "our ancestors," but her random comment is most appropriately taken as referring to that "other" scholastic, medieval culture from which Renaissance humanists struggled to take their distance. At the very least, the existence of cultural universals is implied that bound premodern European culture to its Mexico counterpart, and that distanced both from their modern equivalent. Equally revealing in this respect are Todorov's comments on the Florentine Codex regarding the anonymity of Mexico art. While brave warriors are mentioned, even by name, they never become "characters," in the sense of assuming individual psychologies (Todorov 119). Todorov elaborates: "It may seem bold to link the introduction of perspective to the discovery and conquest of America, yet the relation is there [...]" (121). The insight is an intriguing one and, we believe, fully justified. But much needed to be done, notably by way of dismantling such patently idealist concepts as "medieval" and "Renaissance," before the insight could be substantiated. In the absence of such theoretical labor, we are left with a nebulous attachment to "aristocratic values," mediated through a fascination with money, "the universal equivalent of all spiritual values," in the transition to something called the "modern mentality" (142-43). Despite their Marxist residue, these concepts look suspiciously like free-floating spirits, cut adrift from any material basis in history.

The simplicity of such a conceptual apparatus is its only virtue: for explanatory purposes, it is virtually useless. But we will not go into such issues at this point. Our principal concern in this section has been to highlight the existence of a dominant feudal ideology, based on the notion of service to one's lord/Lord, which, following Rodriguez, we earlier termed substantialism.
"Substantialism" is a term that Rodríguez took from Gaston Bachelard (Rodríguez 1990: 115) but defined crucially in a far narrower sense. For the Spaniard, substantialism was not, as it was for the French writer, a general term that served to define the belief in "living spirits" as animating the whole of nature, but an ideology that objectively greased the social mechanisms whereby the social surplus was extracted from a peasant population. This feudal ideology was locked in conflict with nascent bourgeois, mercantilist ideologies, notably animism, a concept again taken from Bachelard by Rodríguez (116) but redefined by him in a more historically localized sense, with reference to the emergence of the "beautiful soul" or (proto-)free subject, a notion that, we will be arguing, became the ideological motor of a Spanish war machine that, ultimately, spelt the inevitable downfall of the Indian cultures. On September 11th, 2001, to tug, incidentally, upon one thread of our narrative, a dormant substantialism will suddenly irrupt upon the contemporary scene, to become once again locked in conflict with animism, which had long since mutated into liberalism, the dominant ideology of the "free world."

**Constructing a Bridgehead**

Let us begin where Stephen Greenblatt begins his *Marvelous Possessions*, a work that has achieved something like classic status in colonial studies, namely with a section taken from Columbus' logbook for Tuesday, December 18th, 1492:

> [...] yo vide que le agradaba un arambel que yo tenia sobre mi cama; yo se lo di y unas cuentas muy buenas de ámbar, que yo traia al pescueço, y unos çapatos colorados y una almaraxa de agua de azahar, de que quedó tan contento que fue maravilla; y él y su ayo y consejeros llevan grande pena porque no me entendían, ni yo a ellos. Con todo, le cognosei que me dixo que si me compliese algo de aquí, que toda la isla estava a mi mandar. Yo enbié por unas cuentas mías adonde por un señal tengo un exçelente de oro en que esta<n> esculpido<s> Vuestras Altezas y se lo amostré, y le dixe otra vez como ayer que Vuestras Altezas mandavan y señoreavan todo lo mejor del mundo, y que no avía tan grandes príncipes, y le mostré las vanderas reales y las otras de la Cruz, de que él tuvo en mucho, "y ¡qué grandes señores serían Vuestras Altezas!" dezía él contra sus consejeros, "pues de tal lexos y del cielo me avían enbiado hasta aquí sin miedo". Y otras cosas muchas se passaron que yo no entendía, salvo que bien vía que todo tenía a grande maravilla. (Greenblatt 135)

Greenblatt's reading of the above passage is clear enough: Columbus moves with unseemly haste from his confession of incomprehension to the barefaced expression of his intention to expropriate the island, by wilfully misconstruing the presumably innocent, ritualistic invitation, on the part of the
local cacique, to "make himself at home" (cp. modern Spanish "estás en tu casa"). The tactic is tantamount to "a palpable lie" (Greenblatt 13) to justify what is, by any reckoning, inexcusable behavior.

Now while this may be effective (although also debatable) as a forensic exercise, to establish the "guilt" of an "individual" party, it is enormously trivializing as an interpretive exercise. To begin with, despite Greenblatt's quasi-materialist attention to Columbus' "signifying practice," the little court-room drama is played out in terms of classical liberal values, values that circulate in a realm above and beyond all distinctions of historical time or place, and that New Historicism otherwise prides itself on problematizing. The view of Columbus that ensues is simply a construction out of Greenblatt's own discourse. The accusation, it has to be said, is unlikely to faze a New Historical criticism that, in the tradition of Foucault and other doyens of postmodernism, rejects claims to a greater or lesser access to the truth of things. Given such epistemological relativism, success goes to the "rhetorical device" (132) that proves practically most effective, judged in terms of its suasive force. At the same time, the obliteration of any distinction between past and present cannot help but prove troubling to a discourse that prides itself on promoting respect for the other.

From our point of view, Columbus' secret motivations in his conduct with the Indian cacique, whether conscious or otherwise, are in the last instance quite beside the point, as is the kangaroo court staged by Greenblatt. The key to the above passage, we believe, and to Columbus' texts in general, lies in the notion of "reading." The notion, it has to be said, is not entirely alien to Greenblatt (88), who takes it on board from Todorov (Todorov 15 ff). Todorov, however, rather confuses the issue by fudging the distinction between the "reading" of God's signatures inscribed in His Creation and its secular counterpart, the scrutiny of natural signs such as clouds, birds, seaweed, and even the scars on the bodies of Indians, for their "telltale" value. We are indebted for our understanding of the concept to the work of Juan Carlos Rodríguez and Álvaro Salvador, for whom allegorical "reading," after the manner practised by Columbus, is dictated by the pressure of an ideological unconscious secreted at the level of prevailing social relations. Understood in such terms, reading necessarily transcends individual intentions: "cotidianamente se está realizando en la Península en relación no sólo con los mundos nuevos y desconocidos, sino con la realidad en general" (Rodríguez and Salvador 14). Columbus confronts any situation, not least of all his first encounters with the inhabitants of the New World, as a reader, a role that is determined by his status as the servant of his lords, the Catholic Monarchs, who are themselves God's representatives in this world. Everything was contained within the dominions of these lords just as every object was received
as a signature of their presence in the creation: "Colón no hizo el más mínimo intento de 'nueva comprensión' ideológica hacia aquel nuevo mundo que intentaba vivir. Aquello eran las Indias porque las Indias tenían su lugar concreto y exacto en la lectura del mundo que hasta ese momento se había hecho en Europa; lugar ideológico, político y, por supuesto, económico" (Rodríguez and Salvador 17).

To locate further the precise difference between Rodríguez and Salvador's reading and Greenblatt's, let us return again to the "presentist" bias that we discerned in the latter. Obviously, the process of reading necessarily entails a hermeneutic moment, when we first confront a text, in an effort progressively to disengage its core meaning. But we believe, along with Rodríguez and Salvador, that a reading only becomes "symptomatic," in the Althusserian sense, when it is seen as grounded in a "problematic," as opposed to the experiential world of, say, Columbus. By problematic, Althusser understood the "latent" structure of a text, otherwise the principle of meaning that conditions the text, as opposed to the "manifest" content embodied in the specific propositions that the text asserts, or in the intentions of its author (see Althusser and Balibar). Any reading presupposes a dialectic between the problematic whose structural principles govern the reading, and the structural principles that constitute the latent structure of the text under analysis. That latent structure is determined by a specific set of social relations and the dominant ideology secreted by these relations, which, in the case of Columbus, is substantialism, based on the notion of the world as a book. Rather than looking upon the world, in a literal sense, the substantialist, we have seen, reads the world, attempts to decipher the mysteries written in it. Names, qua signatures, are not applied to objects from the outside; rather they are revealed within, through a process of exegesis. Commentaries may vary, but there is only one Book.

The claim, then, is that the scenario staged by Greenblatt, in which an individual stands accused and is subsequently convicted of mendacity, is anachronistic in the extreme, and needs radically to be reconstructed. Our contrasting view is that Columbus operates "unconsciously" within a historically localized ideological structure that is characterized not by "free subjects" but by "servants of the lord/Lord." The words uttered by the Indians, in the context of this structure, must be commensurable with the Admiral's own since both are viewed as translations of one and the same underlying text, otherwise the world as a book. Of course, the predictable riposte from New Historians will be that we have simply produced an alternative, more or less rhetorically efficacious set of images, narratives and representations. They will doubtless be supported by others attached to the Foucauldian notion that truth is simply a function of various languages,
narratives or power differentials. Our next task, therefore, will be to renegotiate the relation between epistemological relativism and ontological realism so as to allow for the possibility of objectively evaluating the New Historical and Althusserian readings as we have contrasted them above.

Incommensurability and Cultural Syncretism

We claimed earlier to have commenced our discussion at the same point as Greenblatt, namely with an excerpt from Columbus' log entry of December 18th, 1492, but in the most literal sense this was not true. We began not with the English translation, after the manner of Greenblatt, but with the original Spanish version. The respective passages are not without their semantic variance. Consider, for example, the concluding phrases, which read in Spanish: "Y otras cosas mucha se passaron que yo no entendía, salvo que bien vía que todo tenía a grande maravilla" (Colón 135); whereas the English reads: "... and many other things passed between them that I did not understand, except that I saw well that they took everything at great wonder" (Greenblatt 13). An alternative translation might read: "... and many other things occurred that I did not understand, except that I saw well that he took everything at great wonder". Obviously, a person who was bilingually qualified to judge the two versions would be able to evaluate them against the original. Does "se" mark reciprocity (between them) or simply verbal intransitivity? Does not the singular form of the verb refer to the "king"? Or perhaps Greenblatt's translator properly attends to what the author "obviously" intended, namely the plurality of the Indians, taken as a group? etc.

Such indeterminacies may be deemed to be of little consequence, although the translation quoted by Greenblatt, when closely scrutinized, is manifestly plagued by them.\(^{15}\) Their importance in the present context is that they highlight the whole issue of linguistic indeterminacy, as it affects translation, and of cultural and theoretical incommensurability, which will be of central importance in Greenblatt's discussion of Spanish imperialism. Greenblatt's position is emphatically one of cultural relativism: "There is no original, no authorizing self, no authentic text; all texts are translations of fragments that are themselves translations. Still less is there an original experience, an extra-linguistic meaning, a primal act of eyewitnessing" (Greenblatt 48-49). The emphasis throughout New Historicism will be upon

\(^{15}\) Thus, for example, does the phrase "de que quedó tan contento" refer to the act of giving (on Columbus' part) or to the things given, as the English "with which he was so pleased" would seem to suggest? Does not "si me compliese algo de aquí" simply mean "if I needed anything from here," as opposed to "if something from this place pleased me" (as in the English translation), a phrase which resonates with ulterior motives (and so favors Greenblatt's overall reading); and does "de que él tuvo en mucho" refer to the actual objects exhibited by Columbus to the Indians (as the English translation suggests) or signify that the king was overwhelmed or intimidated by the spectacle per se?
"distinct discourses," each equipped with its own "discursive regime," characterized by a specialized terminology and marked off by strict procedural boundaries. From which follows, among other things, the preoccupation with the "radical difference" (14), of the kind that characterizes the encounters between native and European from the beginning and which explains their "astonishing singularity" (54). Quite simply the Indians "are not in the same universe of discourse" as the Spaniards (59), to the extent that both groups constitute two epistemic communities, travelling, so to speak, along different semantic rails, destined never to meet.

What precisely are the consequences of such an extreme form of conventionalism? We have already had occasion to comment upon one, namely the drawing together of the past and present through a process of aestheticization, one consequence of which is to reduce the past to an effect of textuality. Also in evidence is a judgemental relativism, which maintains that there are no rational grounds for choosing between conflicting beliefs or indeed between conflicting conceptual technologies. Pressed to its extreme, such relativism seemingly involves the absurd denial that the discovery of writing prompted a qualitative transformation of human communication, which facilitated the kind of conceptual discourse and cumulative acquisition of knowledge impossible to cultures still restricted to non-alphabetic communication. But perhaps the most far-reaching consequence of New Historicism's hermeneutic bias is what Roy Bhaskar (1978) has described as the "epistemic fallacy," whereby problems of ontology are reduced to questions of epistemology, on the basis that human agents both transform and reproduce social structures that, of their very nature, are fluid and mobile in form. The result is to collapse the intransitive existence of causal structures into the transitive dimension of practice and knowledge.

Epistemological relativism is "fallacious" for the simple reason that human thought will have an ontology, and when it is explicitly denied one, will either secrete one surreptitiously or, sooner or later, degenerate into methodological solipsism and philosophical incoherence: "[H]ow is it possible for one system of representation to establish contact with a different system?" (Greenblatt 91). Quite simply, it is impossible, other than through a common world of reference, as the relativist well knows. But the latter's complacency before what is an undeniable fact is misplaced, in that the denial of such a commonality leads the relativist into every kind of performative contradiction. On what grounds, we wonder, given the epistemological bias of his argument, does Greenblatt justify his reference to the "miserable chronicles of colonial exploitation of violence" (105); to the "fathomless cynicism" of official Spanish reports (95), etc.? Moreover, does not the suggestion that Cortés' pious admonitions stick in "the hypocrite's throat" (138) rest on a little more
than competing rhetorical phrase regimes? And, finally, is there not a discrepancy, which Greenblatt never resolves, between the sense of moral outrage that undergirds his work and the New Historical conviction that textuality goes all the way down (cf. Norris 69)?

The philosophical, as opposed to moral, incoherence of the relativist's position has been effectively exposed by Roy Bhaskar, whose arguments we will be following closely at this point. To say of two translations, two theories, two cultures, etc. that they are incommensurable (that they clash) is to suppose that they share an area of referential overlap. And by the same token: to say that they are incommensurable is to presuppose that the translations, etc. have been sufficiently identified by a subject able to substantiate that claim, judged on the basis of that person's bilingual competence. Our aim is not to deny the very real, often insurmountable, problems that attend issues of translation. Manifestly, there will be areas of one language that cannot be said by another, subject to variations in space and time, nor are we recommending a regression to some kind of epistemological fundamentalism. Further to which, we readily concede, following Bhaskar (Bhaskar 1986: 72), the principle of epistemic relativity, to the effect that all beliefs are socially produced, so that knowledge is transient and neither truth-values nor criteria of rationality exist outside historical time. Our argument is simply that human societies are bound together by a common principle, insofar as culturally remote people, if they reason at all, may be assumed to reason pretty much as we do, always allowing for the fact that commonalities "acquire their specificity in, and rarely manifest themselves save through, some or other historically determined social form" (89).

But of course, the existence of such commonalities, with respect to the clash between native and Spanish cultures, was, from the beginning, never in doubt. Indeed, by Greenblatt's own reckoning, scarcely less "remarkable" than the failures of communication that dogged the earlier encounters between Indian and European, was the degree of interaction and exchange that did in fact take place, "in situations of extraordinary cultural distance and mutual strangeness" (Greenblatt 99). Contemporaries of Columbus, Greenblatt readily concedes, themselves took for granted the existence of some kind of "universal language," in which expressions were eked out by gesture, tone of voice, etc. The assumption, we believe, is not an unreasonable one: after all, we live in a common world, share certain common interests, "stemming from our nature as biologically constituted beings with a certain innate endowment" (Bhaskar 1986: 89). The existence of these interests, we would argue, provides the physical context in which, in the face of widely divergent cultural pratices, an object language may be improvised. For how otherwise were Spaniards and Indians able to address and to convey to each other their basic human
requirements? At this level, cultural difference may well seem, as it did to William Empson, "a small thing by comparison with our common humanity" (quoted by Norris 84).

Without the existence of this species-being, then, the exchange between the cacique and Columbus would quite simply not have got off the ground. But it is doubtful whether this level advances us very far in explaining the gift-giving that quickly ensued or, extending the range of reference, the disturbingly homologous practices that characterized the Mexica and Spanish civilizations: "For what Bernal Díaz actually describes is not the unimaginable alien – how could such a thing ever be described? – but a displaced version of his own system of belief: temple, high altar, culture of holy blood, statues before which offerings are made, "symbols like crosses"" (Greenblatt 134). Only the tenuous barrier of difference – the issue of human sacrifice – separates the two cultures, tenuous because, as Greenblatt proceeds to explain, the two cultures threaten even here to converge, through expiatory sacrifice and the blood and body of God, enacted both in the Eucharist and their "weirdly literal" Aztec equivalents. Obviously, it is at this point that the need arises to explain commonalities that seem to be largely the product of social practices and that every theoretical care needs to be taken to ground texts, literary and otherwise, in a real history, as opposed to the biology, of textual (re)production and reception.

_Servants of the Lord_

Así, ante ellos [los dioses] acercamos la tierra a la boca
[por ellos] nos sangramos
cumplimos las promesas
quemamos copal [incenso]
y ofrecemos sacrificios.
Era doctrina de nuestros mayores
que son los dioses por quien se vive.
ellos nos merecieron [con su sacrificio nos dieron vida].
¿En qué forma, cuándo, dónde?
Cuando aún era de noche
era doctrina
que ellos nos dan nuestro sustento,
todo cuanto se bebe y se come […]. (León Portilla 26)

It is sometimes forgotten, in the rush to emphasize postmodern globalization, that world systems, in a meaningful sense of the term, are nothing new in the history of mankind. Our concern, in the present context, is to emphasize the fact that the great centers of civilization, in both the Old World and the New, including both the Aztec and Inca empires, were all examples of tribute-paying
formations or tributary modes of production, involving the struggle over surpluses produced in the process of the social and physical reproduction of rural peasantries. The exact nature of European feudalism, its relation to the tributary mode, and its place within the over-all system has been, in recent years, the subject of an intense and fascinating debate, the urgency of which is obviously dictated by the association between feudalism and the rise of capitalism, a relatively localized event upon the world stage. Attention has focused particularly upon the relation between taxation and rent collecting, as contrasting mechanisms of extra-economic coercion. Whereas Haldon sees both mechanisms as "expressions of the political-juridical forms that surplus appropriation takes, not distinctions between different modes" (Haldon 77), Chris Wickam argues that they represent two very different economic systems, which finds a tax-raising state pitted in a struggle for supremacy with rent-taking lords (Wickam). For reasons peculiar to its own history, Wickam's argument runs, this structural antagonism was resolved in Europe in favor of local lords, a situation which, from the 10th century, unleashed a process of development ultimately favorable to commercial activity and leading to the rise of capitalist relations.

Obviously, this is not the time or place to enter into the complexities of this debate (see Callinicos 1995: 175-79). However, to the extent that we are here concerned to advance a theory of tributary and feudal cultures, some consideration of the economic realities of Spanish imperialism is in order. Early interpreters of this imperialism, such as Las Casas, were the first to foreground the struggle against necessity, integral to the colonial project, and the consequences of the social relations that prevailed in Columbus' early expeditions. From the beginning, divisions occurred along strictly class lines, notably between "la gente de trabajo y los oficiales mecánicos" and the "hidalgos y gente de Palacio" (Las Casas 1875-76: 40-41). Las Casas describes in detail the process whereby, as the expeditionary force struggled to survive, given the dire circumstances in which it was forced to operate, the workers in particular, on whom survival hinged, came under unbearable pressure, leading to their physical breakdown. At this point every attempt was made to off-load the productive onus onto the Indians, although the noble elements were themselves forced to bear part of the material burden. As Las Casas himself makes clear, the choice at this early stage lay between forms of bonded labor, which degenerated easily into forms of slavery, and salaried or "free" labor. The presence of so many unproductive members quickly forced Columbus to gravitate towards slavery, as the only seemingly viable solution to the chronic difficulties faced by the expeditionary force:

¡Buena vendimia, y hecho harto de apriesa! Ayudó mucho á esta despoblacion y perdicion, querer pagar los sueldos de la gente que aquí
los ganaba, y pagar los mantenimientos y otras mercadurías traídas de Castilla, con dar de los indios por esclavos, por no pedir las cosas y gastos, y tantos gastos y costas, á los Reyes, lo cual el Almirante mucho procuraba, por la razon susodicha, conviene á saber, por verse desfavorecido y porque no tuviesen tantos lugar los que desvalorecían este negocio de las Indias ante los Reyes, diciendo que gastaban y no adquirían. (Las Casas 1875-76: II, 106).

Once the Spaniards encountered the more advanced civilization of the Mexica, on the mainland, they had no problem in recognizing the dynamics of a society split along class lines, involving a repressive body of state officials, the pipiltin, and an exploited peasantry, the macehualtin. In the relatively recent past, a dominant bureaucracy had taken control of the principal means of production, namely the land, a control that was maintained through dominance over both the repressive and ideological state apparatuses. With respect to the broad features of the social system, we may reasonably be certain that the fundamental economic activity consisted of the extraction of tribute (see Rodríguez Shadow 63 ff.); that there was a clear and obvious parallel between the State's dependence upon tribute and the Sun's unquenchable thirst for human blood; and the complex system of trade and commerce, including markets, was controlled and run by the state, as opposed to being dictated by the mechanism of supply and demand (Rodríguez Shadow 82-83). Indications are, more generally, that it was through the tributary system that the Mexica extended their imperial reach across Central America. Resistance naturally came from the surrounding peoples, thereby occasioning divisions within the native population that the Spaniards were able to exploit during the conquest. There is some evidence of class conflict, although little to suggest the existence of widespread ideologies alternative to the dominant one (Rodríguez Shadow 96). The latter took obvious forms: to justify its riches, the elite projected itself as the gods' representatives on earth, argued that the office of governing was burdensome and difficult, and predicted that failure to obey them would lead to natural disasters.

The Spaniards did not fail to recognize the parallels between the social relations prevailing in their own and in Mexica society. Exploitation was certainly nothing new to Fernández de Oviedo, which doubtless alerted him to its pervasive presence among the Indians. He observed its effects with an objectivity that was born of indifference:

Su comida, por la mayor parte, es hierbas cocidas con aji, e pan; e comen poco, porque no comerían si más alcanzasen, puesto que la tierra es muy fértil e de grandes mantenimientos y cosecha, pero la gente común y pelebeos son tan tiranizados de sus señores indios, que a la mayor parte les tasan los mantenimientos en esta manera. Solos los
señores, e algunos sus parientes, e algunos principales e mercaderes, tienen heredades e tierras propias, las venden e juegan cuando les parece; y éstos las siembran e cogen, e no tributan ellos ni ningunos oficiales, como son albañiles, carpinteros, e otros que hacen plumajes, y plateros, cantores e atabaleros (porque ningún señor indio hay que no tenga música, e cada uno segund su estado). Todos éstos no tributan con más de tributo servil, cada uno con su persona, cuando les han menester, e no se les da paga alguna a ninguno dellos. (Fernández de Oviedo 1959: IV, 249)

Such were the similarities between the Spanish and the Mexica tributary systems that, structurally speaking, the arrival of the Spaniards simply presupposed the superimposition of one more layer of exploitation. The lynch pin, to judge from Oviedo's comments, was the tax collector or "tequitlato," the functionary charged with the direction and distribution of communal works. It was the tequitlato who paid tribute to the Indian lord ("señor"), part of which was then passed on to his Christian master ("amo"), otherwise the comendero or village corregidor. Practically, of course, the consequences of the conquest were enormous in that, in effect, the super-exploitation of the Indian peasants left them unable to reproduce themselves. In the event of any vassal's failure to meet the tax burden, as Oviedo makes clear, the tequitlato would inform the Indian lord, who would then give the order for the individual concerned to be sold into slavery (249). Oviedo leaves us in no doubt as to the merciless nature of the system, or of the degree to which the local nobility actively colluded with it. "Ninguna misericordia ni caridad alguna hay en los señores indios, ni cosa alguna hacen por virtud, sino por temor" (250). Indian nobles were affected to the extent that they suddenly found themselves transformed from "libres señores," used to being served, into "siervos."

The Principal of Attachment

In order to gain direct access to an alien language and culture, the options appear to be relatively limited. Quite simply one can "become as a child" or "go native," strategies that were sometimes forced upon Spaniards who fell captive to the Indians but that were understandably not generally pursued. In most circumstances, Spaniards adopted what Anthony Pagden has called the "principle of attachment," which consists of identifying elements of a foreign culture or surroundings that parallel others within one's own world. As Pagden readily concedes, it is doubtful whether the Spaniards would have got very far without it. But he qualifies: "it may (and indeed frequently does) lead us simply to assimilate the unknown to the known" (Pagden 1993: 24), a process that can eventually result in a native culture being totally absorbed by its imperial counterpart. Hence the attempt by some colonial scholars, of which Pagden
appears to approve, to dynamite the bridgeheads that others perversely (or calculatingly) – such at least is the claim – insist upon constructing between cultures: "[...]
Alternate the incommensurability itself which is, ultimately, the only certainty, the only possible context in which America can be made at all intelligible. In a world where no translation is possible, silence is the necessary condition of speech" (41).

If a program of strong relativism is to succeed, it will need to assert the social character and social causation of every aspect of culture, including the logical principles by which a society operates. And this is only possible if it can be established that nothing about beliefs themselves explains why they are held or not held, as the case may be. In other words, what is required is an alternative logic, of a kind deemed to "contravene our sense of what is logically and cognitively appropriate" (Archer 114), or at least something that would go some way to demonstrating that habits of thought are fundamentally relative. Hence, the gravitation, on the part of colonialists, towards areas of indigenous culture that are notably "alien" and that accordingly fuel the notion of incommensurability. With the aid of a section from Fernández de Oviedo, relating to Columbus, Pagden is able to stage a little cultural non-encounter of his own. The passage describes how Columbus, who is anxious to acquire gold, tries to persuade his fellow Spaniards of the need to imitate the ritualistic behavior that, among the Taíno Indians, accompanied the panning for gold. Columbus specifically had in mind the practise of sexual abstinence that he felt correlated magically with a successful outcome:

El almirante don Cristóbal Colón, primero descubridor destas partes, como católico capitán e buen gobernador, después que tuvo noticia de las minas de Cibao, e vió que los indios cogían oro en el agua de los arroyos e ríos, sin lo cavar, con la cerimonia e religión que es dicho, no dejaba a los cristianos ir a coger oro sin que se confiesen e comulgasen. Y decía que, pues los indios estaban veinte días primero sin llegar a sus mujeres (ni otras), e apartados dellas, e ayunaban, e decían ellos que cuando se vián con la mujer, que no hallaban el oro, por tanto, que, pues aquellos indios bestiales hacían aquella solemnidad, que más razón era que los cristianos se apartasen de pecar y confesasen sus culpas, y que estando en gracia de Dios nuestro Señor, les dará más complidamente los bienes temporales y espirituales. Aquella santimonia no placía a todos, porque decían que, cuanto a las mujeres, más apartados estaban que los indios los que las tenían en España; e cuanto al ayunar, que muchos de los cristianos se morían de hambre, e comían raíces e otros manjares, y bebían agua. (Fernández de Oviedo 1959: I, 120-21)

In Pagden’s view, the above passage perfectly demonstrates how the
principle of attachment operated in practise and the extent to which it was responsible for the obliteration of differences between the cultures concerned: "The stark incommensurability of the two is, or seems to be, dissolved in the supposed common recognition of the danger of sex and the cosmic worth of gold" (Pagden 1993: 21). Columbus could only make the actions of the Taino Indians intelligible, it is alleged, through a move intended to relocate the actions of the Taino in a context that would have "made them unintelligible to their original actors." Thus, while attachment allows for the creation of an initial familiarity, by facilitating some measure of classification, the end result is an eliding of cultural differences: "But it did not get the observer very far inside what he had seen, in particular if that was not an island, a promontory or even a plant, but instead a complex social world, which offered few outward signs as to what the inside might ultimately contain" (36).

Obviously, Pagden has intentionally selected the passage with an eye to opening the floodgates of contextual conditions, which favor the relativist argument. By-passing the numerous instances in which shared lower-level perceptual beliefs enabled Spaniards and Indians to get translation going and to engage effectively in interchange, the colonialist has focused on aspects of localized, ritualistic behavior, involving seemingly incommensurable discursive universes. And yet, from the beginning, the culturalist argument is attended by certain paradoxes, the principal one being that it is only possible to establish incommensurability on the basis of comparisons, any drawing of which presupposes the existence of a shared reference or "common recognition." Once these commonalities are conceded, they quickly blossom into striking similarities: "The Indians found gold, and they did so after performing a series of rituals which bore a striking resemblance to some of those practised by Christians" (18). The converse of incommensurability is an uncanny convergence or what Margaret Archer otherwise refers to as "brute regularities" (Archer 114), which the historian must accept even as he attempts to minimize its effect: "However reluctant Columbus may have been to see in the Indian – naked, polygamous and, to his ears, inarticulate – a fellow human, he was now equipped to recognize one aspect of Taino behavior as compatible with his own" (Pagden 1993: 21). And this with respect to an incident intentionally selected to emphasize cultural incommensurability and the impossibility of translation!

The logical paradoxes do not cease here. Pagden himself experiences no difficulty in exercising his own bilingual versatility, from his own particular vantage point outside both cultures in question. Thus, Columbus was "heavily indebted to the language of alchemy" and the medieval tradition that attempted to "transform" base metal into gold (20); whereas the Taino proceeded on the basis of a principle only too familiar from other polytheistic
groups, namely that "substances in transition between the natural and the artificial were dangerous" and that "what lies in water is neither above nor below the ground" (18). Relativists, like Pagden, want to assert things about alien beliefs, such as their relationship to local conditions and conventions, and to pronounce upon the formal logical relations between them. But how is this possible in the absence of translation? How can the Taino theories be identified as alternatives or indeed to be known to be incommensurable if translating them is impossible? Without translation, there are quite simply no grounds for ascribing beliefs to people in other times or places, including those that Pagden attributes to the Taino Indians.

Feudal Animism

Having argued so far that colonialists have been guilty of exaggerating the incommensurability between Spaniard and Indian, I now proceed to the inversion of this argument, through the claim that these same colonialists have not been sufficiently attentive to the differences within Spanish culture. In particular, I wish to focus attention on the Augustinian movement of spirituality that, from the 13th century onwards, constituted a challenge internal to scholastic substantialism. The significance of this movement, with respect to Columbus' alchemic obsessions, lies in the importance that it attached to the notion of transformation, involving the suppression of scholastic substantial forms, otherwise those qualities deemed to be inherent in, and organic to, natural beings, and their substitution by an animistic structure that permits the manipulation of elements that are no longer deemed to be substantially unalterable. The continuities are obvious – the notion of reading the world as a book and of signatures inscribed in nature. But so too are the innovations, notably the importance attached to the spiritual voices believed to inhabit creation. While not yet radical enough as to constitute a "break," these innovations represent an ideological force to be reckoned with by the dominant, substantialist orthodoxy. Indeed, even after the rise of a qualitatively distinct, secular variety of animism, as a consequence of the impact of neo-Platonism, from the end of the 15th century, elements of feudal animism will continue to cling to the new alchemy and, subsequently, to modern science, symptomatic of which is the fear attached to overstepping the bounds of knowledge (see Rodríguez 1990: 78-87).

Such is the backdrop to what Pagden refers to as "the opaque operations of Columbus' own mind" (Pagden 1993: 18). Let us pause to tease out still further some of its implications. We are dealing, it bears repeating, with ideological incommensurabilities and transitions internal to the European tradition. Likewise, it is important not to lose sight of the resistance that substantialism presupposes to the whole notion of transformation.
Symptomatic in this respect – I am still following Rodríguez’s argument (Rodríguez 1990: 261-2) – is the controversy that, in the context of contemporary religious turmoil, surrounded the whole issue of the Incarnation, as this was repeated in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, from the substantialist standpoint, was necessarily envisaged as the greatest miracle in that it contravened the claim that the things in this world involve an inextricable mixture of spirit and matter, and cannot readily cease to be what they substantially are. Animism also had problems with transubstantiation, but for the rather different reason that the admixture of spirit and matter, promoted by the Eucharist, contradicted its own spiritualizing impulses. Far more congenial to animism, by virtue of its opposition to substantial forms, is the notion of metamorphosis. Animism places upon the individual the onus of a choice: the soul that does not choose the spirit, as opposed to the flesh, will be transformed into the flesh. Hence the fascination for the Augustinian Fray Luis de León with the myth of Circe:

¡Ay! Pon del cieno bruto
los pasos en lugar firme y enjuto,
antes que la engañosa
Circe, del corazón apoderada,
con copa ponzoñosa
el alma transformada
te ajunte nueva fiera a su manada (quoted by Rodríguez 267).

A key text, in all of this, is Juan Huarte's Examen de ingenios, which captures many of the tensions involved. Rodríguez is reluctant to follow Américo Castro's reading of Huarte, which attributes the latter's opposition to miraculous explanation to an incipient liberalism. Huarte's real concern, Rodríguez argues, is eminently substantialist: he simply fears the degradation involved in too ready an appeal to the Almighty. A close consideration of Huarte's text indicates the correctness of Rodríguez's position. Ordinary people, the Spanish doctor explains, have a tendency to see God at work in everything. But, as he continues to explain, natural philosophers are reluctant to have recourse so readily to supernatural explanation: "Pero los filósofos naturales burlan de esta manera de hablar: porque, puesto caso que es piadosa y contiene en sí religión y verdad, nace de ignorar el orden y concierto que puso Dios en las cosas naturales el día que las crió; y por amparar su ignorancia con seguridad, y que nadie les pueda reprender ni contradecir, afirman que todo es lo que Dios quiere, y que ninguna cosa sucede que no nazca de su divina voluntad" (Huarte de San Juan 80-81).

At the same time, Huarte's text, as Rodríguez is the first to concede, is "slippery" in the extreme, to the extent that, even as it promotes the substantialist emphasis upon the individual's inalienable "nature," it also
engages in a frontal attack upon notions of "blood" and "lineage," upon which the whole ideological edifice of substantialism rests:

De todo esto se entenderá la gran significación que tiene el hacerse Dama el peón que – sin prenderle – corre siete casas. Porque todas cuantas buenas noblezas habida en el mundo y habrá, han nacido, y nacerán, de peones y hombres particulares, los cuales con el valor de su persona hicieron tales hazañas que merecieron para sí y para sus descendientes título de hijosdalgo, caballeros, nobles, Condes, Marqueses, Duques y Reyes. Verdad es que hay algunos tan ignorantes y faltos de consideración, que no admiten que su nobleza tuvo principio, sino que es eterna, y convertida en sangre, no por merced del Rey particular, sino por creación sobrenatural y divina [...] (272).

The relevance of such a passage to the ambition of the colonizers of the New World should be obvious. Columbus himself carried fascination with the numinous glitter of gold to new heights, nor is there any doubting that at some level his preoccupation with conversion was driven by the dream of social mobility. He certainly set new standards in tenacity when it came to defending the rewards and privileges bestowed upon him by the Catholic Monarchs. In his wake, many an illiterate orphan would have dreamed of becoming a Marquis, and some – notably Pizarro – were able to realize their fantasies. But needless to say we are less concerned with the fates and fortunes of individuals than with the whole mercantilist project, notably its generalized faith in the transformative power of gold. Structural processes were underway that were to lead to the radical transformation of prevailing social relations, and it is to these that we shall now turn.

The Rise of Secular Animism

Fernández de Oviedo was doubtless not the first conquistador to reflect with nostalgia upon the eclipse within his homeland of the kind of hierarchical social system that prevailed among the Indians. Nor was he the first to reflect upon the dangers of emulating the socially mobile. But his observations may, nevertheless, be taken as symptomatic of social changes afoot in the Península, whose ideological repercussions we must now begin to chart:

Yo os digo, caballero pobre, o hidalgo necesitado, o artesano de mal reposo, o villano mal consejado, que vosotros y todos los que destas calidades os hallastes en esta armada, que tenéis justa paga de vuestro mal acuerdo. Porque al pobre caballero fuera más seguro estado el que se tenía, sirviendo a otros mayores; y al escudero ejercitándose de manera que si no le pudiera bastar su hacienda, bastara él a ella; y al artesano no desamparar su oficio, ni al villano su arado; porque en el cavar y en las otras labores y agricultura que dejó por venir a las Indias,
había más seguridad y quietud para el cuerpo y para el ánima.
(Fernández de Oviedo 1959: IV, 299)

And needless to say, Oviedo considered himself as nothing if not a "servant" of the Church (I, 11), whose chosen role in life was to "servir a Dios y a Vuestras Majestades" (I, 10). "Vassalage" determines the limits of his thought, which hinges on the definition of "freedom" as the freedom to serve: "lo que por fuerza se da, no es servicio, sino robo" (IV, 42). Nor, given his personal sense of nobility, was Oviedo slow to express his contempt for people of "baja sangre," to deploy the whole substantialist rhetoric of "treachery" and "honor", or to see the supernatural as an active force in the unfolding of historical events: "Intervino otro miraglo muy señalado, y fué éste […] Otro miraglo subcedió en esa sazón o tiempo, e fué muy notorio y fué aqueéste […]" (227). Such was the common currency of the age, and it is not in the least bit surprising that Oviedo chose to express himself in such ideological terms.

But there is another side to Oviedo, who, even as he seeks to legitimate his status in terms of service, with reference to the supernatural, also presents himself as a "testigo de vista" whose testimony is to be taken literally. Aristocrat he may well be, but as a conquistador Oviedo knew at first hand the meaning of hunger and material hardship, suffered in the service of the crown, as he was never slow to insist. Indeed, it is hard to read the Historia general without being struck by its author's practical knowledge and his novel capacity to live off his wits, in the spirit of those picaresque figures who, within the realm of imaginative literature, were contemporaneously – the coincidence cannot be fortuitous – displacing the chivalric heroes of old: "[…] pero estas cosas de acá, con mucha sed, con mucha hambre y cansancio, en la guerra con los enemigos, y en ella y en la paz, con los elementos contrastando con muchas necesidades y peligros" (II, 183). Gone is the substantialist "book," displaced by a literal eye, which views the object not from the perspective of its allegorical meaning but from that of its sheer physicality: "[…] le dieron [a Hernando de Arroyo] con una flecha en la espinilla de una pierna, estando a mi lado; e fue tan poca la herida, que en dándole la flecha, se cayó ella en tierra; pero la hierba e ra tal, que al momento desmayó, e se vido que era mortal. E yo le hice sacar de allí a otros dos hombres míos, para que la llevasen a la nao, donde le curaron, e se hicieron con él todas las diligencias que fué posible por remediarle; pero al tercero día murió rabiando" (III, 229). This is a new kind of literalism, one which, suddenly transformed into the textual dominant, stands worlds apart from its counterpart in the substantialist text, for which the literal constituted one exegetical level among several. How do we account for its existence? When did it arise and where?

To answer these questions, we must turn to animism, which, we have seen, stands opposed to substantialism. While he recognizes the existence of a
feudal animism, which allowed for the irruption and solidification of the bourgeois matrix of the first phase, Rodríguez leaves us in no doubt as to the significance to be attached to the "break" between the feudal problematic and animism in its subsequent, secular form. The bourgeois matrix, we indicated above, is always characterized by the continuous production of the "subject" or, to be more exact (as regards the period in question), of a proto-subject or beautiful soul. Lyric poetry, in the tradition of Petrarch, will "bare" its form and, in the process, establish a hierarchy based not on the notion of blood but on sensibility and the capacity for love (Rodríguez 1990: 115 ff). In prose the favored genre will be the "dialogue," to be counterpoised to the feudal "dispute." Designed to explore the theme of "friendship," the dialogue is homologous, at the ideological level, with commercial exchanges, at the economic, exchanges that presuppose the existence of salaried labor, as this will take shape, contemporaneously, during the course of the 16th century (Rodríguez 2001b: 48-49). To be free is to be freed from one's possessions, with the exception of labor power, which the subject is thereby compelled to exchange. It is for this reason that, in these early stages of bourgeois development, the subject takes the form of a *piaro* or member of the poor, who recounts his "life" as readily as he sells it on the open market.

Having glimpsed the emergence of such notions in Oviedo's text, let us turn to one in which the impact of animism is more immediate and striking, namely the *Naufragios* of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. The advantage of Cabeza de Vaca is that, through his work, we can examine the experiential moment of the rupture, when organic structures break down and the individual is driven back upon his own resources:

Trabajando por llegar allá, nos hallamos en tres brazas de agua, y por ser de noche no osamos tomar tierra, porque no habíamos visto tantos humeros, creíamos que nos podía recrecer algún peligro sin nosotros poder ver, por la mucha oscuridad, lo que habíamos de hacer, y por esto determinamos de esperar a la manana siguiente. Como amaneció, cada barca se halló por sí perdida de las otras; yo me hallé en treinta brazas, y siguiendo mi viaje a hora de visperas vi dos barcas, y fui a ellas, vi que la primera a que llegué era del gobernador. (Cabeza de Vaca, 113-14)

There are, it has to be said, certain problems associated with this close attention to discrete textual moments, in that it lends itself to what Rodriguez himself has warned is a species of sociological "experientialism." It is vital, the Althusserian reminds us, to view the "ideological unconscious" primarily not as an individual or, for that matter, institutional phenomenon, but as a structural phenomenon, insofar as it is secreted, originally, in the prevailing relations of production. That said, it is difficult not to linger upon the ideological
resonances of that existential moment in De Vaca's text when the organic community is seen to collapse, to be replaced by a new individualism:

Yo, vista su voluntad, tomé mi remo, y lo mismo hicieron todos los que en mi barca estaban para ello, y bogamos hasta casi puesto el Sol; mas como el gobernador llevaba la más sana y recia gente que entre toda había, en ninguna manera lo pudimos seguir ni tener con ella. Yo, como vi esto, le pedí que, para poderle seguir, me diese un cabo de su barca, y él me respondió que no harían ellos poco si solos aquella noche pudiesse llegar que en nosotros había para poder seguirle y hacer lo que había mandado, que me dijese qué era lo que mandaba que yo hiciese. El me respondió que ya no era tiempo de mandar unos a otros; que cada uno hiciese lo que mejor le pareciese que era para salvar la vida; que él así lo entendía de hacer, y diciendo esto, se alargó con su barca [...]

Such a literal text awaits no allegorical interpretation. Cabeza de Vaca is not a sinner, cast upon the sea of death, nor a pilgrim, struggling against the forces of evil, in an attempt to be reunited with his Lord. Rather he is an isolated individual confronted by Chance, driven to depend for survival upon his innate wit and personal initiative.

Yet it is also important not to demand of a text what it cannot give, and viewed in this context, Naufragios is still some way from being the Spanish equivalent of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Moreover, we will have to wait for some time before any such work could be feasible. Indeed, it needs to be added that Naufragios remains in many respects a substantialist document, and one that promotes itself as such. Like Oviedo, De Vaca in his preface makes clear the importance that he attaches to the notion of service ("en nombre del servicio"). Moreover, during the course of his journey, he will regress gradually from the status of an entrepreneurial merchant to a Christ figure, enlisted in the service of his Lord. In other words, we have a text that registers exactly the resurgence of feudalism in Spain, following the relatively brief efflorescence of animism in the opening decades of the 16th century.16

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16 Enough has been said, we believe, to provide a context in which to further rectify some of the positions assumed by New Historicism. We have in mind Greenblatt's second chapter on The Buke of John Maundeuill. A "Book," notice, in the substantialist tradition, not a "life" (of Lazarillo, etc.), which will be the genre initiated by animism. Given this status, it makes no more sense in the case of Mandeville to recuperate some notion of a consistent subjectivity than it does in the case of, say, Juan Ruiz, whose Libro de buen amor remains precisely that, a "book." For such a subjectivity, as Greenblatt discovers to his surprise, is destined to remain fantasmal, symptomatizing the absence of an authentic traveller (Greeblatt 34). The notion of the "Mandeville-effect," it should be added, rooted as it is in the postmodern concept of subjective dispersal (the "death of the subject"), misses the point entirely and illustrates once again the manifest ahistoricity of New Historicism. We are here addressing not a period during which the bourgeois subject enters into crisis, but during which it was only...
**Columbus: Saving the Phenomena**

Yo no tomo que el Paraíso Terrenal sea en forma de montaña aspera, como el escribir d’ello nos amuestra, salvo que él sea en el colmo, allí donde dice la figura del pezón de la pera, y que poco a poco andando hazia allí desde muy lexos se va subiendo a él, y creo que nadie no podría llegar al colmo, como yo dixe, y creo que pueda salir de allí esa agua, bien que sea lexos y venga a parar allí donde yo vengo, y faga este lago. Grandes indicios son estos del Paraíso Terrenal, porque el sitio es conforme a la opinión d’estos sanctos y sacros theólogos. Y asimismo las señales son muy conformes, que yo jamás leí ni oí que tanta cantidad de agua dulce fuese así adentro e vezina con la salada; y en ello ayuda asimismo la suavíssima temperanza. Y si de allí del Paraíso no sale, parece aún mayor maravilla, porque no creo que se sepa en el mundo de río tan grande y tan fondo. (Colón 242)

Only once, as Anthony Pagden has pointed out, did Columbus radically doubt his initial cosmographical calculations: faced by the sheer volume of fresh water issuing from the Amazon into the ocean, he was forced to speculate upon the existence of a continent not previously recorded in the writings of the Ancients. His conclusion was that this continent could only be the Earthly Paradise. "It was," as Anthony Pagden argues, "a desperate attempt on Columbus' part to 'save the phenomena' as he knew them, to preserve his own eccentric geographical vision which he had spent so many fruitless years peddling to the various monarchs of Europe" (Pagden 1993: 22). But again, as with regard to the notion of alchemic transformation, it is not clear whether the historian has fully taken the pressure of a concept, the "saving of appearances," whose meaning varied enormously according to its ideological context. In this respect the work of Rodríguez is again indispensable.

Broadly, the Althusserian Marxist argues, we need to distinguish between a substantialist understanding of the phrase and subsequent empiricist readings. For the former, the "saving of appearances" is integral to the notion of reading the world as a book. The creation is a text, authored by God, whose message is there to be deciphered, by those who possess the necessary exegetical skills. The difficulty lies in the fact that His words have been partly beginning to be produced. The feudal text, we cannot reiterate sufficiently, does not operate through the notion of the "subject," for the simple reason that "freedom" was never at issue for the bonded serf, and vassals were only "free" to choose the object of their allegiance. All of which explains why Mandeville's text should culminate in the "author"s visit to the Holy Land, in which this land itself is projected as a Book to be read (see Greenblatt 39). True, we are also forced to contemplate the existence of many books, which could be construed as a premonition of things to come. But there is no gainsaying the fact that the feudal text that remains is pre-eminently a gloss, in the tradition of feudal substantialism.
obscured by the Fall, and can only be recuperated through the multiple levels of commentary. Commentary must necessarily focus upon appearances, since these are, when all is said and done, the only evidence that we possess concerning the intentions of the Author. It is in this sense that, according to Rodríguez, the Calderonian Dialectic of the Dream may be said to presuppose the notion of a real dream. The Althusserian explains:

"Salvar las apariencias" significa, pues, impedir que todo se convierta en fenoménico (como pretende el platonismo). Es consecuencia, una dialéctica que provoca la famosa estructura denominada usualmente como "desengaño barroco", desengaño que se expresa a través del "ojo" o del "oído" (los dos elementos básicamente captadores de la apetencia de las apariencias según Santo Tomás) y que supone una actitud moral idéntica a la expresada en la Dialéctica del Sueño. (Rodríguez 1990: 65)

The substantialist understanding was challenged from several directions. Firstly, as Rodríguez indicates above, by a Platonic tradition that, in its religious branch, argued the need to dismiss this world in its entirety, as a mere shadow of the next. Secondly, and more importantly, however, by the secular version of Platonism, animism, that we considered above, together with its subsequent mechanistic, Cartesian and empiricist developments, based on the notion of the possessive subject. Through the importance that they attached to this world, as opposed to the next, these bourgeois ideologies lent a new meaning to the very phrase "to save appearances." For the first time, the gaze latches onto a material, phenomenal reality, as something that offers itself, in itself, as a source of delight. During the course of time, as bourgeois ideology assumes its dominant forms, experiences become productive of "hypotheses" that can be tested "experimentally," and whose results have to be "verified." As Rodríguez concludes: "Frente a esta presión doble, el organicismo supone la práctica del desengaño en el sentido que acabamos de describir (esto es, según se plasma en la dialéctica calderoniana del sueño) como deseo de 'salvar los fenómenos', de adecuarse, en definitiva, a la lógica de las apariencias como verdades imperfectas, pero irremediablemente necesarias en cuanto que sólo a través de ellas se puede leer los signos sagrados del orden de Dios que rigen el mundo organicista" (66).

While Pagden is alert to the feudal tradition of "reading" and to the existence of a corresponding "theory of knowledge," which "relied very largely upon exegesis and hermeneutics, and claimed that the external world and all human life was legible, secundum natura" (Pagden 1993: 52), he is constrained, by virtue of his own ideological unconscious, to interpret Columbus' compulsion to "save the phenomena" (22) in strictly empiricist terms. The slippage from "experience" to "experiment" is almost imperceptible but real, so that suddenly
the struggle is no longer between substantialism ("reading") and animism ("experience") but, somewhat anachronistically, between scholasticism and classical empiricism: "All that could be seen or demonstrated by experiment had ultimately to be made intelligible in terms of one or another component of the canon" (52). From "experiment," soon eeked out by the notion of "hypothesis," it is but a short step to modern science and the liberal notion of progress: "In practice, scientific understanding was built up by a process of continuing negotiation" (53). Equipped simply with the notion of "Science," as opposed to that of "sciences," rooted in their respective problematics and determined by the productive process, Pagden is constantly constrained to find Columbus wanting: "The difficulty, however, was always seeing the discrepancy between the observation and the text, particularly since no observation or experiment was ever conducted with the purpose of verifying (much less falsifying) the statements made in the text" (53, Pagden's italics). Rather like the scholastic philosophers that Galileo invited to look through his telescope, Columbus is inexplicably unable to gaze literally upon the evidence of his senses: "When experience directly contradicted the text, it was experience, which was unstable because of its very novelty, which was likely to be denied or at least obscured" (53). There is altogether something quite perverse about the whole thing in that: "Having discovered what every shred of external evidence should have told him was a 'New World,' he then referred back to the canon to demonstrate what only he, because of the authorities which had dictated his original hypothesis, could not accept" (54).

Within the context of a dominant substantialism, as exemplified by the texts of Columbus, the temptation was always there to disqualify the Other on the basis of its organic deficiencies, the effect of which, within the context of a tributary mode, was to place a slave or peasant population beyond the bounds of humanity. Such, at least, was the ideological rationale for a whole host of xenophobic hatreds and racist judgements that characterized the discourses of the transition, such as Aristotelian rationalism. Significantly, Oviedo's intense preoccupation with the enormous variety and otherness of the American continent correlates with an attempt to disqualify the Indians on the basis of their strictly vegetative souls. It was animism, the earliest form of bourgeois ideology, which promoted the notion of a common humanity, including colonialized peoples. And it was from an animist standpoint that Las Casas was moved to condemn the genocidal practices of Spaniards: "Todas estas obras y otras, extrañas de toda naturaleza humana, vieron mis ojos, y ahora temo decirlas, no creyéndome á mí mismo, si quizá no las haya soñado" (Las Casas 1875-76: III, 94). Undoubtedly, there are things to be learned here with respect to the conflicts currently engulfing the "civilized" world: "Todas
las Naciones del mundo son hombres, y cada uno dellos es una no más la definicion, todos tienen entendimiento y voluntad, todos tienen cinco sentidos exteriores y sus cuatro interiores, y se mueven por los objetos dellos, todos se huelgan con el bien y siente placer con los sabrosos y alegre, y todos desechan y aborrecen el mal, y se alteran con lo desabrido y les hace daño" (III, 296). Yet from the standpoint of a resolutely historicizing Marxism, we have also attempted to offer a word of warning, by returning the debate to the realities of ideological, political and economic struggle. Emphatically, if Las Casas was anxious to couch his argument in terms of "human nature," it was in part because he "unconsciously" repressed the notion of exploitation that was integral to the slave system, which he actively promoted, albeit for a relatively short period, together with its counterpart with respect to feudalism, whereby "lords" extracted the social surplus from their "serfs"/"servants." And at no point was the Dominican about to confess that, as a member of the holy orders, he himself stood to benefit from the distribution of this social surplus. Our conclusion is inevitable: it was possible in the 16th century, as in our own day, to be relatively vocal in one's promotion of human nature, while being somewhat less forthcoming with respect of human equalities.

Reclaiming Reality: Walter Mignolo

North American Hispanism in its postmodern form – roughly corresponding to "cultural studies" – is mortgaged to a philosophical irrealism that now encompasses much of what is produced within the North American academy. The unenviable task of colonialists working within Hispanism is how to reconcile that irrealism with their claim to embrace a genuinely transformative, politically progressive program. Their solution has been to promote a discursive materialism that hinges upon the notion of a performance, through which to reduce the domain of the ontological to that of the epistemological. The emphasis upon action is productive of a species of voluntarist rhetoric that, under the guise of "openness" to the "voices of the other," seeks to subordinate scientific rationality, which is seen as inherently exploitative and oppressive, to local or "border" cultures that completely escape critical interrogation. Perforce, these same colonialists have little to offer regarding what must be considered the most urgent task facing indigenous communities, namely how to reconcile the popular demand for enfranchisement, based on the preservation of multiple identities, with the necessary task of modernization. At the same time, they have much to offer a leisured elite, angered by the reality of post-colonial poverty but complicit with an
imperialism that allows it (the elite) to live in what Bhaskar, with unwonted brutality, refers to as "conditions of plenty" (Bhaskar 1991b: 135). In order to sustain these and related claims, we turn in the present chapter to Walter Mignolo, whose mature work, notably The Darker Side of the Renaissance and Local Histories/Global Designs (2000), while ambitious in scope and aim – they question the very basis of European thought, with respect to its implication in colonialism – yet remains thoroughly rooted in the cultural semiotics that characterized the colonialist's earlier work.

Towards a Constructivist Epistemology

The first thing to note about Mignolo's mature work is his continuing commitment to hermeneutics, through his expressed allegiance to Hans-George Gadamer. The latter, Mignolo will remind us, critiqued a "dogmatic objectivism" that, emanating from positivism, has been allowed to distort the human sciences. Attention focused, quite properly, upon the human subject and its implication in its object of study (society), which, the hermeneutist's argument ran, places limits on the possibility of naturalism or at least qualifies the form that it must take. In Gadamer's own words: "This feeling for the individuality of persons, the realization that they cannot be classified and deduced according to general rules and laws, was a significant new approach to the concreteness of the other" (quoted by Mignolo 1995: 18). Mignolo's only reservation, with respect to Gadamer, is that the preoccupation with a single hermeneutic situation must give way, in the light of the colonial experience, to a plurality of traditions (1995: 39), that, in other words, attention needs to focus not upon a single locus of enunciation, with respect to the human sciences, but upon a plurality of loci.

The emphasis upon multiplicity and plurality, together with that upon individual locatedness, lends a characteristically materialist feel to what might otherwise look like one more variation on an old idealist theme. Indeed, the feel in question is further enhanced by the notions of enactment and performance, which Mignolo wishes to introduce into the debate. The effect, linguistically, is to displace the focus of attention from meaning, understood in the abstract sense, at the level of competence, to the semantics of material practice. Thus: 

"[...] signs have neither defined properties nor teleologically divine or intentionally human orientations but acquire such qualities when they enter into a network of descriptions by those who, in one way or another, use them" (Mignolo 1995: 20). Once set in motion, its effect is relentless: "Enacting is performing, not looking for correspondences with the world or for the true meaning of a sentence, a text, an object, an event" (20). The attack upon correspondence theory leads, in true Saussurean fashion, to the marginalization, if not exclusion, of any notion of the referent, the first major
casualty of which is *truth*, replaced by that of rhetorical persuasion, in typically sophistical fashion. The final stage is one in which, to deploy Roy Bhasker's terminology, the *transitive dimension*, otherwise what we currently know about the world, has completely swallowed up the *intransitive dimension*, otherwise the world itself: "I believe that theories are not necessarily the instruments required to understand something that lies outside the theory, but, on the contrary, that theories are the instruments required to construct knowledge and understanding (in academia they would be called 'scholarly or scientific descriptions')" (20-21).

True, there is a tentativeness to Mignolo's formulation that suggests a reluctance to fully embrace the epistemological consequences of the positions he assumes. Indeed, the colonialist moves immediately to re-inscribe the inside/outside opposition as one between, on the one hand, the personal (individual) and social situation of the knowing subject, within the rules and procedures of the discipline, and, on the other, an objective emphasis upon the disciplinary models themselves. But while accepting the relevance of both, a clear distinction is drawn between the humanity of the former, with its concern for "care" and "dialogue," and the coldness of the latter. Posed in such terms, the choice is already made: "Thus, the locus of enunciation is as much a part of the knowing and understanding processes as are the data for the disciplinary (e.g., sociological, anthropological, historical, semiological, etc.) construction of the 'real'" (21). Clearly, we are in the presence of a constructivist epistemology that has the greatest difficulty in imagining a distinction between a phenomenal real or "what is taken to be real" and the real itself, which is pressed, in a truly Kantian manner, into the realm of the noumenal.

Mignolo, we are saying, exhibits the tendency, persistent in Western thought since Descartes, to treat all questions about what is (ontology) as questions about what we can know (epistemology) (cf. Bhaskar 1978: 36). We are talking here about rather more than the mediation of our comprehension of reality through concepts. At issue is the postmodern attempt, always latent in philosophical modernism, finally to liberate subjective experience from its subordination to the materialist principle of ontological realism and so to embrace an all-encompassing ontological relativism. For Mignolo it is basically individuals who act, that is, who constitute the irreducible entities of the social system. While he would concede that people are never free of a social matrix, which is always transforming them in one way or another, he never attempts to theorize the existence of real structures that transcend the level of the empirical and actual, otherwise that of the performance. People act, and what they do has the properties of a performance. It is a war against reification, but one with unfortunate consequences, namely an all-pervasive
anthropocentric/anthropomorphic bias that, as Bhaskar reminds us, lies at the heart of irrealist and western thought generally (Bhaskar 1993: 205). Amongst other things, such a bias conveniently elides the fact that, while we are certainly in the world, this world preceded us and, presumably, will continue to exist when mankind has passed into oblivion.

Mignolo, it has to be said, never deduces the full consequences of his philosophical position: theories, note, are "not necessarily" instruments for investigating something outside theory; the "objective" notion of knowledge is allowed, although we are denied access to "better (deeper, more accurate, more trustworthy, more informed, etc.) knowledge or understanding" (21). The authorizing locus of enunciation, in other words, is simply privileged over any correspondence "to what is taken to be real" (21); the "saying" over the "said" (22), and more recently, quoting Glissant, the "texture of the weave" over the "nature of [the] component" (Mignolo 2000: 82). Such syntactic weighting has all the appearance of an escape mechanism, and with very good reason, for the fact of the matter is – and I am again following Bhaskar – that epistemology will have an ontology, albeit of a positivist and consequently inadequate kind. The only alternative would be performative contradictions on a prohibitive scale. Quite simply, and Mignolo's identity theory notwithstanding, we need to detach ourselves referentially from our environment in order to say something about it. Otherwise, there seems very little point in engaging in discourse at all. Moreover, unless discourse has an effect upon an external world, the prospects for mounting any emancipatory project seem very bleak indeed, which is fine for pragmatic philosophers located in privileged First-World academies, but disabling in the extreme to anyone such as Mignolo, who lays claim to an interest in the struggle for colonial liberation.

In sum, Mignolo's central notion of performance secretes an ontology based on experience, in that it ascribes a predicate "knowledge" to a subject "man," via the underanalyzed notion of "experience" or, to be more precise, "performance." While, like many anti-naturalists, Mignolo quite properly wants to insist on human agency, he succumbs to a species of voluntarism, which, as a complete inversion of positivist determinism, preserves the latter's essential terms of reference. One consequence is that hermeneutics continues to accept the positivist definition of science that focuses on the invariance of events, not upon the mechanisms that generate them. True, the constructivist believes in theory construction as a social project. Knowledge is a social activity and an incremental one at that – hence the reference to "communities of interpretation." But the idealist, by definition, can never progress to an evaluation of theoretical constructs in realist terms. Hence, the emphasis upon the isolated individual subjects, reduced to "loci of enunciation" that interrelate across space and time, and the failure to explore science as involving a social
transmit. The result is an irrealism of sometimes breath-taking proportions, whose consequences, in practice, we will be exploring below.

_The Mirror of Nature_

The specter that haunts everyone is that of _regulatory determinism_, otherwise the notion that, in principle, events are determined as in a closed system, through the reduction of complex beings to their component parts. Given sufficient information, it would follow, we can know when, and if, I will get out of bed, in which case the prospects for human freedom look bleak indeed. The way out, for the critical realist, is to emphasize ontological depth or emergence: the laws of nature are reconstrued, not as constant conjunctions, but as _real_ mechanisms, operating at a level distinct from those of the empirical and the actual. The ensuing stratification facilitates a notion of human agency (Bhaskar 1993: 50-53 and passim): there is a difference between catching a bus and catching a cold. What blocks any comparable resolution from the standpoint of the constructivist is his empirical realism, based on the notion of a totally rule-governed phenomenal world. To escape the reach of the ensuing determinism, the "free subject" needs to be located in a subjective realm of performance, outside the objective purchase of science. We are determined as material bodies, qua empirical subjects, within the phenomenal real, but are free as discursive subjects, at the transcendental, noumenal level. The latter, as we know from Kant, defies causal explanation, which explains the under-theorization of Mignolo's notion of performance, to which we referred above.

The effects of Mignolo's hermeneutic bias do not end there: displaced too are the notions of reference and denotation and, by the same token, of cross-cultural evaluations. For in the absence of a third party, standing somewhere in outer space, who, precisely, is to pass judgement on Amerindian culture, or to draw comparisons with its Spanish equivalent (Mignolo 1995: 327)? Who, that is, other than the various embodiments of imperial power? Truth, in such circumstances, is deprived of any _alethic_ grounding. It belongs instead to the more powerful, even, or especially, within the sciences, where knowledge is allegedly nothing more than whatever powerful individuals, groups or nations dictate. The result is a kind of identity thinking in which the intransitive existence of causal structures (and the beliefs and meanings that they produce) is collapsed into the transitive dimension of practice.

Perforce, Mignolo is now threatened with entrapment by an epistemological relativism that his bourgeois colleagues can afford to view with equanimity but that is denied to him, as a theorizer of colonial oppression.

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17 Defined by Bhaskar as follows: "The truth of, or real reason(s) for, or dialectical ground of _things_, as distinct from _propositions_, possible in virtue of the ontological stratification of the world and attainable in virtue of the dynamic character of science" (Bhaskar 1993: 394).
Hence the need to lay claim to a materialism: "I placed a heavy accent on the materiality of culture and on human beings' (as individuals and communities) own self-descriptions of their life and work" (Mignolo 1995: 320). Everything is about the struggle to avoid death, to reproduce, etc. This is not, to be sure, the world of classical idealism, which, by definition, foregrounded the realm of ideas, but that is because a crucial slippage has taken place, from ideas to the semiotic or linguistic, or rather – because we are in the world of actualism – to "languaging." For performance is to be understood, above all, as a discursive act, in the tradition of Gadamer and his latter-day followers, notably Rorty, for whom being is manifest in language. The transformation is less radical than might seem, at first sight, to be the case, in that the pivotal opposition remains the same: between, on the one hand, a phenomenal or empirical realm subject to strictly deterministic laws and, on the other, an intelligible realm of human being, where agents are free to perform at will. All that has happened is that the Kantian problematic has been displaced onto discourse, which now offers the scope for freedom, creativity and performativity previously reserved for thought.

All this, of course, is transferred, in the case of Mignolo, to the realm of coloniality, where "languaging" is not an object or real mechanism but an actual process, not a competence but a performance. A performance that is an act of total transcendence, in which it is possible to conceive of "thinking beyond thoughts and languaging, indeed beyond language" (Mignolo 2000: 254), defined through the recursive capacity of language: "languaging in language allows us to describe ourselves interacting as well as to describe the descriptions of our interactions" (254). Finally, the sign finds its referent, but only in the form of other bits of languaging, a somewhat incestuous encounter, perhaps, between subject and object, but a felicitous one for all that, conceived "as the difference that cannot be told, and not as an 'area' to be studied" (Mignolo 2000: 69) or, in other words, as a form of almost angelic communion bordering on the ineffable. And so what might seem like the outer reaches of a colonial territory turns out to be very familiar terrain: the site of an encounter between two beautiful souls, of eminently petty-bourgeois extraction. The romantic myth of self-creation re-enacted!

It is a shame to disrupt the happy union, but there are a number of problems with this scenario. Principally, it is easy to see that the notion of the subject as free to choose between new descriptions can encourage the voluntarist view that we are always free to choose any descriptions, or that our performances escape the restraints of social life, not to mention the limits imposed by ecology. What such a view ignores, among other things, is the existence of objective social structures (from language to economic systems) that totally transcend the level of the self, for whose "performance" they are a
necessary condition. Such structures cannot be theorized later, once the performing subject has been installed, by "piggybacking" (to use Mignolo's phase) on other systems of thought, for the simple reason that, to reiterate, they precede the performance. And any theoretician that thinks otherwise will quickly encounter difficulties. The latter will be compounded by a further basic limitation characteristic of hermeneutics that relates to the very nature of science. It may suffice from the outside to justify a belief or action by reference to what the scientific community believes, but as Bhaskar has insisted, the situation is rather different inside. "This may be partly because what is at stake (what stands in need of justification or criticism) is precisely what the community believes. But it will also be in part because at some point the explanatory query in science will take the form 'why is the world this way?,' whereas the explanatory query about science will take the form 'why does this community believe such-and-such?' The answer to the former question will not consist of intellectual cultural-history or the natural sociology of belief, but of a (scientifically-) ontologically grounded, or justified, scientific explanation" (Bhaskar 1991: 35). Any ongoing attempt to collapse the scientific debate into the hermeneutic one is, we believe, bound to give rise to a whole series of performative contradictions, of which more below.

**Deprocessualizing History**

The failure to thematize ontology is only the first of Mignolo's sins. The second is the tendency, rooted in the same irrealism, to deprocessualize history. Mignolo's primary target is less history per se than the liberal version of it, which tells a tale of gradual progress to the summit of European excellence. As in the case of his fellow postmodernists, even the faintest glimmer of progress in human history is greeted with withering scorn. So concerned is he to block such narratives that Mignolo has recourse to a "flashback" (Mignolo 1995: xiv-xv), through which to disrupt the narrative flow. Of course, one understands the problem: "developmentalism" translates, for colonial peoples, into forms of humiliation and degradation so all-encompassing that the colonized have only belatedly begun to recover something of their history and dignity. That said, Mignolo's insistence on the "coevalness" of cultures and his refusal of the concept of historical progression is a hard call. For certainly, outside the world of irrealism within which he moves, there is just one little problem, namely, to take Adorno's example, the relationship between the slingshot and the megaton bomb. What exactly is Mignolo saying: that there is no historical evidence of progress in man's productive forces? Even if we limit ourselves to moral values where, certainly, the historical record is more ambiguous, a persuasive case can be made for degrees of moral advancement (see Sayers). The "freedom" of capitalist society may be ideologically inflected,
but it corresponds, objectively, to a significant improvement over slavery and serfdom.

Let us consider firstly the case of alphabetic scripts. Broadly speaking, the conventional view has been that, around 700 BC a major invention took place in Greece: the alphabet. This conceptual technology, it has been argued by leading classical scholars such as Havelock, was the basis upon which Western philosophy and science, as we know them, developed. Of course, it is also conceded that there was a price to be paid, namely the relegation of the world of sounds and images to the margins of high culture, which left the way open for audiovisual culture to wreak its revenge in the twentieth century, notably in the form of film, radio and television. That said, there is no gainsaying, for Western scholars at least, the importance of the "alphabetic mind," prepared for by about 3,000 years of evolution in oral tradition and non-alphabetic communication. The reason is quite simple: the alphabet, it is argued, provided the mental infrastructure for cumulative, knowledge-based communication. But such reasoning does not impress Mignolo, who will have no truck with such "evolutionary" ideas – they are, he will insist, a fig leaf for oppressive policies towards the Spanish colonies. To justify his own position, he focuses on the work of two Renaissance scholars, grammarian Antonio de Nebrija and linguist Bernardo de Aldrete.

The gist of his argument is as follows. What might seem at first sight an objective concern with language planning with respect to a newly emergent national community, was in fact a means of furthering and imposing Castilian hegemony. Mignolo certainly concedes that, writing when he did, Nebrija could hardly have envisioned Castilian as a means of colonial extension in the New World, and that the grammarian's eyes were set more realistically upon the fortunes of the newly emergent absolutist state in Spain (Mignolo 1995: 41). Still, in principle, Nebrija was allegedly more concerned with the taming or reduction of speech in the interests of writing. By way of support, Mignolo adduces the following section from Nebrija's Reglas de ortografía de la lengua castellana:

Entre todas las cosas que por experiencia los ombres hallaron, o por reuelación diuina les fueron demonstradas para polir y adornar la vida humana, ninguna otra fue tan necessaria, ni que maiores prouechos nos acarreasse, que la inuención de las letras. La qual parece que ouo origen de aquello que ante que las letras fuessen halladas, por imágines representauan las cosas de que querían dexar memoria: como la figura de la mano diestra tendida significauan la liberalidad, y por ella mesma cerrada, el auaricia; por la oreja, la memoria; por las rodillas, la misericordia; por vna culebra enroscada, el año; y assí de las otras cosas. Mas por que este negocio era infinito y muy confuso, el primero
inventor de letras, quien quiera que fue, miró cuántas diferentes de bozes avía en su lengua, y tantas figuras de letras hizo; por las quales, puestas en cierta orden, representó todas las palabras que quiso, así para su memoria, como para hablar con los absentes y los que están por venir. Así, que no es otra cosa la letra, sino traço o figura por la cual se representa la boz. (1977: 115)

A very similar, indeed, virtually identical passage appears in Nebrija's *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, except that, crucially, it concludes as follows: "Assí que las letras representan las bozes, y las bozes significan, como dize Aristóteles, los pensamientos que tenemos en el ánima. (Nebrija 1980: 111)

Mignolo interprets Nebrija as arguing that the letter's superiority over other writing systems was measured by the distance between the graphic sign and the voice: "A language whose destiny is to unify a native territory and to subjugate a conquered people could not, in Nebrija's perception, be left open to the variations of speech" (1995: 42). The implication, on the part of the grammarian, is that pictographic signs do not lend themselves to the controlling function, of the kind required for the process of colonialization.

We have traced Mignolo's reading in detail, and to a great extent, in his own words, because we believe it to be fundamentally misguided and wish to illustrate exactly why. As closer scrutiny reveals, far from privileging writing over speech, Nebrija's text is in fact asserting the phonetic or phonemic principle that writing should be accommodated as much as possible to speech. Thus, "no es otra cosa la letra, sino traço y figura por la qual se representa la voz." Mignolo wishes to argue the contrary, namely that, pace Derrida, the importance attributed to speech by the Western tradition was inverted during the Renaissance, as a consequence of which writing "no longer had the ancillary dimension attributed to it by Aristotle" (1995: 46, cp. 118). But why, if that is so, did Nebrija support what, in Mignolo's view, was an exercise in the promotion of writing with a reference, in the *Gramática*, to Aristotle?!

But that is not the end of Mignolo's shortcomings. In point of fact, the long passage from Nebrija quoted above appears in the colonialist's text not in the original but in translation, for which, presumably, Mignolo assumes responsibility, as he does explicitly for italicizing the final sentence of the quotation (1995: 42. See 345n32). Unfortunately, the rendering is seriously defective, insofar as "voz" and "voces" is translated as "voice" and "voices." Of course, one realizes the reason: Mignolo has a case to prove, namely that Nebrija is attempting to control the "voice." But as should be clear from the context, and is confirmed throughout Nebrija's writings, the correct rendering for "voz" and "voces" is "word" and "words."18 The effect is to detract

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18 Antonio Quilis, the editor of the modern edition of the *Gramática*, alerts us to the terminological distinction in Nebrija between "palabra" and "voz," the first referring to
somewhat from Mignolo's central thesis concerning the taming of the "voice." Nebrija, to reiterate, is actually advocating the secondary status of writing. True, the grammarian celebrated alphabetic writing as the end result of an evolutionary process, but as things stand, he appears to have a point regarding the proliferation of signs under the pictographic or syllabic system, when compared to the economy of the alphabetic system (cf. Havelock 94). Literacy, we do not doubt, was put to all kinds of ideological uses in Western society, but that was only to be expected within a class society. Revealingly, the prohibition upon evolution is quickly lifted in the European context: Renaissance men of letters, such as Nebrija and Aldrete, "could not have had the perspective one has today on colonized peripheries" (Mignolo 1995: 67). Such performative contradictions constitute the weft and warp of Mignolo's text.

We will restrict ourselves to a number of comments with respect to Mignolo's reading of Aldrete, who, it is claimed, inclines towards the priority of speech over writing (1995: 43). The contrast that Mignolo proceeds to draw with Nebrija is, we believe, scarcely more justified, and certainly no more helpful, than Mignolo's earlier analysis of Nebrija. True, Aldrete tended toward an Aristotelian conventionalism that prioritized speech, but the contrast is not with Nebrija, whose position (we have seen) basically coincides with his own, but with the Platonic naturalists such as Andrés de Poza (see Read 1977a) and, within the realm of orthography, Pedro de Madariaga, who attaches great significance to writing (see Read 1978b). More importantly, Mignolo's reading exhibits the same interpretive bias that led him seriously astray in the case of Nebrija. Basically, the colonial critic is out to target Aldrete, and deploys his rhetorical skills to that effect. The Spaniard, "[w]ith a calm and ghastly conviction" (1995: 33), states that the Amerindians, disrespectfully referred to as "aquella gente," lacked any kind of letters and, therefore, civility (34). He then "blatantly" proceeds to argue the correlation between their lack of letters and their lack of dress (letters being the dress of speech). Now while Aldrete is certainly a creature of his times, who took on board uncritically many of the stereotypical characterizations of Amerindians circulating in Spain, Mignolo's moralism is not, we believe, the appropriate response and compares unfavorably with the contributions of liberal scholarship, some of which is far more sensitive to the nuanced interplay between cultural stereotypes and the newly acquired "scientific" knowledge otherwise in evidence in Aldrete's text (cf. Guitarte).

Details aside, Mignolo's discussion is marred throughout by lessons

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the word in its "graphemic" aspect and the second to the word in its "phonic" aspect (Nebrija 1980: 46).

19 For the importance of language to the relations of production, see Read 1992: 48-49.
imbibed from Foucault and his other postmodern authorities. We have in mind particularly the tendency to collapse different kinds of power into one category, notably power conceived in its transformative capacity into power conceived as exploitative and domineering. From a power that is intrinsically exploitative, Mignolo moves to the generalized suspicion of knowledge and, more specifically, science, which is portrayed as a universally oppressive discourse. There is a striking contrast here with the Althusserian tradition, for which science produces knowledge effects that may or may not be contaminated by power (see Resch 228, also Bhaskar 1993: 153). While ideology invades sciences on a daily basis, through the spontaneous behavior of its individual practitioners, and while it might not always be easy to separate truth-seeking procedures from those relating to social functionality, a distinction is always possible in principle. That principle presupposes, at root, a commitment both to ontological realism and judgemental rationalism, to be contrasted with the irrationalism so deeply pervasive of Mignolo's texts. Realists are emphatic that we can have better or worse grounds for adopting a particular view.

The Dress of Speech

In a passing reference Mignolo concedes that the spread of Western literacy took different directions, due to sometimes conflicting ideas about language, writing and cultural ideologies (1995: 45). He himself refrains from pursuing them for, one surmises, several reasons. Firstly, it would have meant complicating his homogenized view of "Europe"/"Western" culture, which, obviously, would have detracted somewhat from the effect of the opposition between it and its (equally homogenized) Amerindian counterpart. Secondly, insofar as Nebrija and Aldrete constituted two isolated "performers," Mignolo feels under little obligation to contextualize their work. As we have seen, he had no interest in theorizing knowledge developmentally, as a social activity. His aim was rather to manipulate texts for immediate ideological purposes. These purposes need to be set against the considerable body of Hispanic scholarship on Renaissance linguistics already in existence, and that Mignolo ignores.

We have distinguished elsewhere between two conflicting perspectives on the nature of language, the Platonic, naturalist view and the Aristotelian, conventionalist view (see Read 1977a, 1978a), together with their corresponding perspectives on linguistic change, devolutionary in the case of the naturalist thesis and cyclical in the case of its conventionalist counterpart (see Read 1977b; Read and Trethewey). This scholarship was subsequently reconceptualized within the framework of psychoanalysis (Read 1990: 1-26) and Althusserian Marxism (Read 1993). The challenge, from the standpoint of
the latter, was to establish the connections and necessary mediations between, on the one hand, the more general aspects of the relevant social formations and, on the other, linguistic and orthographical theory, on the outer reaches of the ideological level. Suffice it for our present purposes to focus briefly on two scholars writing at the end of the period in question, Bravo Graxera (1635), notable for his defence of writing and etymological orthography, and Mateo Alemán (1608), who will usefully serve to offset Mignolo’s simplistic view of the period as dominated by subservience to writing.

In contradistinction to Foucault, with his emphasis upon uniform, epistemic practices, we insist that there had to be at least two approaches to issues of orthography in Spain during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, for the simple reason that, as we argued earlier, there existed at least two ideologies: substantialism, the ideology of a dominant nobility, and animism, the ideology of the emergent bourgeoisie. The first rests upon the importance of "blood" and "lineage," and the substantial nature of clothing, therefore of orthographical trappings. In the words of Gonzalo Bravo Graxera: "Son las vozes el cuerpo del sentido, la Orthographia el vestido de las vozes, decente es que se vistan las letras con aliño, i propiedad" (Bravo Graxera, fol. A3v). Interestingly, and pace Mignolo, Bravo Graxera sees himself as battling against a dominant phoneticist bias, which accorded pre-eminence to speech. To this bias, Graxera opposes the need to preserve etymology and thereby information concerning the derivation of individual words. Within the horizon of substantialism, things gravitate towards what they substantially are, upon reaching which they would ideally come to rest. Stasis, not movement, is the norm: "Lo mismo es de las palabras peregrinas, que viven entre nosotros; aunque por la dificultad de los characteres, ó por otras causas las vistamos en nuestro mismo trage en la sustancia" (fols 4v-5r).

True, for Bravo Graxera, words manifest the concepts of things, as Aristotle says, but they are, in other respects, no different from tables and chairs in that they have their own substantial qualities, which are interfered with on pain of radically transforming the meaning of words, as when "h" is omitted from "hombre" and "traer". Words, that is to say, function not as signs but as signatures, written in the book of God, the transformation of which threatens to obscure God’s message, already jeopardized by the effects of the Fall: "[…] porque no carecen de mysterio los menores characters de las vozes sagradas i mas los que están explicando su origen" (fol 17v). The specter of chaos is conjured up, given the idea that each province might adapt orthography to its own dialectical norms of pronunciation. Manifestly, Bravo Graxera was resisting the forces of change that, during the transition, were threatening established hierarchies, as feudal interests were undermined by a new mercantilism. Social change, for the etymologist, corresponded, in any of
its forms, to social decay and degeneration.

Yet for animism, the progressive ideology that greased the new social relations, it was imperative to strip language bare, to reveal the beauties of the flesh:

Tengo por impertinente dezir, que las diciones que se derivan de otras lenguas, esten obligadas a guardar el orden i letras de su natural (si aviendolas traído à nuestro úso, i siendo en el admitidas, necesariamente las mas dellas cuando llegan, vienen mui otras i estropeadas) pues no ai razon porque se deva respetar su linaje, sino à la parte, lugar i calidad como sirven; de donde disen, cual te hállo, tal te júsgo" (Alemán, fol. 12r).

Thus writes Mateo Alemán, for whom, as for Orpheus, "El mundo esta compuesto con armonia de sones" (fol. 1v), a reminder of the neo-Platonism that underscored this early bourgeois expression of the "free subject" or "beautiful soul," as the subject was known in its embryonic form. By this stage in his career, Alemán had transferred himself to the New World, where he doubtless felt less inhibited when it came to expressing impatience towards the undignified, slavish worship of things past:

Esto pasa en la ortografia, que como nuestra vulgar tuvo principios barvaros, (lo cual no niego, ni me nieguen ser de mayor grandeza, la jenerosidad i valor, en el hijo de umildes padres, que la vituperosa haragania, del que los tuvo nobles, i fue dejenerando dellos) escrivieron como quisieron o como supieron, diziendo a las vegadas o me, nusco, atañe, tenudos, fijos, maguer i desaguisado; lo cual, despues aca se à venido puliendo i perficionando, en cuanto à las palabras, dejandose las letras olvidadas, i no reparando en ellas. (fol. 20v)

At this stage, let us recall (see Rodríguez 1990), Spain itself was experiencing a resurgence of substantialist, therefore feudal, values, of the kind that found expression in Graxera.

Possibly the most remarkable aspect of Alemán's work is his attack upon substance, in the interests of mobility. The latter was an integral component of the new bourgeois ideology. If the substantialist saw all things as tending towards stasis, Alemán sees them as always changing. From which position it is but a short step to a whole general social philosophy of progress, in which the Lacedonians are lambasted for famously opposing all forms of innovation. The contrary attitude (to that of the Lacedonians) looks to human inventiveness and creativity at all levels, not least at the political, of which Alemán saw evidence all around him, in the printing press, the invention of clocks, the compass, etc., each one unknown to the Ancients.

The alphabet figures preeminently among the other major inventions of mankind, although without thereby detracting from the primacy of speech,
upon which Alemán is always insistent. Consider the following:

Tambien sabemos del hablar, ser mas antiguo que la pluma, nadie lo duda; y si à la mayor ancianidad, se debe mas justa reverencia, no se me podrá negar, tocarle derechamente á las palabras i no a los escritos […] La diferencia que hazen los vivos à los defuntos, los ombres a las estatutas, esa misma es la que llevan à los escritos las palabras, por ser los criados los escritos, i las palabras dueños i señores de ellos. (fol. 81r)

And these, we insist, are not the stray remarks of some individual eccentric, but the cogent expression of a new social class, epitomized by Juan de Valdés' command to "write as we speak." True, such animist sentiments were increasingly repeated at a writer's peril, in the face of a resurgent feudalism, masterminded by the Inquisition, but clearly, even in the early 17th century, we are still some way from the blanket condemnation of speech suggested by Mignolo.

Los Francezes, para pintar sabio à su Ercules, no le ponian plumas en la mano, sino cadenas de oro en la lengua […]. Pues que sean las palabras, mucho (sin comparacion) mas duraderas que los escritos no aí duda; porque, si se considera la verdad, senzilla i desapasionadamente, las palabras quedan impresas en los animos que son eternos […], i los escritos nos los dejaron en hojas de palmas, corteza de arboles […]; lo cual, se gastó con el tiempo. (fol. 82r)

Incommensurability: Books and Maps

Mignolo engages in a number of cultural topics that reproduce the theoretical aporiai that we have encountered in his discussion of Renaissance linguistics. We will focus on his comparison between the Amerindian amoxtli and the modern European book, and on contrasting cartographical traditions. Spaniards and Mexicas, the argument runs, had not only different ways of transmitting knowledge but also, as is natural, different concepts of the activities of reading and writing. The Mexicas privileged the act of observing and telling out loud the stories of what they were looking at (the movements of the sky or the black and the red ink). Spaniards, in contrast, stressed reading the word, as opposed to the world, and made the letter the anchor of knowledge and understanding (Mignolo 1995: 105). The result: two distinct, incommensurable notions of what it was to read, which can be compared but cannot be ordered hierarchically, and which, accordingly, lend themselves to the claims of the cultural relativist.

Now of course there can be no quarrel with such claims in themselves. Treating members of any socially-based categories, in this case the amoxtli and the book, as sharing the same essential properties is particularly risky. That said,
we are still left with a question to resolve: if the objects have nothing in common, then why are we comparing them? Mignolo replies as follows: "If the properties that make an object a book are neither in the object nor in the class of objects of which the book is one example (mainly because there is no such thing as an essential meaning supporting all different ideas of the book but, rather, changing conceptions of sign carriers), then we have to seek an answer to the question within the specific cultural descriptions of similar kinds of objects" (1995: 120). Presumably, he has in mind a theory of similarity or, in Wittgensteinian terms, "family resemblance," but the question is never clarified, and related issues are left unresolved. What, after all, explains the breathtaking similarity between, on the one hand, the Mexicas' commitment to reading the world and, on the other, feudal, substantialist notions of the World as a Book? Mignolo is even less forthcoming on differences within the European tradition. We have in mind, particularly, the transition from the notion of the book to the preoccupation with individual "lives." Such a transition, it should be noted, fits in rather snugly with the Althusserian focus upon the existence of two ideological matrices, of feudal substantialism and bourgeois animism (see Rodríguez 2001). The book is a quintessentially substantialist genre, the "life," a new creation by animism. Mignolo is silent on such issues, confirming the suspicion that, "with an arrogance thinly masked as humility," in the words of Eagleton, "the culture of the Other assumes that there are no major conflicts or contradictions within the social majority themselves" (Eagleton 2003: 21).

Far more worrying than these omissions, however, is the way in which Mignolo uses differences between cultural objects to argue that the Mexicas were also alien to "the Western notion of truth" (1995: 108), since at this point cultural (and epistemic) relativism begins to transform itself into something qualitatively different, namely judgemental relativism, relating to classificatory schemes imposed by the various imperial powers that are deemed to enact the coloniality of power: "[…] the entire planet […] becomes articulated in such production of knowledge and classificatory apparatus" (2000: 17). Now while, as we have insisted throughout, science is certainly implicated in issues of power, including those that involve master-slave relationships, this fact can form no basis for the ontological irrealism that Mignolo seeks, somewhat surreptitiously, to instate. There is a fundamental difference in principle between, on the one hand, categories of cultural objects, embedded in localized communities, and, on the other, scientific categorization, which presupposes the existence of natural kinds, established on the basis of real underlying essences or mechanisms. The molecular structure of a metal is not something that European scientists have brought into being and seek brutally and arbitrarily to impose upon the rest of mankind. Categorial realism makes it
clear that you can be wrong in your basic characterization of the world, and that the history of science is one of increasingly accurate categorization of the world, as access is gained to progressively deeper levels of reality (Bhaskar 2002c: 138).

Predictably, matters are brought to a head over cartography. It is hard, at first blush, to see exactly where the problem lies. Maps, it is clear, have been burdened throughout the ages by every manner of ideological baggage. That much, we can all concede. The problem arises regarding the question as to whether maps can be said to refer or correspond, in their essence, to reality. Realists would insist that they can. Mignolo, just as brazen, argues that they cannot or rather that the difference between, say, Jesuit and Chinese cartography was relevant "not at the level of true correspondence between maps and the world but at the level of power" (1995: 225-26). On this basis, maps are reduced to exercises in power, notably of the kind involved in master/slave relations, and thereby relieved of any referential responsibilities. While the world may appear to be opposed to the word or map, "[t]he dichotomy vanishes when a distinction is made between existence (or the materiality of what is there) and the description of what there is." Mignolo continues: "A description of the world is what makes it relevant to us, not its mere existence. The domains that human being can perceive or describe are much more limited than what there is. Expanding knowledge is, precisely, the human capacity of expanding the range of descriptions without exhausting the ontological domains" (227).

Now this is familiar enough territory. The tactic is to reduce culture to textualization, whose density constitutes a reflective barrier to the external world. Language, we saw, is not about denotation but one's capacity to impose descriptions or, rather, redescriptions on the community. But books and words are one thing: they may be said to have a density that leads inexorably toward idealism, in some shape or form. Can Mignolo pull off the trick regarding maps, where issues of practical adequacy seem, on the face of it, more compelling? As the colonialist himself concedes: "[T]he problem was (and still is) that López de Velasco was closer to the 'real' shape of the New World than Guaman Poma" (253). A problem? Possibly, but not one really to trouble the irrealist, who rejects any notion of correspondence and whose discourse has the capacity to suck up whole land masses in the twinkling of an eye: "America was not an existing entity in the middle of an unknown ocean, waiting to be discovered, but […] a European invention." (264). It is all very strange. On the one hand, Mignolo concedes the existence of a land mass, but then, on the basis that our understanding of it is mediated through imperialist language and culture, immediately withdraws the concession: "Putting the Americas on the map from the European perspective was not necessarily a task devoted to
finding the true shape of the earth; it was also related to controlling territories and colonizing the imagination of people on both sides of the Atlantic: Amerindians and Europeans” (281).

On closer inspection, everything hinges on an adverbial phrase. One might accept that the task cartography set itself was not simply that of finding the true shape of the earth, but "not necessarily"? Surely, a map would not be a map if it were not "necessarily" committed to representing reality. Moreover, could not the two issues – representation and power – be interconnected? Couldn't finding the true shape have something to do with a state's capacity, including military capacity, to control a territory? Not for the first time, one is struck by just how undialectical Mignolo is as a thinker. Consider also the claim that: "Economic expansion, technology and power, rather than truth, characterized European cartography early on" (311). Here the "rather than" is certainly a genuine concession, although minimal. But once it is conceded that truth is relevant, why should that relevance not have something to do with economic expansion, not to mention the possession of superior weaponry and militaristic strategies? After all, it was the Mexicas who lost the imperial struggle with the Spaniards. Is it not conceivable, indeed, very likely, that the Spaniards' superior capacity to visualize space (if, indeed, that is what they possessed) was one of the deciding factors?

As always, problems regarding reference spill over into the question of evolution. Mignolo objects to the idea that cartography may be said to progress or that maps gradually become more accurate. But in that case, how do we explain that, toward 1555 "the world began to look to our hypothetical European observer very much as it does today for many people on this planet" (1995: 267)? Presumably, following the logic of Mignolo's argument, because Europeans imposed their regional wishes by force, on a global scale. But such logic cannot help but seem rather curious. One wonders how the irrealist is able to cope on a day-to-day basis, given that his physical well-being, if not survival, will sometimes depend on the representational accuracy of his maps. The answer, of course, is that he copes at the cost of ongoing performative contradictions. Thus, Mignolo concedes, in an unguarded moment, that, when compared to their European equivalent, Amerindian maps were "very imprecise as far as location (longitude and latitude) is concerned" (299). But if one's real location is an irrelevance, why the concern about issues of precision?

We are reminded of Bhaskar's story of the idealist who protested the world to be a figment of his imagination and then insisted on leaving by the door on the ground floor, as opposed to the window on the third.

It is at this point, if not before, that one begins to suspect that the nub of the issue must lie elsewhere. Specifically, we would draw attention to Mignolo's tendency to equate correspondence with resemblance or, as he terms
it, "similarities" or "visual likeness" (1995: 332), in an attempt to disqualify the view of human beings as "the mirror of nature" (333). The colonialist concludes: "If one looks at cultural objects as results of activities responding to human needs rather than artifacts by means of which the mirror of nature is extended and the nature of the world is captured in visual signs, then enactment becomes more relevant than representation" (334). The critique of specular metaphors continues in Mignolo's subsequent work, which condemns the metaphysical belief in the capacity of language in the sciences to "mirror" reality (2000: 76). Such considerations, is has to be said, are irrelevant to a critical realist. Whoever thought of science as "mirroring" reality? Certainly not scientists themselves who, to judge by their practice, aim to isolate and explain the mechanisms underlying empirical reality, otherwise what is mirrored (on the surface). But Mignolo scarcely pauses to catch his breath. Critical realism is the least of his concerns as he undertakes to obliterate any philosophically significant differences between factual and fictional discourse, as part of a campaign to promote a deflationary account of science and its claims to objective analysis of the world.

Local Histories, Global Designs

The juxtaposition of local and global designs in Mignolo's mature work could be taken as indicating an immunity to one of the charges commonly laid against postmodernism, namely its failure, nay refusal (because it is a principle openly acknowledged), to universalize or, as postmodernists themselves would have it, to totalize. Mignolo's exceptionalism in this respect, however, turns out to be more apparent than real, and rests, precariously, upon the move to take on board, somewhat belatedly, the World System of Immanuel Wallerstein. Briefly, World System Analysis approaches the transition from feudalism to capitalism from the standpoint of the growth of trade, of a powerful class of merchants, and of towns as the center of both. Wallerstein stresses the importance of the conquest of the American colonies in the transition. Europe's upper strata, he argues, responded to a crisis of feudal society in the 15th century by overseas expansion and the creation of colonies and politically dependent zones. The operations of a commerce based on "unequal exchange" guaranteed the transferal of surplus from the "periphery" to the "core" (Wallerstein).

Why the World System, as opposed to any other theoretical model? As Mignolo himself quite properly explains, it offers definite advantages to the Hispanist qua colonialist. Specifically, it proposes a narrative that begins in the 16th century and not, as do its postcolonial counterparts, in the 18th century (Mignolo 2000: 18-19 and passim). The effect is to lend prominence to a period of crucial importance for Hispanic culture, but one which Anglophone accounts of coloniality systematically repress. One question that Mignolo does
not ask is why he chose Wallerstein and not Rodríguez, who had developed a whole research program on the transition from feudalism to capitalism that was perfectly tailored to suit the requirements of the Hispanist. Several reasons suggest themselves. Firstly, Mignolo is convinced that Marxism, whatever its virtues as a system of economic analysis, is mired in an expressive totality of Hegelian extraction (2000: 86). Secondly, Rodríguez is an intellectual who operates in Spain, a country whose theoretical culture has been systematically repressed in the North American academy (with the active collusion of Mignolo). Thirdly, and somewhat paradoxically, Rodríguez's very strengths were a drawback as far as Mignolo would have been concerned: what he (Rodríguez) offered was not a supplementary package to the Mignolo brand of colonial theory, but, through his highly developed theory of the ideological unconscious, an alternative to it. In contrast, World System Analysis is characterized by a deficiency that Mignolo was able to turn to good account, namely its bias toward political economy as opposed to cultural analysis (see Shannon 204-07). The little that Wallerstein does have to contribute to the latter is curiously wayward. For while he recognizes the 16th century as a key stage in the development of a world system, he argues that it was only in the 18th century that an appropriate ideology appears. In his own words, the world system "functioned for three centuries […] without any firmly established geoculture" (quoted Mignolo 2000: 56). As Mignolo observes, such limitations render Wallerstein complicit with a postmodern concept of modernity that, by foregrounding the Enlightenment, minimalizes the Iberian contribution to the "epistemological imagery of the modern world system" (56).

Mignolo naturally sees his own role as rectifying Wallerstein's biases and omissions. However, in contrast to the Althusserian approach, in which the economic, political and ideological are pervaded, notwithstanding their autonomy, by the matrix effect of the mode of production, Mignolo's whole work rests predictably upon the assumption that it is consciousness or ideas that ultimately determine material being or material things, to the exclusion of economic analysis, at least of a Marxist kind. The implicit model is one that postulates the existence of an ideology or, to use Mignolo's term, "imaginary" that imprints itself upon the subject qua tabula rasa, in the form of contents, themes or ideas. What this reduces to, as a moment's contemplation will reveal, is a neo-Kantian split between form and matter, to be contrasted with the Althusserian or critical realist view, for which ideology is secreted unconsciously, at the level of social relations. By the Althusserian estimate, to imagine ourselves as free agents, given the complexity of this structural mode

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20 Such a critique would be of dubious relevance to Rodríguez, given the Althusserian's notorious opposition to the Hegelian element in Marx and his commitment to "unity in differences."
of determination, can never be very productive in the social sciences. Nor, from the same standpoint, does it help to think of history as a project of conscious self-emancipation, or to frame laws of historical motion in such terms.

Mignolo, it is true, does not systematically spell out his own position: rather he operates on the level of inarticulate awareness – that of the dominant bourgeois ideology – at which issues of causality are left hanging or given an idealist twist. Thus, the expansion of hegemonic forms of knowledge "shaped the very conception of economy" (Mignolo 2000: 22); a new imaginary is not secreted by social relations but mysteriously and intrasitively "coalesces" (38), like a hidden spirit; the imaginary of the modern world system functions as a "parallel construction" (64) with respect to the market circuit; in the 16th century, a form of knowledge became hegemonic "in complicity and in complementarity" (75) with economic history; liberation from religious structures in pre-modern Europe "went together with" the formation of economic relations, just as the same pattern "underlines" (in a quote from Anibal Quijano [212]) both knowledge and property relations; England began to surpass Spain "when the content of its imaginary began to change" (230); it makes sense to see neo-liberalism as a new form of civilization "and not just a new economic organization" (279); economic activity, in the form of globalization, can simply "dispense with" (287) ideology; after 1945, the centers of cultures of scholarship mysteriously "began to be relocated" (304) in the United States; and we bear witness to the "confluence" of industrial and social relations (317), etc.

While individually these examples amount to little, and could be explained away, as simple turns of phrase, their cumulative effect is such as to generate a notably culturalist bias. In the battle between cultures and civilization, otherwise between diverse local histories and global history, as rehearsed by Mignolo, the former are able resist the forces of capitalist globalization, through individuals who determine how they receive dominant cultures, whose artifacts they are able to mold transculturally. By implication, it matters little who owns the means of production. The further assumption is that knowledge exerts causal primacy over the production and reproduction of natural, physical being. The logic of his argument is inexorable, given Mignolo's epistemological, as opposed to ontological, bias, and the philosophical irrealism that underscores all his work.

In the end all academics, through their work, simply tell the story of their own lives, and Mignolo is no exception (cf. Read 2003a). Gradually the thread of an autobiographical sub-text emerges into the light of day. His birth in Argentina, his university education, the books he read, including an early, extra-curricular
acquaintance with Derrida, the cultural cringe and consequence animus against Europe, the shift to France, the relocation in North America, the frustrations of the subaltern intellectual within the American academy, his current cultural predilections, the burgeoning interest in colonial issues, etc. Yet in the end, as an exercise in self-reflexivity, the narrative fails, and it is not hard to see why. The references to different loci of enunciation are strictly geographic. "By bringing this piece of autobiography into the foreground, I have no intention of promoting a determinist relationship between place of birth and personal destiny. I do not believe that someone born in New York will be a broker, anymore than someone born in San Luis Potosí will be a miner or someone born in Holland a miller" (1995: 6). But, one wonders, what of the more social determinations behind Mignolo's formation? On a point of detail, which quarter of his native city was he born in? Was it a public or private school that he attended? And while we are on the subject, what did his father do for a living? Without such information we are left with a postmodern narrative that, while it refuses the impersonality of its modernist counterpart, demonstrates a notable lack of reflexivity, and for predictable reasons. For as Bhaskar explains: "Reflexivity involves an understanding of the self in relation to its context; and the consequence of the failure of post-modernism to sustain adequate contextualization means that its increasing emphasis on self is ultimately nugatory of any true understanding" (Bhaskar 2002a: 34-35). And thus comes home to roost the last of Mignolo's irrealist birds.

The Colonial Criticism of José Rabasa

As Bryan S. Turner has amply documented in *Marxism and the End of Orientalism*, Marxism itself is plagued with Hegelian Eurocentric conceptual devices […] We must not only avoid imposing a Hegelian grid but also destroy the ground upon which Marx, Hegel and all models of "development" or acculturation build their historical stages (Rabasa 1993: 18).

Nothing is more arresting, to members of an older generation at least, than the ease with which the self-proclaimed post-Marxist, of recent vintage, says goodbye to all that. It is, to be sure, not exactly an unfamiliar phenomenon: after all, reformism and desertion has been with Marxism since its origins in the 19th century, and, the gains of the October Revolution notwithstanding, each decade of the 20th century was marked by political
events that forced upon comrades and fellow-travellers a settling of accounts. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956, for example, saw many distancing themselves from the communist movement in some, if not all, of its manifestations. Particularly revealing in this respect are the career trajectories of such writers as E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams and Hobsbawm, to name but three examples.\textsuperscript{21} The same is true of the '68 generation, many of whose gurus – Barthes, Lyotard, Kristeva come to mind – had a fraught relationship with Marxist ideas. But even those such as Michel Foucault, who from the beginning more or less took up a position outside Marxism, could invariably be found structuring their arguments with an eye to Marxism, to the extent that, as Eagleton has recently observed, they contrived never to leave it behind (Eagleton 2003: 35).

Such was not true of the generation that followed, which, while in large part inspired by Foucault's ideas, found it much easier to relinquish the Marxist legacy. Symptomatic in this respect is the above deployment of Turner's \textit{Marx and the End of Orientalism}, a work conceived – by its author at least – not as attempting to disqualify Marxism – which is what Rabasa implies – but to promote an Althusserian, as opposed to Hegelian, Marxist program. To be more precise, Turner sees his work as contributing to the Marxist theorization of pre-capitalist modes of production, which was confessedly still in its infancy (Turner 2). This said, it is also true that the same writer is resisting an emergent post-Marxism, as embodied in the work of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, who are seen as heralding a return toward Weberian sociology (84-85). Hindess and Hirst were, in fact, to be typical of those who, over the ensuing couple of decades, managed to keep one foot in and one foot outside Marxism, before finally shifting over into the non-Marxist camp. Here they were joined by members of the generation that matured in the '90s, whose familiarity with the canon is much more mediated and indirect.

The aim below will be to scrutinize the basic theoretical positions assumed by this self-proclaimed post-Marxist generation. Towards this end, I have chosen to focus upon José Rabasa, whose work, ambitious in scope and forcefully argued, has become a focus of attention within the domain of Hispanic (colonial) studies. My strategy will be to continue the project of renewal that was undertaken by Turner and commandeered by Rabasa for his own ends. From this perspective, the view of Marx as a philosopher of history was always distorting and one-sided. Marx, the Althusserians argued, quickly abandoned the Hegelian notion of history as the fulfillment of its idea, in favor of its alternatives, namely the conception of "history without a subject" and the aleatory instance of the class struggle. Such Marxiological distinctions,

\textsuperscript{21} Each case had its complexities. Williams, for example, managed to negotiate a rapprochement to Marxism in later years.
it has to be said, are the last thing on the minds of the newer generation of culture critics who, their opposition to Eurocentrism notwithstanding, are busy shopping in the more fashionable parts of Paris. Here, relativity, linguisticism, ontological irrealism, judgemental irrationalism, the emphasis upon individual identity, and Power (as opposed to exploitation) are all the rage. We believe, and will be aggressively arguing, that these positions are sustained by a social theory that is weak and incoherent.

The Linguistic Turn
Somewhere in the early 1970s, a whole series of disciplines in the Arts experienced a shift of paradigmatic proportions. Analysis gave way to description, the broad canvas to the miniature, economic and social structure to cultural detail, explanation to empathy. At first blush, it seemed to involve simply a change of mood rather than of intellectual direction, although pretty soon it became apparent, as the post-structuralist movement gathered momentum, that rather more was at stake, including the very distinction between fact and fiction. By the early 1990s the new trend had penetrated to the remoter corners of the anglophone academy, where it was enthusiastically embraced by a new generation of colonialists in the field of Hispanism. Rabasa's *Inventing America* perfectly captures the conjunctural moment:

> My emphasis on the production of America as something "new" – that is, semiotically created – challenges the view of the New World as a natural entity, discovered, revealed, or imperfectly understood. Consequently, I am less interested in issues regarding a distortion or misrepresentation of the New World than in how a new region of the world was invented, and how fiction (literary or otherwise) and history constitute complementary forms of understanding the "West" and "the Americas." (Rabasa 1993: 6)

A notably provocative but also curiously indecisive statement if one considers it carefully. Provocative insofar as Rabasa appears to be arguing for the semiotic origins of a continental landmass: America, it seems, did not exist until it was named. Can this be what the author intends? Of course, we readily concede that in its prehistory America was not called "America," a name resonant with every kind of historical, cultural and ideological nuance. Still, part of the being of America was there from the beginning – or so, at least, common sense protests –, which would distinguish it, say, from the landmass that became Antarctica. At which point an element of indecision increasingly enters into consideration.

Let us take Rabasa's conceptual challenge on board and further explore...
its textual ambiguities. Closer scrutiny reveals that the colonialist is not denying the existence of an external world or, presumably, our capacity to refer to it, but is simply confessing to being "less interested" in this existence than he is in the world of discourse, a position that is confirmed in his more recent work: "My use here [of the northern frontier of New Spain] seeks to foreground a geographic area that was written about, imagined, and mapped from a colonizing perspective, rather than a natural entity that was discovered, known and charted" (Rabasa 2000: 21). As if to counteract any bias towards irrealism, Rabasa adds: "It would be erroneous, however, to think that the people involved in colonial enterprises lacked the resolve to verify what a philosophical realist would call the brute physical facts and were content with ideological, willful claims to the territories" (21). True, it is not altogether clear whether Rabasa himself is equally attached to the belief in "brute physical facts," but the implication at least is that he is no idealist. Representation, then, and misrepresentation of the New World are perfectly feasible, or so Rabasa can be taken as implying: the emphasis is simply elsewhere, on what is in a name ("America"), which would explain why "fiction" and "history" are not mutually exclusive but "complementary forms," whose relation, presumably would need to be carefully nuanced.

In sum, there seems little to object to here. Indeed, the preoccupation with language, as the medium and vehicle of social thought and even of life itself, is indisputably something to be lauded. It was, after all, one of the achievements of Modernism to insist that reality does not spontaneously offer itself to the gaze – the claim of earlier 19th-century movements such as empiricism – but had to be revealed, laboriously. Further to which, most people would now generally concede that no discourse may lay claim to epistemological privilege when it comes to accessing reality. And if there are scholars, such as (allegedly) Tzvetan Todorov, who are concerned with issues of correspondence between Columbus' words and the reality to which they (mistakenly or otherwise) refer, then surely Rabasa is quite entitled to concern himself with the production, by Columbus, of a "New World code" and the construction of a "complex artifice" through which to "entice the imagination of his contemporaries" (Rabasa1993: 53). By the same token, he is also justified in focusing on the way in which actual events are narrated, and on associated questions (regarding whose complexity we can all agree), leaving on one side (but not excluding) questions of historical veracity (160).

Yet there are moments, it has to be said, when Rabasa, appears to be going beyond such straightforward claims. The stimulus here derives from a Nietzschean tradition that preceded the rise of high Modernism and from writers influenced by it, such as de Certeau, for whom historiography – as quoted by Rabasa (8) – "bears within its own name the paradox – almost an
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oxymoron – of a relation established between two antinomic terms, between the real and discourse." This definition, Rabasa comments, "enables us to understand the real as a product of discourse, rather than as an adequation of writing to a preexistent object" (8). Such claims, while still hedging their bets ("rather than") involve somewhat more than a shift of emphasis. What is being denied is not only the existence of any "correspondence" between our concepts and the way the world is, but the whole concept of representation, to the extent, at least, that it is implicated in the discourse of history. Objects, the argument runs, should be considered not as external but as internal to the "real" of discourse. As Rabasa, paraphrasing Barthes, explains:

A first operation separates the "referent" from discourse and gives it an extralinguistic existence – events are constituted as res gestae and discourse as historia rerum gestarum: in other words, it is presumed that facts have extralinguistic existence and that discourse merely tells their meaning. A second operation enmeshes meaning, the signified, with the referent; thus the discourse of history creates a semantic schema with two terms: the signifier and the referent. The elimination of the signified in history prompts the "effect of the real" with an insistent repetition: "it happened." And also claimed, by extension, is a direct access to reality and a referential plenitude in representation. (9)

To this, Rabasa opposes a model that joins the referent to the signified, and so brackets the former, leaving only the signifier and the signified, whose relation is inverted, in causal terms, insofar as the signifier now conditions the signified. The effect is to embed any kind of practice in the elaboration of the linguistic world, thereby allowing Rabasa to categorize any kind of performance as a discursive act. It is not that discourse produces some kind of material effect – let us be clear about this – but that the material act of producing it is what discourse is. A further consequence, we protest, is the fatal semiotic confusion between signified and referent, such that the distinction is lost between the "real" or "factual" and the "fantastic" or "fictive," or at least is construed in such a manner as to suggest that the signifier actually produces the referent: "Rather than presuming our standpoint as universal we should underscore that from Columbus onward the epistemic impasse was the result of the need to produce referents without antecedents in medieval or ancient accounts, where the end product was the invention of a desirable new world and not – as commonplace has it – the description of the new by means of the old" (Rabasa 2000: 121-22). On this basis, the referent has been drawn into, and is no longer exterior to, the realm of discourse. What Columbus is faced with, it follows, is not a new reality but the task of "fabricating new parcels of reality in a new geographic region" (122).

Now this is idealism, sure enough, but of a special kind, based upon
constantly revolving standpoints that successfully disguise its epistemological status as such. At one moment Rabasa concedes that America, as part of the external world, is not constituted by mankind, and that although (or because?) we can detach ourselves from it, we can say something about it. But then the identity between the signifier and signified leads him to retract this concession and to claim that "America" only exists in our discursive constructions. In other words, he pulls the referent back to its constitution in discourse. This is extremely peculiar. Whether the referent exists or not is surely an important question, so why should Rabasa talk as if it were not? Why the enthusiasm to foreground "semiotic warfare" (Rabasa 1993: 160), at the expense of its literal, only too carnal counterpart? His more recent work, far from dispelling any concern we may feel, has only emphasized the extent of his neo-Kantian disinterest in the thing-in-itself: "One does find legends (in the Latin sense of legenda, things to be read) in Columbus' letters and the Diario, but rather than just identifying the allusions to legends (both in Columbus and the accounts of the northern frontiers) as an indication of a territory pursued in vain, we ought to trace how legends are transformed through the descriptions of the places regardless of whether these were (from our cultural vantage point) imaginary or real entities" (Rabasa 2000: 122, italics added).

Scepticism about the World

There is a logical progression from the concern with language to the "invention" of America, through which to capture the process of colonization. The Indians' preferred option, Rabasa acknowledges, is the rather different concept of "invasion," which manifestly caters for their need to foreground the facts of "opportunistic exploitation" (Rabasa 1993: 7). But "facts," or at least "factualism," are precisely what Rabasa is out to problematize. Doubtless there is an important difference between the two, which the colonialist might well have been advised to emphasize: after all, it is one thing to oppose factual knowledge and another to condemn a particular positivist ideology that excludes what cannot be seen, measured, touched, etc. But Rabasa makes no such distinction, with the result that he is constantly seen to dismiss the claims of reference: "It is a counterfiction as a means of trying the dominance of Western institutional fictions that is of interest here, and definitely not a straightening out of the record" (9). Fictional accounts, then, are not to be replaced by "truer" accounts, which are closer to the real, but by alternative fictions, the end result of which is that the grounds for differentiating the real from the fantastic "collapse into a play of mirrors and cross references" (36). Gone, in the process, is any claim to "objectivity" and indeed to "truth," which fade away into the realm of signification. But this is a price that the student of Nietzsche is prepared to pay: "The possibility of multiple arrangements of
particulars," Rabasa suggests, with reference to certain maps, "presupposes a conception of the world as semiotic invention rather than a representation of reality that would purportedly reflect natural spatial relations" (185). At such moments, when he denies all validity to the distinction between the "discursive" and "non-discursive," the colonialist teeters on the brink of deviating from his other mentor, Michel Foucault, through whom so much of the Nietzschean influence passes but who otherwise refused to surrender totally to linguisticism.

Basically, then, Rabasa does not like making ontological commitments. He aspires not to an "anti-fiction," delivered from some epistemological vantage point above discourse, but to a "counter-fiction," which, while preserving a critical impulse, concedes the impossibility of getting outside of language. It is on this basis that Rabasa finds fault with the work of Beatriz Pastor, who "assumes that one can distinguish a real New World from mythified versions," and so "evades [...] the fact that the New World, or the reality of America for that matter, consists of a web of references, images, symbols, and legends, if not prejudices and deeply embedded Eurocentric devices, which Columbus inaugurates." This discursive perspective, Rabasa insists, "cannot be simply dismissed by appealing to some readily identifiable natural entity existing 'out there' in some unproblematic fashion" (224-25n6).

The outcome is an ontological irrealism that, pressed to its extreme, excludes the possibility of saying anything about the true nature of reality, a position from which Rabasa is saved only by a literary license and philosophical vagueness – he confesses to a disinterest in "cogent theory" (10) – that excuse him from the need to define his concepts. This irrealism has only deepened in the later work, in which "writing about violence" slides inexorably towards "writing violence", itself conceived as an act of violence (Rabasa 2000: 28). In the absence of referents, the attempt to bear witness ends up by turning upon itself, with the result that condemnations of power structures become, in the manner outlined by Foucault, implicated in the same structures.

Our own position, however, is that there is little need for such pessimism. It is possible to concede all the postmodernist's positions – that signs can never bridge the gap between themselves and their referents, that to refer to reality one has, in a sense, first to disengage from it, etc. – and yet resist some of the dire consequences that Rabasa sees as following inevitably from them. For, to begin with, the more sophisticated realists (of which admittedly Pastor may not be one) never argue that language refers to the world "in some unproblematic fashion," as if through an organic bond; on the contrary, for them the act of reference is always complex in the extreme and every possible care is needed in theorizing it. Secondly, one can accept that knowledge is socially produced, and therefore characterized by every kind of prejudice,
while still holding out for the existence of a real world, replete with structures and generative mechanisms, which function independently of us (see Bhaskar 1989a: 44-54). And thirdly, there is a certain irony in the fact that Rabasa castigates Pastor for her blindness to Eurocentric devices when he is engaged precisely in reducing ontology, which deals with the question of being, to epistemology, which grapples with the problem of how we can know being. For such a reduction, as Roy Bhaskar has insisted, has been the founding gesture of European philosophy since Descartes (see Bhaskar 1978: 36-45).

How might the debate develop from here? One imagines that Rabasa would feel inclined to reiterate, firstly that he had only ever wished to promote an interest in the "geographic invention" of the world, rather than – a simple shift of emphasis – the "truth" (whatever that might mean) of the historical record itself, an interest in representation and discursive exchange, rather than actual historical events; and secondly, that his decision to mount a critique of colonial discourse from within the framework of a colonizing language and culture, however effective, tactically speaking, was bound to come at a price, namely, contamination by the very Eurocentrism that is the object of his critique. But the colonialist might also wish to argue, more aggressively, that the "ontological primacy" (Rabasa 1993: 7) of America was never a matter of indifference to him, as proven by the importance he attaches to "very real forms of colonization and exploitation" (215n 2); and his insistence that racism has "very real consequences" (4), which included the loss of possibly 80% of the indigenous population between 1576 and 1580 (125). Finally, it could conceivably be claimed that evidence of a belief in reality can be found throughout Rabasa's work. Consider, for example, the manner in which he dismisses as "nothing but a textual illusion" the notion of an imperialist conquest carried out by a handful of Spaniards (122), the obvious implication being that other notions are much more firmly grounded. And the examples could be multiplied.

So why, then, are we making such an issue of the colonialist's irrealism? For the following reasons: firstly, the balancing act, between the subjective and objective, is a mere tactical maneuver, resting on little more than the semantic ambiguity of such terms as "invention"; secondly, the force of the realist statements made by Rabasa is constantly undermined by a relativism that threatens, theoretically, to leave nothing untouched – even racism, however real its consequences, is significant as an "illusion" or "European construct" (4); thirdly, it is difficult to know how the respective fictions that Rabasa postulates can be evaluated in the absence of a common reference point in an extra-textual world; and finally, because Rabasa's brand of ontological scepticism is conducive to a radical paralysis of the will that has the capacity to invalidate any political program. This last point is worth elaborating. If what we do is
more or less arbitrary, then there is very little point in doing anything. But clearly, decisions must be taken – what Bhaskar calls the "axiological imperative" (Bhaskar 2002a: 236) – and in the absence of rational criteria for choosing what to do, there is always the temptation to do nothing, which, needless to say, is but one other way of taking a decision. Convention, we are saying, licenses the politics of inertia, a reminder that debates about epistemology and ontology can impact upon revolutionary politics. We will be exploring this issue further below, but before we do, let us tease out a little further the contradictory basis of Rabasa's brand of post-Marxism.

**Performative Contradictions**

"Leaving aside the question of whether his critiques of earlier interpretations are accurate or not, this transformation of the problem has cleared the ground for examining reconstructions and reinterpretation of 'discovery' no longer in the light of a correct version but according to the systems of representation prevalent during specific historical moments" (Rabasa 1993: 215n 2). The specific reference is to Edmundo O'Gorman's reconstruction of the "discovery of America." What such statements demonstrate, more generally, is the ease with which the neo-Kantian splits the universe into two parts, the domain of the socially determined, on the one hand, and the world that is external to it, on the other, before proceeding, in typically postmodern fashion, to privilege the former over the latter. This operation, which Rabasa performs repeatedly, at times with aplomb, at other times with a touch of élan, is worrying, on several counts. Firstly, it is tantamount to a failure to universalize, at a time when postmodernism itself has extended across the globe and cries out for analyses with a corresponding reach. And secondly, it leads Rabasa inevitably into contradiction as soon as he starts to promote interpretations of his own, to be appreciated by the "discriminating reader" (27), and to denigrate commentators that are deemed "reductive and naïve," "tend merely to repeat what they take to be obvious" (26), "betray a dull wit" (34), etc. For there is only one possible way in which such comparisons can be drawn, and that is by reference to the external world that Rabasa marginalizes, without whose controlling influence it is not clear how anyone is to be prevented from constructing the object in any way they want. To pretend otherwise is to produce a text, as Rabasa manifestly does, that is bound to be riddled with performative contradictions of every kind.

Of course, one understands his problem. Having reduced ontology to epistemology, the colonialist finds himself without an ontology, or at least with a reality whose natural kinds, categories, causal hierarchies, etc. are simply imposed upon it by mankind, from the outside. From such a thoroughly Nietzschean standpoint, it is impossible to say what reality is. Now this, it goes
without saying, is all very well in theory, but its consequences for any practical program or activity are catastrophic. The fact of the matter is that epistemology will have an ontology – quite simply it is impossible to speak intelligibly without one – and in the absence of a formalized one, will secrete an informal one (see Bhaskar 2002a: 37-40); which explains why Rabasa will sometimes assume an ontology that corresponds with positivism, otherwise the "factualist" realm of "things" and "events" that elsewhere he goes to such lengths to condemn. At this level, one might say, Rabasa has effectively critiqued empiricist epistemology, but not its ontology, which returns, like some form of the repressed, to entangle his arguments and reduce them to incoherence.

And it is not simply positivism that begins to rear its ugly head but a whole series of humanist, liberal, rationalist and even Marxist discourses from which Rabasa has previously distanced himself. Where, other than from these discourses, does Rabasa extract his factual information on the "colonialist machinery" constructed by Spanish imperialists, on the encomienda and repartimiento systems, etc. as the basis of "such salient colonialist features as the institution of slavery" (Rabasa 1993: 75)? On what basis, other than that provided by these discourses, can he argue that the new scriptural economy of the "Renaissance" is "capitalistic," in that it reproduces the terms of ownership of territories (56), as part of some over-all, not to say, universalizing historical process of "secularization"? Or know that the anti-slavery laws of 1542 were followed by plagues that greatly diminished the number of tributaries and gave momentum to the appropriation of land by Spaniards; that the 1540s and 1570s witnessed radical economic, social and political transformations; that Francisco de Oviedo was the Crown's official chronicler from 1532, etc.? It is not that Rabasa fails to list his sources but, on the contrary, that he lists them only too well, and that many presuppose realist ontologies that stand disqualified by his discursive brand of irrealism. To reiterate, one understands the nature of Rabasa's dilemma: he sometimes needs concepts for what has previously been ejected into an inaccessible or non-existent outside. And needless to say, he is entitled to presume (although no thanks to him) that his readers have a rough idea of what constitutes, say, a "conquering and capitalistic enterprise" (75). But that is not the point, which is that he has no right to draw upon a liberal scholarship that he has mocked for its epistemological naivety, and upon a Marxist scholarship whose "ground," let us recall, he aims to "destroy."

There is, it has to be said, a terrible irony about all of this, namely that, in attempting to move beyond Europe, Rabasa has become mired in its philosophical, Kantian heartland, just as, in attempting to move beyond modernism into a post-modernism, beyond Marxism into a post-Marxism, he
has regressed to a pre-modernism and pre-Marxism. And he has done so insofar as he has failed, by his own estimation, to break with the very Eurocentrism that he otherwise sets out to critique. His excuse, as we have seen, is that he aspires to write only a counter-fiction, not an anti-fiction. But even this, we would suggest, does not quite capture what is happening, theoretically. Certainly, Rabasa fails to transcend the subject/object split characteristic of modern European philosophy, but what he actually does is to invert it, so that instead of the positivist attachment to the object, we get the idealist fascination with the subject. Not surprisingly, he continues to be haunted by the positivist legacy that he believes he has surpassed.

One question inevitably suggests itself. How could Rabasa possibly remain untroubled by the theoretical incoherence that his texts so clearly exhibit? The short answer is that he grants himself the necessary logical license, by reneging upon any obligation to meet the demands of theoretical cogency. But this in turn only raises a further question concerning what is manifestly a resistance to theory, which leads into the realm of ideology and thence into that of social relations of production, which Rabasa is anxious, at all costs, to keep at bay.

Rhetoric versus Ideology
Part of the contemporary drift towards reformism is the abandonment of the term ideology in favor of rhetoric. The difference, as Terry Eagleton indicated some time ago, is crucial: it is one thing to allow that one's discourse is rhetorical, it is another to confess to it being ideological (Eagleton 1991: 202). Both rhetoric and ideology perform a naturalizing function in the name of certain forms of political power, but rhetoric confines itself to discursive forms whereas ideology, while it may grease the whole social order, is generally not identified with this order. In other words, the ideological function is not to be confused with its economic and political counterparts, nor to be reduced to the level of discourse, although it certainly generates discourses. Rabasa, as we have seen, is reluctant to acknowledge the existence of anything outside discourse, which would explain why "ideology" survives in him largely as a pre-theoretical term, with which to designate the views of one's opponent that are distorted by particular interests – the Nahua wrote glyphs to "promote and express Spanish ideology" (Rabasa 2000: 14), etc. – the key point being that these interests are eminently conscious. Let us elaborate.

Rabasa is never disposed to theorize ideology because his aim is to get at something below the level of (conscious) ideologies, namely a discursive unconscious that needs to be analyzed as rhetoric. We thus catch Rabasa in the act of dismissing ideology as a relatively superficial phenomenon: "[…] it consequently becomes futile either to pursue the intentions of Stradanus or
even to unmask an ideology” (Rabasa 1993: 34). Likewise, his somewhat dismissive reference to Hartley's "systematic ideological unmasking of objectivity and positivism in maps" (248n14) suggests that there are more serious tasks to perform, namely "examining self-deconstructive moves in the Atlas itself" (248). In a word, Rabasa deflects the unconscious through discourse by restricting ideology to the level of consciousness, as a consequence of which he is "less concerned with constructing a context for a critique of ideologies in the texts" than with "outlining a disjuncture between what is available for observation and the particular inventions of an ever-present New World" (126-27). Clearly, "ideologies" here equate with thematizations of ideology, at the level of content analysis, not with unconscious secretions at the level of social relations. That is, to rephrase the matter in Marxist terms, ideology is a matter of the superstructure rather than base.

We need to clarify what is going on here, theoretically speaking. The discursive unconscious is operative beneath the level of ideological belief, which concerns ideas that are consciously held and articulated. At the same time, social relations have now been raised to the level of discourse, with the result that, although operating at an unconscious level, they are emphatically discursive structures, understood in Foucauldian terms, that is to say, as epistemic systems. The latter are much in evidence, for example, in Rabasa’s approach to the texts of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: "Instead of evaluating Sahagún's attitude, then, we ought to see how he seeks to register the pre-Hispanic world as a regime of signs" (162). The goal is to reveal the system of discursive structures that works through Sahagún rather than originating in him. The result, allegedly, is a fundamentally materialist critique that aims to neutralize the effects of the discursive unconscious: "My intention is not to call for an indiscriminate form of play, but to avoid being played by the same artifacts that, assuredly, we reduce to a univocal meaning" (47-48). And to do so through a process that raises to the level of consciousness what has been repressed "beyond the motivation of the authors," into "the margins of a textualized world" (78). Rabasa elaborates later: "I believe that this bearing of an unconscious element in writing is ultimately more important for a deconstructive project than the elusive full presence of self-reference" (209).

The project is an intriguing one, with radical implications, which Rabasa, to his credit, pursues with energy and enthusiasm. But as a theoretical model, the discursive unconscious is deeply flawed, for the simple reason that there is one issue that it can never address but that will dog it throughout, namely what determines the discursive situation itself.
From a Discursive to an Ideological Unconscious

While it is not our aim in this context to elaborate a fully-fledged Marxist version of the ideological unconscious, we need to sketch in briefly the kind of form it takes, as a point of comparison and through which to exert some critical leverage on Rabasa's discursive counterpart.

Manifestly, the concept of ideology present in the early Marx falls very much in line with the view of ideology as existing in the form of ideas, albeit of the ruling class. However, in the mature Marx – as articulated by Althusserians – ideology is something that is secreted unconsciously, at the level of the relations of production, in the form of ideological matrices. Ideological forms secreted at the level of social relations are "subsequently" legitimated at the superstructural level, through a dual process. In the words of Juan Carlos Rodríguez: (a) "partir del propio inconsciente ideológico para tematizarlo y teorizarlo (que es lo que hacen siempre los filósofos, críticos, escritores, etc., situados en el horizonte de una clase)"; (b) "a la vez, retornar luego a ese inconsciente: que es lo que hacen la familia y los diversos aparatos ideológicos" (Rodríguez 2001a: 19). And so back into the base, in a circular process, that finds the ideology in question, in its theorized form, transformed, at the level of the social formation, into the very truth of nature. Political and economic practices, in this context, may well be organized like discourses, and will certainly involve discourse, but as a matter of fact they are practices rather than discourses and are not reducible to discourse.

Of course, Rabasa "knows and "recognizes" the interconnections between discursive and economic mechanisms, in which respect he quotes Charles V to telling effect, regarding the exchanges between Spaniards and Indians: "[…] y con su conversación y texto ha de ser tratando y reesaltando y conversando los unos con los otros, habéis de ordenar y mandar de nuestra parte." (Rabasa 1993: 104). The implications are obvious: while Charles may not have been a theoretician of ideology, in practice he knew the importance of verbal exchange or dialogue as a means of facilitating the process of economic exchange. And there are moments when Rabasa would embrace, at least implicitly, the workings of structural causality. Hence the references that litter his text to "nascent capitalism," to British indirect rule and international divisions of labor, to the exchange of natural resources for European manufactured goods, to the exploitation involved in the supply of raw materials to Europe, etc. It is even conceded that the geography atlas was a suitable companion to the free trade policies of Holland's "nascent capitalism" in the 17th century, "insofar as the production of atlases was aimed at a

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23 The Marxist will insist that the dialogue, as opposed to the feudal dispute, is a generic form secreted by mercantilist relations – hence its proliferation in the 16th century (see Rodríguez 1990: 368-72).
universal consumer within a competitive market" (Rabasa 1993: 206). Rabasa is driven, I am saying, by the force of his argument to recognize the intimate historical relationship between discourse and capitalism. But he cannot flesh out the relations of determination that link the two because discourse, while certainly integral to the development of capitalism, also transcends it.

A key moment in this respect is a quite remarkable passage in which Rabasa takes de Man to task for his excessively shallow and narrow focus upon literature and criticism. Understandably, the colonialist sees his own depth-model of the discursive unconscious as a corrective to such critical practice: "From the Atlas, the ahistorical critic learns that the 'eye' of the poet is historical and that the poet's field of perception entails an unconscious dimension that eludes self-reference" (185). At this point, Rabasa is poised to conceptualize an ideological unconscious: "The elucidation of an ideological content in the allegories accompanying the Atlas is a facile task to perform. However, the ideological dimension that allegories introduce into the cartographical description of the earth itself remains hidden" (186, italics added). This quotation is important, I believe, because, while it shows Rabasa continuing to treat ideology as operative at a conscious and therefore secondary level of intentionality, it does raise the theoretical possibility that ideology works to some extent invisibly. We would draw attention, in this respect, to the importance attributed by Rabasa to the role of ideology within such non-discursive realms as cartography, where it "defined the significance of mapped spaces in the first place" (208); and to Rabasa's more recent brush with the Althusserian notion of interpellation, deployed to explain the process of subordination to a "dominant ideology" (Rabasa 2000: 5), including the claim that, beyond the realm of ideas, "ideology itself is also constitutive of action and sensibility" (48). This line of argument, one surmises, threatens to embroil Rabasa in a theoretical debate that would take him beyond the realm of discursive production into that of economic production and, from a methodological standpoint, beyond the level of description to explanation, which would explain his instinctive response is to pull back the argument onto the discursive level, relating to representations of America.

And so, finally, we are returned to the point of departure: Rabasa's promotion of an indeterminate series of differences, at ground level, in the form of a culturally pluralistic America, with the corresponding down-grading of any totalizing, therefore, "totalitarian," analysis and, correspondingly of any "underlying" basis which might explain these differences as part of a common, global structure of exploitation. Power relations are dealt with at the discursive level, cut off from their historical roots in the material relations of production. The underlying strategy is clear: culture and "difference" are to be understood in nationalistic or ethnic terms, in abstraction from class, so as to direct the
political energies of the exploited away from the conditions of their exploitation and into cultural spaces where they can be more easily managed and defused. At this level of rarefaction, where everything causes everything else, meaning is rendered so indeterminate as to preclude the possibility of its fixation and, by the same token, any attempt to mount an effective political program. Far from materializing the logic of production, it follows, Rabasa in fact dematerializes it, in an effort, conscious or unconscious, to conceal the underlying economic structures that produce their discursive counterpart. Discourse analysis reduces social phenomena to the status of autonomous, free-floating "effects" whose causes must necessarily remain unknown or difficult to trace.

**Blindness and Insight**

To break with the dominant ideological unconscious, as Marx was to do in the late 1840s, in the transition from left-wing Hegelianism to Marxism, was doubtless a tremendously difficult but at least, on its own terms, theoretically feasible task, and has presumably been repeated on many other occasions since. That said, there are limitations to the extent to which a single person can resist an ideology, in the absence of a change in the dominant relations of production, that is, in the absence of a social revolution. For to imagine that the subject is free to initiate structural changes is, the Marxist claims, to court the key moves of the dominant bourgeois ideology. The latter has had many forms, but all based on the key category of the subject, in its various incarnations – animist, mechanician, Cartesian (rationalist), Kantian, empiricist (Locke and Hume), positivist, phenomenologist, etc. In this respect it contrasts with substantialism, the dominant ideology of feudalism, which was based, we have argued, upon the serf/servant/lord opposition.

Now, there is much about this Marxist position that overlaps with Rabasa's notion of the discursive unconscious, in that the latter, like its ideological counterpart, does not originate in a subject, but functions as a transcendent structure that imposes itself upon the individual. Indeed its formulation is dependent upon the post-structuralist reduction of the subject to a historically determined "fold" – to use Foucault's image – in discourse or, as it subsequently became, to a virtual reality or mirage created by the intersection of discourses. The effect is to draw attention away from the subject to the epistemes or discursive structures (Rabasa 1993: 18, 36-37) that, insofar as they actually generate the subject, in its historically different guises, produce the "generalized form of blindness" (186) also characteristic of the ideological unconscious: "As such this essay on the invention of America provides an alternative history, a fiction that undermines the universality of European history and subjectivity – not with factual contradiction, but rather
by elaborating a narrative that maps our blind spots and opens areas for counterdiscourse while decolonizing our present picture of the world" (212).

At the same time, the discursive unconscious differs from its ideological counterpart in fundamental respects. To begin with, the postmodern historicization of the subject form is never completed. There are several reasons for this: firstly, the demands of disciplinary specialization, not to mention the prevalent postmodern reluctance to engage in grand narratives, discourage the colonialist from pursuing the complex history of the subject's transformations since the 16th century;24 and secondly, because, in the last instance, Rabasa aims not to engage but to transcend history, by tracing, from the time of Columbus, "forms of subjectivity still influential today" (Rabasa 1993: 75). Moreover, his attachment to judgmental relativism precludes the kinds of radical "breaks" that Althusserianism permits and indeed theorizes, as part of its view of the history of science. Moments of sudden insight are possible under the discursive regime, but are immediately re-contained within an implicit ontology that is flat, unchanging and unstructured: "Perhaps the curious notion of an awakening of America can sum up the intention of this essay: America as a regime of signs and self-evident facts about its discovery must be 'reawakened' with an interrogation about geographic, cartographic and historical constituents underlying our present picture of the world – not to demystify, but to invent the Americas anew" (214). The gesture is a familiar one, as is the performative contradiction that underlies it. At one moment, the possibility is held out of accessing reality, of gaining (progressively) deeper insight into it; at the next, the same possibility is snatched back again, into the transitive domain of invention. The final outcome is a kind of oscillation, between the libertarian impulse to resist everything and a calculated, resigned accommodation to Power, the latter diffused throughout the whole of society.

The Rhetoric of Science

The absence in Rabasa of any clear notion of objectivity and truth means that it is very difficult for him to sustain a workable notion of science. His understanding of science is largely positivistic, hence the program to open up "factualism" to "a paradoxical terrain that precludes closure" (8). Unfortunately, as we have already had cause to observe, the result is not a break with factualism but a simple inversion of it, leading to the promotion of subjectivity – "the phenomenal world (temporality and experience)" at the expense of objectivity ("the reductions the sciences draw") (Rabasa 2000: 320n2). Beneath such claims lurk the familiar thematics of idealism: science is

24 The contrast in this respect with Rodríguez could not be greater. Teoría e historia (1990), which deals largely with the 16th century, was extended and elaborated in La norma literaria (2001), which addresses modernity, and in subsequent works, which reflect upon the postmodern scenario.
abstract because it deals with universals; a universal is never more than a part of any concrete being; science derives from more concrete forms of knowledge; and science abstracts from the emotional content of knowledge. "We can thus embrace the richness of scientific inquiry in its ongoing reconsideration of its categories in the different and differing disciplines (the one is also plural) without abandoning the opaqueness as well as the translucent experience of the singular" (320n2).

Obviously, this is not the place to undertake a wholesale dismantling of scientific positivism and its phenomenological inversions.\textsuperscript{25} Suffice it to contrast the scientific realist position of Marxism, which understands the job of theory as the "empirically-controlled retroduction of an adequate account of the structures or mechanisms producing the manifest phenomena of socio-economic life", often in opposition to and out of phase with their spontaneous mode of appearance (Bhaskar 1991a: 491). In the human sciences, these mechanisms will include people's own beliefs and self-perceptions. Their adequate re-presentation in thought is a social, historical and relatively autonomous process, characterized by Althusser in terms of a series of "Generalities" (Althusser 183-89). This process, conducted within the transitive dimension, goes hand in hand with the recognition of the independent existence and transfactual activity of the object of such knowledge within an intransitive dimension. A concrete being, within this conceptual framework, is viewed as the result of conjointly acting generative mechanisms; it just is the conjunction of these mechanisms. Collier explains: "Since this is a relation of emergence, the higher stratum being emergent from the lower, one may call the irreducibility of the concrete particular to the mechanisms which conjoin in it horizontal emergence" (Collier 1989: 102).

Needless to say, this kind of scientific realism clashes with Rabasa's traditionally humanistic disdain for scientific inquiry, which surfaces with particular vehemence in his discussion of the work of Urs Bitterli. According to Rabasa's synopsis, Bitterli views the voyages of discovery as "deeds whereby the recently found territories are not merely discovered but actually come into existence in the act of their discovery" (Rabasa 1993: 38). On the face of it, this would appear to correspond to the colonialist's own view of the "invention" of America. But even this, it transpires, does not sufficiently implicate knowledge in power and the process of imperial conquest, insofar as, allegedly, Bitterli seeks to salvage the scientific method by dating it from the second phase of the voyages of exploration during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Rabasa sees this as a covert attempt to defend "the pretended autonomy of science from politics" (39), which can be contrasted to his own determination "to avoid the powerful illusion generated by a rhetoric based on scientific truth"

\textsuperscript{25} For this, see Bhaskar 1989a: 124-32.
(29). The latter position is not one that Rabasa is prepared to surrender or indeed negotiate in any way, and it is renewed with added vehemence in his more recent work: "The culture of conquest is not an ideological component that we can separate from some sort of objectivist discourse, but indeed is part and parcel of the production of colonial knowledge" (Rabasa 2000: 131). The tactic is clear: we are being invited to consider science as implicated inextricably in ideology and rhetoric.

It is an invitation that we must decline. The primary distinction between ideology and science, we argue, is not one that separates different practices – the result of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness – but different aspects of the same practice, in its relation to its environment. Of course, if one were to give a detailed causal account of the development of a research programme – how it was organized, financed, hypothesised, applied, and so on – the relevance of epistemic and ideological factors would need to be considered. But there are clear criteria (which is not to say they are easy to apply) for distinguishing the ideology from the science. As Collier elaborates: "[I]n so far as mechanisms are set up which allow the mechanisms present in the intransitive object to determine the result, it is science; in so far as mechanisms are set up which allow the relations of power in society to determine the result, it is ideology" (Collier 1989: 29). While science does achieve progressively more refined knowledge of deeper and deeper levels of reality – a view, to be sure, which plays a relatively limited role in Althusserianism proper (Bottomore 450) – it never frees itself from the clutches of ideology. A research topic can be studied as ideology, which facilitates social functionality, and as science, arrived at through truth-seeking procedures. The more ideological motives are present, the more epistemic mechanisms require scrutiny. Conversely, when the science is sound, ideological considerations lose their relevance.

**Eurocentrism**

Once history has been discursively "deprocessualized" (to use Bhaskar's term), we are left with the basic opposition between a demonized Europe and its angelicized Other, namely indigenous culture. There are moments, it is true, when even Rabasa is struck by the crudity of such dichotomies, and the need to move beyond the "crass, culturally defined dichotomies of Self-Other (which reproduce ad nauseam the Europe and its others complex)" (Rabasa 1993: 123). "The West", the "Western episteme", "Western dominance", etc., he concedes in his more recent work, are always a shifting field, rather than a homogeneous entity (Rabasa 2000: 199). Having said which, at no point can the colonialist radically complicate a structure that sustains his core concept of Eurocentrism, which in turn sustains the notion of the discursive unconscious.
Eurocentrism, we should know, is a pervasive mind-set, one of the "overhanging determinants of contemporary thought" (Rabasa 1993: 212), which corrodes the sciences, including that of cartography, from within. We take the latter as an example for the simple reason that, the claims of discourse theory notwithstanding, maps would seem to require the existence of an intransitive domain, to which they ineluctably refer. Hence, presumably, their "indelible truth value" (208), which even Rabasa is compelled to recognize, and upon which we depend even to negotiate a short trip on the subway. Truth value, however, pales to insignificance in the world of the postmodernist, whose attention is drawn to the "complacency of European universality" that "ignores the ideology that defined the significance of mapped spaces in the first place" (208). For maps are originally and inextricably entwined with issues of power, in which respect, far from being an exception within the range of European sciences, they are in fact exemplary of the inalienably rhetorical or ideological status of scientific discourse.

Ideological, as opposed to rhetorical, because presumably the objects involved are less "discursive" than "visual." Eurocentrism permeates the world by means of a semantics of space that reduces the meaning of cartographical representations to signs Europeans project onto the surface of the earth. What Rabasa would appear to have in mind, then, is a socially defined semantics, which transcends the level of the individual, and is operative at the level of a social unconscious. Strange to say, therefore, that the colonialist can only outflank the crudity of the binary opposition "by starting to wonder about the inner Other – that all too Eurocentric Self that haunts the ethnographer's most venerable intentions." To elaborate: "Evidently Eurocentrism is not an 'out there' that we can identify, but 'the locus where minor discourses intervene'" (123). In this way, the semantics of Eurocentrism is finally conflated downwards into the Subject or, to be more precise, into "psychology," which, having consumed a series of structural mechanisms that constitute a societal exteriority, becomes bloated to the size of something that looks suspiciously like an Hegelian Moving Spirit. The latter expresses itself throughout the whole social formation to the extent that it actually becomes identified with that formation. And if that is the case then there is a supreme irony to Rabasa's critique of Eurocentrism, in that it should end up assuming the guise of the bourgeois master trope, the Subject, whether in an individual or trans-individual form.

The class reference (to the bourgeoisie) is crucial, and one that is systematically repressed throughout Rabasa's work. For this free subject is not simply European but eminently bourgeois – feudal substantialism, we have insisted throughout, knows no such category – and is the basis of a bourgeois ideology that has spread internationally, along the pathways of European
imperialism. The difference is crucial: one does not have to be European to be a bourgeois subject. And once the latter makes its appearance, then so too does the paradigm of consciousness, together with its converse, the domain of the unconscious. So that even as he congratulates himself on having escaped the orbit of Eurocentrism, into which so many of his fellow poststructuralists have been drawn, Rabasa enthusiastically embraces such epochal spirits as the "Middle Ages," the "Renaissance," the "Baroque," which were refined in the very heartland of European idealism.26 To these same spirits can be added those overarching "epistemes" or mind-sets of Foucauldian extraction, which likewise arise with the abandonment of the subject, and which finally erode all distinctions between different discourses, before returning, via Foucault's final work, to the category of the subject.

From Foucault, what Rabasa takes, among other things, is an unwillingness to situate discursive practices in any firm relationship to their historical context. Symptomatic in this respect is the pathetic gesture towards the inclusion of Ireland within the British Isles as exemplifying forgetfulness within European history (Rabasa 1993: 249n20). What Rabasa seemingly does not want to know is that "Britain," "France," "Spain," etc. are, within "Europe," the result of centuries of brutal battles whereby political elites imposed themselves on recalcitrant provincial and regional populations, through the vehicles of state apparatuses that were every bit as "blood-sucking" in their treatment of their own populations as they were to be towards the indigenous peoples of their subsequent empires. The blood-sucking, it goes without saying, is the same as that to which the Mexica elite subjected their own native populations. To conclude: history, or rather pre-history, is the story not of the confrontation between Europe and the Other, but of the endless exploitation of one class by another.

The Doctrine of Double Truth

So much for "Europe," but what of its "Other"? Why the current preoccupation with otherness? A good point to begin is the issue of incommensurability. Rabasa's position is emphatic and decisive:

26 The unthinking, even naïve manner in which Rabasa deploys such terms can be usefully contrasted with the knowing suspicion with which Rodríguez treats the same items, together with the contrast that he establishes with his own notion of the "transition": "[...] el sistema de transición tampoco supone una 'unidad' interna, según la idea de espíritu de la época (o simplemente de época), que se propaga básicamente a partir del horizonte fenomenológico de principios de siglo, según esa especial mezcla de enunciados kantianos y hegelianos" (Rodríguez 1990: 124). He explains later: "De cualquier forma, es claro hoy ya para nosotros que la noción de Renacimiento (como la de Edad Media) supone una enorme vaguedad respecto a lo que realmente pretende definir. Más: Renacimiento y Edad Media son términos que sólo tienen aplicación dentro de la lógica teórica de la ideología burguesa en general" (135).
"communication requires that an addresser and an addressee recognize a referent in the interior of a message" (91). Again, the familiar attempt, on the part of the discourse theorist to draw the intransitive into the transitive dimension, but this is not where Rabasa's idealist proclivities end, as we see from the ensuing discussion. Here, a contrast is drawn between, on the one hand, the language of control practised by urban Westerners and, on the other, the expressive formulations characteristic of tribal, peasant, and lower-class peoples. Rabasa explains: "Whenever these two modes of relating to language are dominant, it necessarily implies a breakdown in communication. Referents can never be recognized as long as two different contexts or discourses mediate their significance. As such, dialogue with an other is an illusion. There is only dialogue among the same, and indeed, it is power-ridden. Since going native forecloses the possibility of representing the Other, control by means of translation seems to be the other alternative. Logical as well as rhetorical constructs, however, thwart the project of translation" (92).

Now this sociolinguistic excursus seems, as we argued in chapter 3, untenable, if not patently absurd. Is it not true that Ptolemaic science refers to the same "Sun" as does Copernican science? And while Ptolemaic science is manifestly incommensurable with Copernican science, is it not also true that one can evaluate one paradigm against the other, and so prove, say, the Copernican to be superior to the Ptolemaic? Or did Rabasa even at this point have in mind the kind of incommensurability that, as he has more recently argued (Rabasa 2000: 51), does not preclude the non-contradictory co-existence of two (incommensurable) worlds in one consciousness? If so, then his position is more feasible, and obvious examples of such incommensurability readily spring to mind, such as the "double truth" whereby Humanists in the 16th century opened up a space for secular discourse while remaining fervent believers in Christianity (see Read 1981: 72-84). True, given the subsequent strife between "religion" and "science," this same example also suggests that, firstly, it is not always easy in practice to keep two seemingly distinct discursive domains apart, and secondly, that peaceful co-existence sometimes marks an historically transient state of affairs. With this in mind let us turn to Rabasa's own example.

The time of history (as in the origin of Amerindians in Asia) and the times of the gods (as in the origins of the Nahuas in the seven caves of Aztlan) speak two different worlds and do not, as it were, utter propositions that contend to make equally valid statements about the same world. […] [T]he experience of the "magical" space of time coded in Nahuatl cartographic histories will always remain inaccessible to the historian and the anthropologist – for that matter, to the language of science. Within this formulation, translation proves to be a
futile, indeed a violent task. (Rabasa 2000: 278)

Again, the position here sketched out seems scarcely tenable. To begin with, if they do not speak to the same world, why compare the two times, of the gods and of history? And moreover, does not the pronouncement on their incommensurability logically suggest that Rabasa at least is able to compare and evaluate the two paradigms? From what God-like position was he able to perform such a feat? One possible answer, transposed into sociological terms, is: from the position of the petty-bourgeoisie, which notoriously (as regards its academic fraction), lays claim to promoting the well-being of the "people" over and above issues of class. Historically, animism, the ideology of this class, has always operated on the terrain between sacralizing ideologies – substantialism, in the case of feudalism – and the more classic ideologies of the bourgeoisie, such as the positivism or "factualism" that Rabasa critiques. Animism, that is to say, serves the purpose of co-existence, on the part of an emergent bourgeoisie, with a sacralized society. Hence, we suspect, the eagerness with which a whole generation of postcolonial intellectuals, currently besieged by the technicist ideology of late capitalism, deploys an animist thematic, in order to mediate between the "Other" and "Europe."

Our suspicions are confirmed by the recent work of Alain Badiou, who believes the Other to be an objectified instance of "me-at-a-distance," who furnishes my consciousness with a stable construct with which to identify. This would explain, among other things, why Rabasa appears to know so much about the good Other, which is simply his own specular image, projected onto the indigenous community. The resultant encounter between both is simply that between two beautiful souls, traced by the pulsions of narcissism and aggressivity. In the words of Badiou: "We are left with a pious discourse without piety, a spiritual supplement for incompetent governments, and a cultural sociology, preached, in line with the new-style sermons, in lieu of the late class struggle" (Badiou 23). Pressed to its conclusion, the logic of the argument is obvious: the Altogether Other, which Rabasa's work does so much to promote, is none other than the ethical name or face of God.

Zapatismo: Politics of the Other

The issue of practical politics with which Rabasa has largely concerned himself is that of Zapatismo, which he characterizes as pursuing a political space "that is not bound by the logic of capitalism or socialism" (Rabasa 1997: 419). Zapatismo combines, as Rabasa explains, with a pronounced tendency to reject class struggle and integration into class organizations in favor of the defense of traditional cultures and their associated forms of economic

27 For an extensive discussion of the historical transformations of animism, particularly in its petty-bourgeois forms, see Rodríguez 2001a: 129-97.
development. As a movement, its roots go back to the crushing of the student movement in 1968 in Mexico City, following which student activists moved to outer areas to work with peasant groups. Philosophically, it consists of an alliance between Maoist activists and representatives of liberation theology, a combination that explains the curious mix of secular and religious registers in the language of Zapatismo (see González 70). Politically, it shares with other expressions of indigenism the belief that it is possible to co-exist with capitalist society (see Mocar).

The convergence between these indigenist positions and Rabasa's notion of incommensurability, based on the co-existence of two cultural worlds, is too obvious to require commentary. The colonialist's only additional contribution of any substance is a brand of Nietzschean metaphysics that empties power of any real political content. Hence his tortuous attempt to generate resistance from power. The different forms that the latter assumes cannot be differentiated into economic, political or ideological practices because they are anterior to any such distinctions, which explains why, even as he rallies to the defense of indigenism, Rabasa studiously avoids any hard discussion, say, of economic exploitation. Attention is focused strictly on the operation of micro-powers, to a politically disabling extent, based on the common assumption that there is always an outside to capital. The taproot of this ideology is the belief in the human right to live and express oneself in terms of the "Time of the Gods."

The response of Marxism, as evinced by González and Mocar, has been highly nuanced. While it defends unconditionally the Indians' rights to autonomy and to accept that the Zapatistas have raised important principles, also long cherished by the revolutionary socialist movement, relating to authentic democracy and the accountability of leaders, it rejects absolutely the politically motivated attempt to collapse revolutionary socialism into grotesque parodies of it. Typical of the latter are the Stalinist variants of Communism, whose sorry history of compromises is particularly striking in Mexico. For the rest, the logic of Marxism is equally relentless. It insists that both the Time of the Gods and the Time of History have had, historically, one thing in common, namely the reality of exploitation, in which respect the Empires of the Incas and Aztecs were no different from that of the Spaniards. All three were, after all, solidly founded in a despotism that cramped and constrained the human spirit and intelligence and blocked the full flourishing of human kind. Geographically and historically, Marxists argue, there can be no retreat from the advances of global capitalism and the best that indigenous communities can hope for within it is to become a tourist curiosity.

Philosophically, Marxism resists the return to the old doctrine of the natural rights of man, and supports the quest for a collective, emancipatory
politics based on organized strategies. And, following Badiou, it refuses to celebrate the multiplicity of cultural "differences," for the reason that differences are what exist, in any society, and "since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences are then precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant" (Badiou 27). The Same, by way of contrast, is not what is but what comes to be, on the basis of truth, which is indifferent to differences. In sum, "It is only through a genuine perversion, for which we will pay a terrible historical price, that we have sought to elaborate an 'ethics' on the basis of cultural relativism" (28). Something of that price is evident in the work of José Rabasa and those fellow cohorts who currently dominate the scene of Hispanic colonial studies.

**Conclusion**

We can locate discourse theory with respect to its broader historical and social coordinates: it is part of the "steady trek from erstwhile revolutionary positions to left reformist ones" (Eagleton 1991: 202) that took place in the 1980s and '90s. Ideologically, it deploys pluralism (cultural differences) to neutralize any systematic knowledge of the material (economic) difference between exploiter and exploited, a difference that informs all cultural practices and relations; and to displace attention from issues of class to those of ethnicity and nationalism. Significantly, Rabasa took from Turner the knowledge of the shortcomings of Hegelian Marxism, but not the view of third-world reformism – the dream of a "third way" between socialism and capitalism – as "an expression of the ambiguity of the petty bourgeoisie which is threatened by the working class with the abolition of property and threatened with extinction by the concentration of capital" (Turner 76). The omission is unfortunate, given its obvious relevance to the career trajectory of the "pocho," otherwise a Mexican who (as Rabasa explains) has been co-opted by imperial culture (Rabasa 1993: 20). Such co-option, we suggested above, comes naturally to, and is to some degree inevitable in, the migrant intellectual who arrives in the American academy from a nation that is cast in a subordinate position within the global system, but more often than not from a class that is dominant within the nation in question. Such nuances are important but are readily lost in the rhetoric about "Europe and the Other," together with the fact that in class societies power is not distributed equally, nor is it the effect primarily of discourse; and that the theoretical attempt to discredit the idea of totality, within the context of political reformism, serves in the last instance to preserve global systems of exploitation.
Ideologies of Colonial/Colonialist History: Anthony Pagden

Introduction: "Encountering" the Other
There is something inevitable about Anthony Pagden's initial scrutiny of the lexicon used to describe the European arrival in the New World, given the hypersensitivity of anthropologists and historians when it comes to applying their own concepts to what used to be called "primitive cultures." Etymologies are paraded in full view, for all to see, notably with respect to "discovery," derived (or so we are informed) from a late ecclesiastical Latin word "disco-operio," meaning to reveal, to expose to the gaze (Pagden 1993: 5). It competes with "inventio," a term less frequently used that foregrounds the creative aspect of what might otherwise seem to have been found (6). Pagden's own preference is for "encounter," presumably on the grounds of its relative semantic neutrality. Important though such issues are, Pagden's intention is clear, namely to demonstrate to possible postmodern critics an appropriate delicacy and self-reflexive sensitivity with respect to issues of cultural "incommensurability."

Such a resolution is, to be sure, somewhat pragmatic but, it could be argued, not unreasonably so, in a scholar anxious to enter into the detail of historical analysis. One's only concern is that it does not address the ideological basis of the different lexical items on offer. What we will argue, following Rodríguez, is that both "discover" and "invent" are firmly embedded in distinct but overlapping ideologies, originating in a single matrix. To be more precise, "discover" connects with a Kantian-based historiography that, from the standpoint of a subject of History, imagines the historical process to be one in which something that already lies hidden is "revealed." The transition from one age to another, within this framework, consists of the passage from necessity to freedom, from nature to culture, each stage being superior to the one that preceded it. The human spirit, initially smothered in its primitiveness, gradually acquires its own truth, which is that of the kingdom of liberty, culture and light.

"Invention", by way of contrast, falls within the discursive framework of empiricism, archetypically represented by the figure of Robinson Crusoe. Here the succession of ages always involves the acquisition of "experiences," on the basis of which the individual proceeds to make "tools" and thereby to control "nature." Extended to the arts, the logic is inexorable: experiences that
are accumulated from the outside are expressed in the literary work through the use of appropriate linguistic tools. A significantly different emphasis, then, compared to the Kantian tradition, but one nevertheless encompassed by the same, let us call it positivist, horizon, within which history is conceived as recognizing itself in its origins, in the human spirit. One age, the argument runs, succeeds another, through a process whereby Man, the Subject of History, either "reveals" or liberates his full, ratiocinative capacities or "develops" the same through the application of new technical means (see Rodríguez 1990: 125-28).

While exhibiting peculiarities of its own, the notion of "encounter" is, like "discovery" and "invention," rooted in the same dominant ideology. Ontologically, it implies the existence of objects that collide or "encounter" one another in an empty space, after the fashion of billiard balls. Epistemologically, it operates in terms of a Subject, the original source of which is "Man," a category on which Pagden will never relinquish his grip. History, within this framework, will again take the form of a series of epochal shifts, "the one already closed, the other still in a state of becoming" (Pagden 1993: 92), engineered by "powerful human agents" (96), progressively articulated not only by protagonists of Pagden's narrative but by the liberal historian himself. For after all, the task of the reader, within the dominant ideology of empiricism, is always to "extract" or disengage the essence of the text by eliminating what is accidental to it, in other words, what obscures this essence. The result will be less an analysis than a description of the text, a description that will constantly teeter on the edge of paraphrase.

Rodríguez, by way of contrast, breaks with all these liberal categories:

 [...] para nosotros es obvio que este paso desde las formaciones feudales a las formaciones capitalistas sólo puede ser explicado de acuerdo con lo que constituye la base misma de cualquier tipo de formación social; esto es, a partir de la específica "combinación" en que se interrelacionan las diversas fuerzas sociales que realmente intervienen en la constitución de cualquier formación social en la "ruptura" del feudalismo. (Rodríguez 1990: 128)

The emphasis here is not upon individuals, who, from the Althusserian standpoint, are simply supports through which social relations are mediated. Nor is Rodríguez particularly concerned with the "technical" organization of society, at the specifically political, economic and ideological levels. Everything hinges rather upon the social relations themselves, which, in the case of feudalism, consist not of "subjects" but of "serfs" and "servants", in opposition to their lord or Lords. The combined impact of such

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28 It should not be supposed, from his emphasis upon abstract social relations, that Rodríguez is offering a species of rationalism. On the contrary, as other sections of
discriminations is to generate a degree of structural depth totally absent from the empiricist paradigm unconsciously embraced by Pagden.

Now if, as Rodríguez proceeds to argue, the feudal formation is determined by the notion of "service," then obviously the key question, with respect to the dissolution of feudal relations, is: what has caused servile relations to change? The answer, within the Althusserian problematic, lies in the appearance of a new social force, the bourgeoisie, not only in its capacity as a social class but also as the bearer of a specific mode of production – capitalism in its mercantilist phase – that is radically opposed to its feudal counterpart (130). Objectively, the forms of transition tend toward a bourgeois revolution. But "tend" here is the crucial term, in that specific processes can be neutralized or reversed by the force of others, which explains why the histories of Spain, Germany and Italy were so different from those of England and France. Suffice it, at the present juncture, to emphasize that the formations of the transition are the result of the impact of a set of social relations, of bourgeois extraction, upon their feudal equivalent.

The Unconscious Ideology of Empiricism

It is undoubtedly significant that The Fall of Man (1982), an early work by Pagden, should open with a negative reference to Foucault: the rupture between different epistemes, it is charged, was never as abrupt as the Frenchman claimed, as of course it never is, at the empirical level. And doubtless even more significant that Pagden should wish to play Thomas Kuhn's paradigmatic shifts in slow motion, in accordance with his own insistence on the prolonged nature of the transition from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican system: "When such authoritative systems as Ptolemaic cosmography and Aristotelian psychology surrender to change they generally do so in response to a very gradual recognition that the system can no longer be made to account for all the facts of the case" (Pagden 1982: 5).

The "facts of the case"? The phrase has a modern ring to it, a warning signal, perhaps, that despite, or possibly because, of this insistence on historical continuity, as opposed to discontinuity, Pagden's discourse is vulnerable to a certain ahistoricism, characterized by the projection into earlier ideological formations of elements drawn from others of relatively recent extraction. The "conscious" nature of this otherwise "unconscious" enterprise is announced by Las Casas' alleged commitment to "A Programme for Comparative Ethnology." True, the penetration of Las Casas' science by its modern counterpart is nuanced: "scientia", we are assured, correlates not with "science"

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*Teoría e historia* indicate (1990: 136-42), he recognizes the need for additional specificity, that is, knowledge at a more historically determinate level, which interacts with higher levels, in an open-ended process.
(as now understood) but with text-based "understanding" (129-30). Moreover, "Las Casas's hypothesis is 'proved' by the telling case of human sacrifice" (143). But, we must protest: if readers are to be alerted to the dangers of anachronism that surround "proof," what about the word "hypothesis," which Pagden does not hesitate to deploy throughout? Consider, moreover, the slippage from the Aristotelian opposition between body and soul to that of its post-Cartesian equivalent, between "body" and "mind," together with the grounding of a climatic theory of bodily "humors" in a clearly "biological base" (138). Not surprisingly, we eventually find ourselves located within a "laboratory" that, however metaphorically conceived, remains a laboratory, and one resonant with modern, scientific overtones (150).

The same universalizing process assumes more encompassing forms, most strikingly in the discussion of Las Casas' historical perspective. Pagden's own summary (141-45) is sufficiently detailed to enable us to perceive quite clearly that we are in the presence of a figural history, devoid of any sense of chronological time, and that the gradual progress toward "true civility" is, within the logic of Aristotelian physics, a substantive movement or pilgrimage on the part of man, qua "servant," towards his "natural" place alongside his "lord/Lord." The "culture heroes" who engineer the epochal shifts emerge, within this context, as individuals on whom God's message has been inscribed with exceptional clarity, and are not to be compared with their latter-day counterparts of Enlightenment extraction.

Much the same applies to Pagden's analysis of José de Acosta. An attempt is certainly made to keep anachronistic impulses at bay, through an attachment to the original text: "And once we have learned some new truth by experience", Pagden paraphrases, "then it is 'natural' to look for some alternative cause that satisfies all the facts of the case" (154). But if we are to be alerted to the dangers of the "natural," should we not treat with caution the suggestion that the "[f]acts no longer spoke for themselves" (155)? Moreover, the gloss upon Acosta's attention to experiences as a concern for "empirical data" (153-54) neutralizes the effect of Pagden's insistence upon the intrinsically Aristotelian dimension to Acosta's work. Similarly, subsequent references to a "body of empirical data" (198) and "more obviously scientific observations" (199) serve largely to facilitate the gradual transition from Aristotelian science to its Enlightenment counterpart. Francisco de Vitoria and his colleagues of the Salamanca school, we are finally assured, "made it possible for Acosta and those who followed him to see that every explanation of alien cultures had to be securely grounded in that local and empirical study of behavior which, in the 19th century, came to be called 'ethnology'" (209).

In sum, while taken in isolation they may seem insignificant, the references to "accurate prediction," "empirical grounds," "empirical and
historical data," "bodies of empirical data," "empirical evidence," "observable phenomena," "variables," the "primacy of experience," "testing," "empirical observations," "verifiable characteristics," "elaborate demonstrations," "pieces of objective reasoning," "sets of evidence," "scientific observation," "descriptive and causal explanation," etc. exert a cumulative effect, which is to install a whole ideology of empiricism and thereby blur the radical differences between feudal and early modern science.

How do we explain such slippage in an historian otherwise alert to the existence of epistemic or paradigmatic shifts? The answer, I believe, is to be found in the nature of empiricist ideology itself, and in its profoundly idealist attachment to the notion of a "human nature" that "evolutionism" essentially leaves untouched. "Man," according to Kantianism, "expresses" himself through linguistic "forms," or alternatively, according to the empiricist variant, exteriorizes his inner thoughts and ideas through whatever linguistic means — in the technical sense — are available. Qualifications, it has to be said, are called for within the context of literature, the domain of the "imagination," where "experience" is not subject to the "control" and "verification" that science demands. But in essence the same "human nature" prevails, and in the process the literalism that, as we will see, is unquestionably a feature of the likes of Las Casas and Acosta, is prematurely collapsed into its empirical counterpart. The cultural historian does not "see" the ideological density involved because he moves within it, in the sense that it constitutes his ideological unconscious. The all-pervasive nature of the latter is such that it places radical constraints upon the appreciation of otherness, constraints that, ironically, it was Pagden's goal to expose in colonial writers and historians past and present.

The Canonic Principle and the Autoptic Imagination

We have accused the empiricist of a nominalism that, while distrustful of the intrusive role of theory, indulgently generates analytic terms of its own. For, of course, no methodology can dispense entirely with abstract concepts, even for purely descriptive purposes, and Pagden's is no exception. Indeed, we would be advised to attend carefully to his categorial innovations, if we are to appreciate their strengths and, more importantly, their weaknesses. Let us consider two of the more significant, with which the historian frames his discussion of 16th-century colonial texts, namely the "canonic principle" and the "autoptic imagination." Symptomatic of the latter, according to Pagden, is the repeated legitimation of narratives on the basis of "I saw," "I heard," "I was there," etc. "Autopsy" itself originates, as a category, in ancient rhetoric but, the argument continues, was also to dominate accounts of the New World and its inhabitants. "The ability to 'bear witness' in this way was, for obvious reasons, to mark off those who had 'been there' from those who had not"
(Pagden 1993: 52). On this ability many chroniclers were to rest their case, not least of all Las Casas, Fernández de Oviedo and Acosta.

Autopsy, it transpires, needs to be set off against an alternative, canonic principle, based on the prevalence of the notion of the world as a book, whose message must be deciphered, with references to the appropriate authority or authorities. This second principle, Pagden elaborates, presupposed a theory of knowledge that dictated the cognitive practices of early historians of America: "[It] relied very largely upon exegesis and hermeneutics, and claimed that the external world and all human life was legible, secundum scriptura" (52). The key canonic text, naturally enough, was the Bible, to be supplemented with the Church Fathers and, when necessary, the various Classical authorities. Needless to say, this motley collection was sometimes the occasion for conflict, notably when Christian sources were called upon to discredit their classical counterparts, but taken together they constituted an impressive canon to be off-set against their modern competitors. Pagden explains:

Whenever an alternative structure did present itself it was likely, at least at first, to be dismissed as false simply because it was an alternative. All that could be seen or demonstrated by experiment had ultimately to be made intelligible in terms of one or another component of the canon. As the Spanish Carmelite Domingo de Santa Teresa stated in the late eighteenth century, although Descartes's epistemological scepticism seemed to be intelligible, it had already been refuted a priori by "the authority of Aristotle and St Thomas and Scotus, and all the other doctors and theologians who thought the contrary." For such people – and they are largely representative of the intellectual world to which nearly all Europeans before the mid-seventeenth century belonged – there was no possibility for immediate and authoritative knowledge outside the "structure of norms" provided by the canon. (52-53)

We are left, then, with an opposition between two epistemologies, one based upon the category of experience and on what could be gleaned by way of experiment, and the other based upon reading, as a source of authoritative judgement. Both enjoyed a relationship that, while mutually supportive and, to some extent, symbiotic, was fundamentally contradictory and fraught with tension. Let us explore it more closely.

The slippage on Pagden's part from "experience" to "experiment," with respect to the autopsy principle, locks the latter into a "process of continuing negotiation" whereby "scientific understanding" was "built up" (53), cumulatively, in an ongoing spiral of progress. Symptomatically, Acosta did not hesitate to debunk Aristotle for his obvious shortcomings, when measured against the evidence of the senses. However, as Pagden continues to explain, the difficulty "was always seeing the discrepancy between the observation and
the text, particularly since no observation or experiment was ever conducted 
with the purpose of verifying (much less falsifying) the statements made in the
text." When experience and text collided, "it was the experience, which was
unstable because of its very novelty, which was likely to be denied or at least
obscured" (53), and for an obvious reason: texts that rested predominantly on
the autoptic principle were not easily taken on board by a contemporary
readership that was accustomed to narratives plotted with reference to key
quotations. Experience, that is to say, remained insecurely rooted in a
subjectivity that was still unformed, and therefore vulnerable to pressure from
scriptural authority:

The uncertainty of Las Casas's, or Oviedo's claim to autopsy [...],
derived less from the proven unreliability of any particular "I" than it
did from the fact that before the emergence of the idea of the
autonomous self in the seventeenth century, reliance on "I" as a source
of authority could only ever be tenuous. For the Cartesian sceptic, the
appeal to individual witness made perfect sense. To an Augustinian like
Léry or to a Thomist of Las Casas's stamp, both of whom belong to
cultures whose scientific procedures were bound by the appeal to
auctoritates, it could only ever be highly problematical. For all those whose
intellectual habits had been formed by the canon, the self had little
existence beyond the plurality of the text. (83)

The pre-modern individual, then, according to Pagden's logic, was
caught in a kind of no-man's-land, having relinquished habits of the past
without having as yet replaced them with a sustainable alternative. While
Oviedo and Las Casas sometimes had recourse to the testimony of their senses
and sought to legitimate their accounts on the basis of the primacy of vision,
they "could never, nor did they claim to, offer any proof of their objectivity"
(83). The implication, on Pagden's part, is that "experience" had yet to be
transformed into the more respectable, because more scientific, concern with
"experiment" and the procedures (of falsification and verification) associated
with it. The only problem was that both writers were "addressing scientific
cultures which had already begun to think in terms of objectivity and
detachment and, as a consequence, to demand a disjunction between theory
and observed fact" (83).

Now although such observations are not without merit, in certain
respects they fall far short of adequacy. The first thing to strike us is the
autonomization and reification of culture, to which individuals belong or in
which they fail to find a place. What is never asked is why the individuals in
question, namely Las Casas and Oviedo, acted in the way they did. Moreover,
given Pagden's descriptive bias, some basic theoretical assumptions remain
implicit, and have to be gradually unpacked. For example, while medieval
culture appears to be giving way, through some kind of transitional process, to its modern counterpart, there is never any debate as to what, precisely, drives the change involved. The source of change, it may be supposed, is located in free subjects, such as Las Casas and Oviedo themselves, or alternatively, in Columbus, Cortés, Pizarro, etc., through the transformative effect that they exert on culture. Yet, by a strange coincidence, it is precisely the existence of free subjects that is being problematized and restricted to post-Cartesian society. Certain questions then become unavoidable. Notably, did pre-modern culture lack this kind of subject, and if so, what exactly are the theoretical consequences for feudalism as a social mode of production? And while we are, so to say, on the subject, which imagination does Pagden precisely have in mind when he refers to the "autoptic imagination," the scholastic version (a faculty of Soul) or the Kantian version (opposed to Reason)?

And that is not the least of it. What is obviously missing from Pagden's work is an explicit, carefully argued theory of ideology and of science. The empiricist believes theory is something that he can well do without. But history will have a theory of ideology, and in the absence of one that is consciously elaborated, will secrete another. And this unstated theory, as we have seen, will be nothing less than the historian's own ideological unconscious, secreted into his narrative. One immediate consequence, we have seen, is the tendency to collapse the autoptic mode into an empiricism characterized by its emphasis upon "verification" and "falsification," "external evidence" and "hypotheses." The relevance of such terms to Counter-Reformation Spain is nothing if not debatable and their use only confirms our impression that we are being encouraged to think in terms of an incremental process, leading from pre- to modern "scientific procedures." This tendency is at one with the importance attached to free subject of classic bourgeois ideology. The key reference points throughout are individual subjects or "epoch markers": Girolamo Fracastoro, a physician writing in 1521, Copernicus, Galileo, and thence to various 17th-century and 18th-century figures, with Bacon acting as the fulcrum in the transference of learning from Italy to northern Europe: "This move towards objectivity and empiricism was the outcome of slow development of an objective – it cannot be described as a project – which is most closely connected with the work of Francis Bacon, to create a true 'natural' history of mankind" (83-84).

Substantialism and Animism

The parallels between, on the one hand, Pagden's canonic and autoptic imagination, and, on the other, Rodríguez's substantialism and animism are too obvious to require comment. More intriguing are their differences, which are radical. Substantialism and animism, we have argued, are constitutive of an
ideological matrix, one element of a social formation consisting of conflictive modes of production. Let us illustrate their modus operandi, with reference to the same authors discussed by Pagden, through which to illustrate the relevant differences. Firstly, the substantialist principle, as exemplified by Las Casas:

Allende las susodichas autoridades hay otra de Séneca, no poco admirable, para declaracion de la cual es de notar, primero, que si bien las Escripturas divinas y humanas, que hablan de las cosas señaladas en el mundo acaecidas, consideramos, nunca hallaremos que se hicieron cosas grandes, ó para bien del mundo, ó para castigo suyo, que mucho antes ó por boca de sus siervos y amigos los Sanetos profetas, ó de sus enemigos, como las habia entre los gentiles, no ordenase que ó escura ó claramente lo que habia de acaescer se anunciase ó predijese. Desto están llenas las divinas Escripturas ó historias, como parece en el universal Diluvio por Noé, y en la sumersion y hundimiento de las cinco ciudades de Sodoma por Abraham [...]: lo mismo podriamos traer en ejemlpo, si quisiésemos detenernos en muchos casos tocantes á lugares y gentes y ciudades ménos universales. (Las Casas 1875-76: I, 85)

Substantialism is a product of the serf (servant)/ lord (Lord) relation, involving the crucial concept of "service." Serfs are interpellated as such by their Lord, and "live" their social relations in these imaginary terms, which explains, amongst other things, why a writer such as Las Casas continues to define his activity not through reference to the (publishing) market but on the basis of service to a patron. Likewise, Oviedo expresses his desire to "servir a Dios y a vuestras Majestades [...] debajo cuyo favor y amparo ofrezco la presente obra" (Fernández de Oviedo 1958: I, 10). And just as a lord or lady presides over the activities of his/her serfs and vassals, so the Lord presides over the course of history, or so at least Oviedo emphatically assumes: "Mas como Dios tiene ordenado lo que ha de ser, ninguno puede huir de su juicio" (IV, 36), etc. Substantialism does not see, it reads the world conceived as Book, the latter structured on the basis not of the relations between ("free") subjects but between the lord and his serfs or servants.

Animism, in contrast, we have seen, crucially presupposes the notion of the subject or strictly speaking the "alma bella" or proto-subject, as embodied in the "lives" of lyric poets, dialoguists, and the protagonists of the picaresque. The free subject looks to divine intervention only as a last resort: it finds legitimation enough in the "eye-that-sees-the-thing." Chance is all, and victory goes to the individual who shows initiative, for the future is not already written, as under substantialism, but is something to be produced or created. To illustrate such literalism in operation, consider the following extract from Oviedo:
 Otro monte hay, en aquella provincia, que llaman Masaya, del cual hablaré como hombre que le vi e note después de haber oído muchas fábulas a diversos hombres que decían haber subido a verle. Visto he a Vulcano, e subido he hasta la cumbre de aquel monte de que sale continuo humo; e allá encima está un hoyo de veinte e cinco o treinta palmos en hondo, y en él no se ve sino ceniza, entre la cual sale aquel sempiterno humo que se de día, e dicen algunos que de noche se convierte en un resplandor o llama. Pero yo estuve allí, el día que llegué, dos horas antes que fuese de noche, y estuve el día siguiente todo, e con otros salí en tierra, e subí a ver aquella cumbre, y estuve encima más de un cuarto de hora; e bajado, estuve en aquel puerto también aquella segunda noche hasta que fue de día, el tercero que allí llegué con la serenísima Reina de Nápoles, mi señora, a quien yo servía de guardarropa, mujer que fué del Rey don Fernando Segundo; e con siete galeras estuvo Su Majestad en aquel puerto el tiempo que he dicho, año de mil e quinientos y uno, e desde allí fuimos a Palermo. (Fernández de Oviedo 1958: IV, 392-93)

Substantialism and animism are not to be seen as reified ideological structures, but force-fields that, conjointly, play across the body of texts, with the result that what may seem, at first sight, to be a relatively homogeneous text, such as Oviedo's history, will, on closer inspection prove as elusive, fluid and complex as the social relations that determine it. Note, for example, the above reference to "service" to Oviedo's mistress, the Queen of Naples, buried deep in the heart of an eminently literalist passage. Such moments are to be seen as, in the last instance, the effects of underlying social relations, not of the individuals through whom these relations are mediated. The point cannot be emphasized enough. It is not in Las Casas that we are to search for the origins of substantialism, just as literalism is not ultimately rooted in Oviedo. Individualities come to consciousness within social structures of whose mechanisms they are "mere supports," to use Althusser's misunderstood phrase, and whose totality massively transcends their singularity and that of their texts.

The Althusserian approach, we are saying, is sustained, in contrast to its empiricist counterpart, by an explicit theory of ideology, to be contextualized within the much broader context of a social formation, the latter defined as "a totality of instances articulated on the basis of a determinate mode of production" (Althusser and Balibar 189). Ideology is one such instance among others, notably those of economics and politics. The structure of the whole is "immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects," in short, that the structure "is nothing outside its effects" (209n5). The whole becomes what
Althusser calls an "absent cause" because it is present only in and through the reciprocal effectivity of its elements. One major consequence of these theoretical innovations is the rejection of the paradigm or problematic of ideology as part of the realm of consciousness. In Althusser's own words: "Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness.' They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them" (Althusser 233). Ideology, it follows, is an objective social reality or, more specifically, an organic part of the class struggle.

Such, then, are the contrasting positions of Pagden and Rodríguez on ideology. On the one hand, an under-theorized belief in ideology as the conscious possession of an individual agent, on the other, ideology as the effect of relations of production, mediated through an ideological matrix. It remains to assess the explanatory power of each.

*From "Books" to "Lives*

The contrast between the canonic and autoptic principles can best be appreciated, following Pagden, if we draw into the debate another of Oviedo's texts, the chivalrous romance entitled *Libro del muy esforçado Cavallero … don Claribalte*. The latter arrives with all the familiar trappings of successive layers of texts, and possibly three languages, "piled one upon another." This emphasis upon the "book" defines the canonic mode, and, Pagden insists, "is the very reverse of the kind of history which Oviedo himself was offering his readers in the *Historia general*" (Pagden 1993: 64). The contrast is a stark one, between a genre that authorizes itself canonically and another that seeks legitimation through an emergent subjectivity. Not surprisingly, Pagden discerns in Oviedo qua historian "a heightened concern that his readers should not confuse the absent, self-effaced novelist with the autoptic recorder, the disengaged 'I'" (64).

Now brief though this discussion is, it is misleading in crucial respects. On a point of detail, the author of *Claribalte* is not a "novelist," nor is *Claribalte* a novel, as Pagden himself inadvertently concedes, but a "romance" or, more strictly, a "book." Such distinctions are important, and need to be systematically affirmed if the bourgeois empiricist tradition is to avoid misrecognizing itself in the past. The novel, in the technical sense, can emerge only after the constitution of the Cartesian subject, one of whose incarnations is the richly individuated, "psychologized" protagonist of modern prose fiction. On this basis, not even *Lazarillo* and works in the same tradition are
properly considered "novels."

Rodríguez's approach is altogether more responsive to such nuances. The key, from the Althusserian perspective, is the existence of the feudal animism referred to above (see chapter three). Fed by various contemporary traditions, notably Augustinianism, and characterized by an emphasis upon an inner *virtue*, feudal animism became the basis of a chivalrous-courtly cult that acted as a source of resistance to a dominant Thomistic corporatism, without ever amounting to a "break" with the seigniorial apparatus as a whole (Rodríguez 1990: 67-68). The result is a tradition that, while it exhibits many of the features of its bourgeois counterpart, still registers the pervasive impact of feudal ideology, dictated by the notion of "service" to one's lord or lady, the thematics of blood, honor, treachery, etc.

Such are the ideological dynamics captured in Oviedo's chivalrous romance. Substantialism, to begin with, explains the sheer characterological fixity of the work's protagonist, whose rise from the status of "knight errant" to "Emperor of Constantinople" is pre-figured in his nature. Claribalte's status is, after all, a given: it can only be hidden under a pseudonym. The purpose of the "adventures" or, more strictly, tournaments and duels, is simply to put his innate attributes to the test. They serve, as it were, to prove his lineage. By the same token, the knight's fate is determined not by chance (as in the novel), but by providential design, otherwise the prognostics that attend his birth. The events that follow simply actualize what is. Most importantly, the text exhibits a dual status throughout, in the sense that its feudal literalism remains, in the last instance, exemplary. Hence those moments when the narrative of amorous intrigue appears to capsize, to reveal its moralizing underside. Consider, for example, the lecture that his king gives to Claribalte:

> Los reynos, la nobleza, la honrra y la riqueza, assí como vienen por caso, asi se goviernan por el tiempo. Procura conocer éste y vuestra persona y veréys lo que podréys y no emprenderéys cosa que os sea vergüença ni os dexe sin triumpho. Temed a Dios y sed piadoso y hallaréys piedad y socorro. Acuérdoos quel tiempo que se os passare será la mayor pérdida que os podrá venir, si bien y virtuosamente no usáredes dél. (Fernández de Oviedo 2002: 65)

Likewise, the moral "aside" in which Laterio, Claribalte's tutor, lectures the fledgling knight on the virtues of the true religion (94-95). The latter, it needs to be emphasized, constitutes the core of a life that remains in essence a "pilgrimage" (67), through which Claribalte gravitates towards his natural place, next to his Lord.

Yet, from the beginning, this substantialist legacy is corroded from within by an animist thematics. Against the de-chronologized world of fantasy and magic is to be set the literal time of what is, in geographical terms, a
relatively precise Europe. And while blood remains important, there has been a significant shift of emphasis: "La causa que me movió a intitularme de la devisa de la rosa no es la sangre, porque yo soy de parte muy extraña della, mas es la voluntad que me a traydo desde muy lejos a conocerla y preciarme de ser invencionado y desvisado de vuestra devisa" (85-86). Chivalrous heroes are defined by their courtly "virtue," which is, in the last instance, an interiorized quality of their "soul." And thus, amidst the disquisitions on "service," a "free subject" gradually takes shape:

Y con estas exclamaciones y otras muchas palabras que dixo de hombre lastimado, pudo muy bien conocer Laterio que salían del ánima. Mas como era cuerdo, diole la respuesta que allí convenía; y como cessó el Cavallero de la Rosa, sin responder, su ayo estuvo gran rato sin dezir palabra, y desde a algún espacio comenzó su habla diziendo: -- Señor, no quiero poneros culpa en lo que me avés dicho, porque ay causas que os desculpan y son éstas: yo os he servido desde que naçistes y nunca supe ni sospeché que ninguna dama ni señora del mundo os enamorase hasta agora (puesto que siempre os vi fauo rescerlas y servirlas, pero no para que os diessen pena) y pues començáys a provar los dardos de Cupido, no me maravillo que se os assienten en el corazón y os pongan la vida en aventura. (94-95)

The stage is set for an ideological clash between animism's religion of love and its ecclesiastical counterpart, a clash that, as indicated above, Laterio anticipates and attempts, for pedagogical reasons, to defuse.

The distinctive quality of love is its inwardness, symptomatic of which are the splits that, however embryonically, threaten to fragment the organic community of feudalism. We have in mind, with respect to Oviedo's romance, the delicate interplay between what passes privately ("secretamente") and publicly ("públicamente"), a distinction that feudalism proper fails to draw and whose presence indicates the extent to which the dominant mode has been undermined, ideologically. Consider the constant exchange of letters that, while a further instance of the feudal preoccupation with texts (within texts), also betrays an increasing concern with privacy, the domain par excellence of beautiful souls. While we are still some distance from the dialogues and intimate interchanges characteristic of bourgeois animism, it is significant that Claribalte and his princess are married firstly privately and then publicly (225, 289), with Laterio functioning as "testigo de vista" (227), a phrase that will become the hallmark of all future literalism.

Christian Animism

Given Pagden's inadequate handling of a book of chivalry, whose ideological complexities we have been at pains to explain, it is not surprising to see the
liberal historian equivocating before the equally complex, ideologically overdetermined phenomenon of Las Casas' "conversion":

Las Casas's moment of illumination [...] – conceived precisely as the bestowal of a power to understand through experience – was not the consequence of an encounter with a divine revelation of the kind which had struck Paul from his horse on the way to Damascus; nor did it come to him as the result of his observation of the misery of the Indians, although, as he says, he had seen much of that. As with Augustine, whose own conversion was triggered by the famous *tolle lege*, the child's voice saying "pick up and read," so Las Casas's, too, was the consequence of an encounter with a text. (Pagden 1993: 71-72)

The text in question is Ecclesiasticus 34: 21-2, condemning the defrauding of the laborer of the bread of life. According to Pagden, it restored to Las Casas, "in characteristically Augustinian terms," that is to say, through God's grace, "the eye's capacity to see" (72). One more textual instance, it seems, of the force of the canonic principle, although mediated through its autoptic counterpart.

How are we to explain such a convergence of principles? How, furthermore, does his subservience to a canonic text square with Las Casas' "project to establish the unique status of his voice"? And through a textual form that was persistently and obsessively "autobiographical" (70) to boot! One response might be that such a form was legitimated precisely by its Augustinian source, which privileges the immediacy of the experience, in the context of the lord/serf relation. But that simply raises a further problem, notably the special role of Augustinianism, within a dominantly Thomistic tradition. There is also the question of the continuity, and discontinuity, between the confessional text and the autobiography. The former concerns the relation between the serf/servant and his lord; the latter is an expression of a "free subject." Indications are that Las Casas' text remains bound to the confessional mode, his obsessive self-referentiality notwithstanding. As Pagden concedes: "The vision which Las Casas's conversion had granted him could not, however, stand alone. For, since he was neither a 'Martyr' nor even a real apostle, this vision too had to be linked directly to the canon if it were to acquire any meaning beyond its place in his personal biography" (73).

This is, in essence, as far as Pagden's theory can go, given the limitations of his key concepts of canonicity and autopsy and his predominantly descriptive bias. So let us turn to its Althusserian equivalent. An obvious point of departure, from the latter's standpoint, is feudal animism, of which, we have insisted, Augustinianism constituted a key ingredient. However, by the beginning of the 16th century it was possible to speak of a distinctively bourgeois animism, notably as embodied in the poetry of Garcilaso and
elsewhere. As we have also argued, the impact of more advanced bourgeois relations, which accounts for the rise of secular animism, produces within the realm of religion a new variant, namely Christian animism, characterized by a precarious balance between, on the one hand, the secular notion of freedom—hence Fray Luis de León’s claim to pastoral independence ("por mi mano plantado tengo un huerto")—and, on the other, the substantialist notion of corruption, which explains the mystical desire to transcend "this" world (see Rodríguez 1990: 247 ff).

It is this theoretical apparatus, and the notion of the ideological unconscious upon which it is based, that enable us to capture certain textual nuances that necessarily escape Pagden’s attention. Principally, we have in mind Las Casas’ inability to accede to the subjective position ("I") despite the importance he attaches to his personal testimony (the "eye"), which goes together with an ideological adherence to "el clérigo Las Casas," even when detailing the intimacies of his personal relationships: "Pues como estuviese ausente Pedro de la Rentería, y el Padre clérigo determinase dejar los indios, y predicar lo que sentía ser obligado para desenganchar los que en tan profundas tinieblas de ignorancia estaban, fué un día al gobernador Diego Velazquez, y díjole lo que sentía de su propio estado [etc.]" (Las Casas 1875-76: IV, 255-56). The impersonality extends to dialogues of a seemingly novelesque nature, in which the narrator "refuses" to assume his identity "in public." And necessarily so, in that, to reiterate, autobiography is inconceivable generically, outside the material conditions of bourgeois society proper.29 Even as the animist negotiates the transition from the "book" to the "life", this life remains that of a "soul" that is driven to express itself through "dialogue," as Las Casas' text itself demonstrates only too well, through his lively exchanges with the governor (see, for example, IV, 256). And if this is true of secular animism, it is even more so with respect to its Christian variant, in which the "life" of the saint is always poised to regress from its literal status to a dual narrative, otherwise a "book", in which the voice of God is again audible.

One other point cannot be emphasized enough: the constraints imposed upon Las Casas are not personal in origin but ideological and, therefore, unconscious in the structural sense. The underlying claim, often

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29 The failure to grasp this point, which is nothing less than that of the radical historicity of literature, has occasioned all kinds of confusion. The greatest danger remains that of collapsing 16th-century bourgeois culture into its 18th-century counterpart. In the words of Rodríguez: "[...] si señalamos que el 'yo autobiográfico' no existe en sentido estricto en el Lazarillo, lo hacemos una vez más para oponernos a la habitual lectura –viciada– que acostumbra a dar por supuesto el sentido del 'yo' y de tal 'autobiografía.' Esto es, para oponernos a la habitual identificación del Lazarillo con la noción de 'sujeto' –kantiano, empirista, pequeñoburguesa de los siglos XVIII al XX" (Juan Carlos Rodríguez 2001b: 132).
insisted upon by Althusserians but imperfectly understood by their critics, is that the lonely hour of the economy's last instance never comes, for the simple reason that ideology is always already determined by the matrix effect of the mode of production. What complicates the relevant historical conjuncture in the case of Las Casas is the pressure of at least two conflicting modes of production, feudalism and mercantilism, never forgetting the residual presence of slavery. "Freedom," it is true, has, by the 16th century, become the crux of ideological debates, but the parameters of these debates are not those of the classical bourgeoisie but of a society still mired in forms of bonded labor: "Los defectos de aquel repartimiento fueron muchos contra razon y ley natural, como fué aquel general de dar los hombres inocentes, *libres*, en tan mortífero captiverio, y á los señores naturales de vasallos hecellos siervos de los mismos trabajos, sin respecto ni diferencia de los demás" (IV, 62, italics added).

Freedom, yes, but as Las Casas always makes perfectly clear, freedom to bond oneself to the Monarch as opposed to those members of the nobility or aspirant nobility who had set themselves up as independent lords and masters.

*The Letter of the Law*

Basic to Pagden's reading of Las Casas is the claim that, his attachment to the canonic principle notwithstanding, the cleric also engineered a shift, in matters of legal interpretation, from an emphasis upon abstract knowledge to direct, unmediated contact with "fact." Justification is at hand in the form of quotation from the 14th-century lawyer, Petrus Baldus de Ubaldis, to the effect that "*ex facto oritur ius.*" Correct interpretation, on this basis, consists in the proper reconciliation between the claims of *factum* and *ius*, but where this is not possible, "then it is the law, which must have its source in fact, which must change" (Pagden 1993: 75). The suggestion is that Las Casas was something of a proto-subject, who was able to correctly balance the claims of observation and conceptualization so as to produce a "true science" (77). This "strict adherence to the immediate fact" is dependent upon the cultivation of a "plain style," which, while rooted in an Augustinian precedent, was transformed by Las Casas into something new, namely "a declaration of faith in the essential innocence of his eye" (78). Other features of Las Casas' narrative are, allegedly, "analogous" to legal practice, notably the rapid alternation between recorded action and speech, and lengthy quotation.

Now while there is a nub of truth in Pagden's account, we must object as usual to the collapsing of the substantialist opposition between "experience" and "art" or "science," on the one hand, into the empiricist distinction between "theory" and "practice," on the other. The latter is based squarely upon the phenomenological experience of the "free subject," who is confronted by an equally free object, in the sense that the latter no longer functions as a
signature but as a geometric sign. We are talking, in other words, of two ideologically distinct ways of "saving appearances," whose differences, as Rodríguez warns, are obscured by the generalized references to "empiricism": "[L]a línea mecanicista, en sentido riguroso, que va desde Descartes a Locke, es exactamente la expresada en la relación sujeto/experiencia (con sus desdoblamientos: ideas/hechos; teoría/práctica; razón/acción, etc.); en cambio el "salvar los fenómenos" aristotélico supone precisamente toda la matriz organicista y únicamente tiene sentido dentro de ella" (Rodríguez 1990: 63). In the Aristotelian case, as the Althusserian proceeds to explain, the relevant opposition is not between the subject and object but between this world and the next, otherwise between an imperfect, worldly truth and the perfect essences of the region beyond the moon. Within this context, the body qua flesh remains a contingent necessity, to be assumed in the full knowledge of its imperfection, as an appearance that demands to be read.

The implications, I think, are clear enough. Pagden is able to quote a medieval legal scholar to illustrate the legal principle that sustains Las Casas' practice because the debate falls squarely within the ambit of substantialism. "Appearances," within the terms of the latter, refer to the particularities that "art" cannot embrace, but that need to be saved, through reading, because in them pulsates the voice of God. The "experience" that such a textual exercise required is qualitatively distinct from the kind that operates within the empiricist problematic, whose attendant terms are those of "observation," "falsification" and "verification."

But where, within Pagden's work, lies the "nub" of truth of which we spoke above? Let us note in this respect the changes that Rodríguez himself discerns within the Aristotelian tradition of the 16th and 17th centuries. Both the continuity and discontinuity impose themselves with all the force of a necessity. Aristotelianism cannot continue to function in an unalloyed form during the transition, despite the resurgence of feudalism from the 1530s onwards. Hence the compromise discourse referred to by Rodríguez as non-organic Aristotelianism or "Aristotelian rationalism", "que de cualquier modo no supone ya la plena identificación habitual entre aristotelismo y organicismo feudalizante" (Rodríguez 1990: 348). We will be exploring the concept of non-organic Aristotelianism below, but it is important at this point that we understand something of its complexities.

A particularly helpful text in this respect is Juan Huarte de San Juan's famous Examen de los ingenios, which reviews all the major disciplines in the light of the "faculties of the soul" that are appropriate to them. The crucial distinction lies between abstract branches of the disciplines, which are indebted to memory, and practical branches, which draw upon the understanding and imagination: "[...] si el jurisprito ha de tener atado el
entendimiento, y la imaginación, a seguir lo que dice la ley sin quitar ni poner, es cierto que esta facultad pertenece a la memoria, y que en lo que se ha de trabajar es saber el número de leyes y reglas que tiene el Derecho, y acordarse de cada una por sí, y referir de cabeza su sentencia y determinación, para que, en ofreciéndose el caso, sepan que hay ley que lo determina y de qué forma y manera" (Huarte de San Juan 210-11). Medicine and theology are likewise governed at one level by universal principles, which it is possible to learn by heart. However, if it is a question of applying these principles to particular "casos," then practitioners should be strong with respect to other faculties. In sum, law needs to be applied by individuals of great understanding, who are able to resolve those particular cases that lack a precedent and have not been brought under the art of jurisprudence: "Esto no lo pueden hacer los letrados de mucha memoria; porque si no son los casos que el arte les pone en la boca cortados y mascados, no tienen habilidad para más" (213-14).

Thus, through its insistence on the peculiar combination of faculties required for the practice, as opposed to the theory, of law, Huarte's text also highlights precisely the secular, this-worldly shift involved in transitional discourses: "Ser la ley justa y racional, y que provea enteramente para todo lo que pueda acontecer, y que se escriba con términos claros y que no tengan dubios ni opuestos, y que no reciba varios sentidos, no todas veces se puede alcanzar, porque en fin se estableció con humano consejo, y éste no tiene fuerza para dar orden a todo lo que está por venir" (212-13, italics added). At which point, discriminations become crucial. The contract involved is not the product of a liberal but of an absolutist state, and like all such agreements was determined by natural law, and justified in the last instance by its origins in the mind of God. We are talking, in other words, about a contract that binds servants to their lords/Lord.

Non-Organic Aristotelianism

One effect of the political reversals – quintessentially the defeat of the Comuneros – experienced by the emergent Spanish bourgeoisie in the early 16th century is to postpone indefinitely the kind of bourgeois revolution that launched England and, eventually, France upon the road to modernity. Ideologically, a resurgent substantialism quickly establishes itself in Spain as the dominant ideology, at which point animism begins to live something of an underground existence, its place taken by a non-organic Aristotelianism that is able to "live with" its earlier, feudalizing counterpart. But why, specifically, the need for a compromise discourse of this kind? Rodríguez explains:

El por qué es obvio: las relaciones sociales mercantiles siguen existiendo (aunque su realización clave sea sólo a nivel económico) y siguen segregando por consiguiente
un inconsciente ideológico que de un modo u otro deberá siempre ser "tematizado": tematización que se realizará, pues, bien a través de los enunciados de este aristotelismo no organista o bien a través de una adecuación específica – chirriante – del organismo a tal matriz inconscientemente mercantil. (Rodríguez 1990: 350)

Significantly, it is this kind of Aristotelian rationalism that that Pagden, among others, will persistently confuse with its bourgeois equivalent, at the point where a materialism of scholastic extraction shades into its modern, mechanistic equivalent. Accordingly, it is particularly urgent that we establish its ideological co-ordinates, to which end I return to Oviedo and specifically to one particular section of his Historia general that recounts the attempt made upon his life by one Simón Bernal.

Symptomatically, Oviedo pauses, at the start of his narration, to justify the principle of relating episodes of his own "life," against the advice of his friends. Doubtless the latter were the first to remind him, for eminently substantialist reasons, that people of "blood" and "lineage" had no business justifying themselves "in public." However, once this moment is past, the chronicler proceeds to detail the circumstances surrounding the event in question. Oviedo, it seems, after having denied a position to a one-time shoemaker, who happened to be "a low man," also declined the services of his son, one Simón Bernal. The latter, feeling doubly aggrieved, confronted him on the steps of the church. The narrative continues:

Y en este instante llegó por detrás el Simón Bernal con un puñal muy afilado (aunque traía otra espada muy ceñida) e dióme una gran cuchillada en la cabeza, e descendió cortando por debajo de la oreja siniestra, e cortóme un pedazo grande de la punta e hueso de la quijada, y entró hasta media mejilla; e fué tan grande e honda la herida, que me derribó e dió conmigo en tierra; e al caer, dióme otras dos cuchilladas sobre el hombro izquierdo, e todo tan presto, que antes que el alcalde le viese, ni yo me reconosciese, era hecho lo que es dicho. E el malhechor echó a huir la calle adelante, no queriéndose acoger a aquella iglesia, a par donde estábamos, porque si allí se entrara, fuera preso, sino fuése a la iglesia mayor donde el deán e otros clérigos, sus amigos e valedores, le atendían para le favorescer, como lo hicieron.

Así como caí en tierra atordido, dije recio: "Válgame la Madre de Dios". E miré atrás e vile alzado el puñal; e dándome presia a levantarme, dije: "Oh, traidor, ¿por qué me has muerto?" E puse mano a la espada, que tenía ceñida debajo de una loba cerrada que tenía vestida, tomando el pomo por encima de la ropa, medio sin sentido e tal, que no conocí bien al que me hirió por la turbación de la vista. E como el traidor no se detuvo, aunque salieron muchos de la iglesia, e
algunos comenzaron a correr tras él, y el alcalde asimismo, como era mancebo e tenía buenos pies, fuése a la iglesia mayor; e luego los alcaldes comenzaron a hacer requerimientos al deán e clérigos, para que les entregasen el malhechor; pero diéronse poco por sus auctos e pregones con que le citaban. (Fernández de Oviedo: III, 277)

Now, as is immediately apparent, this is not a dual text, based on the split between this world and the next, in which events must be read for the message that is contained within them. Rather, it is distinctively literal, down-to-earth relation, replete with elements of direct speech, constitutive not of a confession, in the feudal manner, but of a legal document that proves the innocence of Oviedo and the guilt of Simón Bernal. Having said which, it is also important to acknowledge the presence of elements that fly in the face of this literal bias. Structurally, the passage exhibits the regressive tendency typical of the epic whereby the narrative doubles back upon itself so as to recount the same events from a slightly different perspective. Thematically, "treachery," together with the ritual exchange of insults, is feudal through and through. Such is the weight of substantialism at this point that Oviedo anticipates and attempts to neutralize any attempt to allegorize his narrative:

Yo me desacordaba que estos trabajos me venía de la mano de Dios por mis méritos, pues que dice Sanct Gregorio: "Cuando en esta vida padescemos lo que queremos, nescesario es que inclinemos los estudios de nuestra voluntad a la de aquel que ninguna cosa injusta puede querer". Grand consolación es en que los desplace pensar que todo se hace por la disposición de Dios, al cual ninguna cosa sino lo justo aplace. Non obstante esta autoridad del glorioso dotor que tengo alegada, sospechaba yo que por industria de Pedrarias se acumulaban mis trabajos; y así por esto como cumplir con lo que debía, desde a dos o tres días que fuí acuchillado, hice llamar a aquel escribano Pedro de Barreda [...]. (III, 277-78)

The result is something midway between a feudal epic of public treachery and vengeance, and a bildungsroman of private intrigue, in the spirit of which Oviedo will not rest until Simón Bernal is duly processed by law, proven guilty and punished. The latter consisted of being deprived of an arm and a leg, to be publicly displayed in the town square.

In their respective analyses of the cultural formations of imperial Spain, Anthony Pagden and Juan Carlos Rodríguez appear to converge on a common distinction between two diametrically opposed discourses, namely the canonic and autoptic principles, in the case of the liberal historian, and

31 For further discussion of this stylistic phenomenon, as it appears in the Poema de Mio Cid, see Read 1983: 11.
substantialism and animism, in the case of the Marxist. Yet appearances can prove deceptive, as a more detailed comparison between the two scholars reveals. On the one hand, we have an idealist brew, concocted of elements drawn from empiricism, Kantianism and Hegelianism, and, on the other, a brand of Structural Marxism that defines itself precisely in terms of its opposition to all three bourgeois ideologies. Pagden, no doubt, poses the relevant issues in terms that speak far more directly to the Anglo-Saxon academy, and in a manner far more accessible than his Althusserian counterpart. That said, he unconsciously embraces an empiricism that can offer few prospects for a theory of the "ideological matrixes" towards which he so lamely gestures (Pagden 1995: 125), and even fewer prospects for a theory of the specific matrix that holds the colonialist himself so firmly within its grip and with which he would need to "break" before the serious task of ideological critique could get underway.

Benítez Rojo and Las Casas' Plague of Ants

In his La isla que se repite, Cuban critic Antonio Benítez Rojo re-reads one of the digressive "fictions" within Las Casas' Historia de las Indias, concerning a plague of ants that occurred in the Caribbean islands in 1519-21, and, through the deployment of the key Freudian notion of the uncanny, argues that it rehearses the Spaniard's deeply entrenched sense of guilty complicity in the importation of Negro slaves, who were currently "plaguing" these same islands. The initial goal below will be to review, metacritically, the theoretical apparatus that Benítez Rojo brings to bear on Las Casas' text. Psychoanalytic readings, as we know, have long been a commonplace of (post)colonial studies, although never conducted with an easy conscience. The problem, in its general outlines, is fairly clear. On the one hand, few would contest the transhistorical existence of a psychic human apparatus, succinctly alluded to by Freud himself in his famous observation concerning the Trobian islanders: "Don't they have an anus then?" On the other hand, we have the warnings of Franz Fanon against the uninhibited application of "European" theoretical categories to a psychic economy of the colonized, on the grounds that the latter is manifestly inflected by the material brutalities of imperialism. Benítez Rojo is himself firmly persuaded of the relevance of psychoanalysis: the texts of Las Casas, he avers, constitute nothing less than a "performance psicoanalítica" (Benítez Rojo 1998: 139). Reading Benítez Rojo against the grain, we will argue that, while the existence of an unconscious association between the ants and Negroes is
undeniable, the psychoanalytic details mustered in its support are, in
temselves, rather less convincing. The effect is to raise serious concerns about
the a-historical bias of psychoanalysis and, more specifically, the virtues of
conducting "case studies" of pre-modern individualities.

Our second goal will be to juxtapose to the libidinal unconscious its
ideological counterpart, as articulated by Juan Carlos Rodríguez. From the
latter's standpoint, the universalized application of psychoanalytic categories
cannot help but appear a risky enterprise, particularly when it comes to
assuming, as part of our metacritical baggage, notions of subjectivity whose
historical production needs to be properly theorized. The Spanish empire,
within this context, has the virtue of being something of a test case, through
which to take the measure of relevant transhistorical and historical forces.

Given such contrasting evaluations, it is important to clarify at the
outset one particular point of principle: our aim is not to disqualify
psychoanalytic criticism per se nor, more broadly, to promote some brand of
structural monism. We readily concede (a) that the psychological sciences are
no mere region of the "continent of history," to be explained away through a
process of reduction to more fundamental levels of inquiry; and (b) that, by
the same token, the social and psychological sciences need to be applied
conjointly in the analysis of social formations, past and present. There can be
no question, furthermore, of reducing the elements of a structure, at one level,
to the status of simple effects, at another, a view commonly attributed to
Althusserianism. These positions, we believe, are perfectly compatible with our
central concern, namely, to prioritize determination (in the last instance) by the
ideological unconscious, whose pervasive influence is registered precisely in,
but extends far beyond, the texts of Las Casas that Benítez Rojo has selected
as the basis for his own analysis. Compatible for the simple reason that the
reductive impulse is as unacceptable vis-à-vis the social sciences as against their
psychological counterpart, particularly in the form of an attempt to treat the
class struggle as a regional instance of the revolt of the son against the Father.32

32 Needless to say, Benítez Rojo is by no means the first to focus upon Las Casas'
problematic role in the importation of African slaves to the Caribbean. Indeed,
traditional authorities have focused unflinchingly upon it. And what they have had to
say, for the most part, seems eminently acceptable. Henry Raup Wagner, for example,
rightly argues that the widespread use of slaves in Southern Spain explains in itself Las
Casas' initial acceptance of Negro slavery and why he personally advocated it.
Similarly, we would agree that the Dominican's zeal to defend the cause of the Indians
readily explains why he continued to advocate this same slavery until relatively
late in the proceedings (Wagner 247). Nor would we necessarily question the view that Las
Casas' advice "had no effect on the course of events" (246). What is far more debatable,
and certainly more relevant to our present concerns, is the claim by Wagner's editor,
Helen Rand Parish, to the effect that Wagner's work "is free from every preconception
save one, which he had derived from his own study of the material. He felt strongly that
Uncanny Visitation

Let us begin where Benítez Rojo begins, namely with those sections of Las Casas' text that deal with the plague of ants that overran the islands of the Caribbean in the early years of the 16th century. The citation below is taken directly from Benítez Rojo's text, which uses the Fondo de Cultura Económica edition of Las Casas' Historia de las Indias of 1965. Our own references will be to the first edition of this work, which appeared in Spain in 1875-76. For once these editorial details will prove to be of some consequence:

[...] hicieron ventaja las hormigas que en esta isla se criaron a las de Sant Juan, en el daño que hicieron en los árboles que destruyeron, y aquéllas a éstas en ser rabiosas, que mordían y causaban mayor dolor que si avispas al hombre mordieran y lastimaran, y dellas no se podían defender de noche en las camas, ni se podía vivir si las camas no se pusieran sobre cuatro dornajos llenos de agua. Las de esta isla comenzaron a comer por la raíz los árboles, y como si fuego cayera del cielo y los abrasara, de la misma manera los paraban negros y se secaban; dieron tras los naranjos y granados, de que había muchas huertas y muy graciosas llenas en esta isla; [...] dan tras los cañafistolos, y, como más a dulzura llegados, más presto los destruyeron y los quemaron [...] Era, cierto, gran lástima ver tantas heredades, tan ricas, de tal plaga sin remedio aniquiladas; [...] solas las heredades que había de cañafistolos en la vega y las que se pudieran en ella plantar, pudieran como se come el pan, por la gran fertilidad de aquella vega [...] Tomaron remedio algunos para extirpar esta plaga de hormigas, cavar alrededor de los árboles, cuan hondo podían, y matarlas ahogándolas en agua; otras veces quemándolas con fuego. Hallaban dentro, en la tierra, tres y cuatro y más palmos, la simiente y overas dellas, blancas como la nieve, y acaecía quemar cada día un celemín o dos, y cuando otro día amanecía, hallaban de hormigas vivas mayor cantidad. Pusieron los religiosos de Sant Francisco de la Vega una piedra de solimán, que debía tener tres o cuatro libras, sobre un pretil de una azotea; acudieron todas las hormigas de la casa, y en llegando de comer del luego caían muertas; y como si enviaran mensajeros a las que estaban dentro de media legua y una alrededor, convocándolas al

Casas's life and writings were inseparable; you simply could not discuss one without the other" (xix). For what such writers and critics fail to see is that the assumption of a strong "personality," otherwise a "free subject," committed to expressing an authentic interiority, in a manner that "set [Bartolomé de las Casas] far above most men of his age" (247), is the most basic preconception of all, as both Benítez Rojo and Rodríguez, in their different ways, set out to prove. For further discussion of subjectivity in the context of slavery, see Read 2003b, 2003c
banquete del solimán, no quedó, creo, una que no viniese, y viánse los
caminos llenos dellas que venían hacia el monasterio, y, finalmente,
subían a la azotea y llegaban a comer del solimán y luego caían en el
suelo muertas; de manera que el suelo de la azotea estaba tan negro
como si lo hubieran rociado de polvo de carbón; y esto duró tanto
cuanto el pedazo de solimán, que era como dos grandes puños y como
una bola, duró; yo lo que tan grande como dije cuando lo pusieron, y
desde a pocos días lo torné a ver como un huevo de gallina o poco
mayor. Después vieron los religiosos que no aprovechaba nada el
solimán, sino para traer basura a casa, acordaron de lo quitar […]
Viéndose, pues, los españoles vecinos desta isla en aflicción de ver
crecer esta plaga, que tanto daño les hacía, sin poderla obviar por vía
alguna humana, los de la ciudad de Sancto Domingo acordaron de
pedir el remedio al más alto Tribunal: hicieron grandes procesiones
rogando a nuestro Señor que los librase por su misericordia de aquella
tan nociva plaga para sus bienes temporales; y para más presto recibir el
divino beneplácito, pensaron tomar un Sancto por abogado, el que por
suerte nuestro Señor declarase; y así, hecha un día su procesión, el
obispo y clerecía y toda la ciudad echaron suertes sobre cuál de los
Sanctos de la letanía tenía por bien la Divina Providencia darles por
abogado; cayó la suerte sobre Sant Saturnino, y […]celebrarónle la
fiesta con mucha solemnidad […] Vídose por experiencia irse
diminuyendo desde aquel día o tiempo aquella plaga, y si totalmente
no se quító, ha sido por los pecados […] La causa de donde se originó
este hormiguero, creyeron y dijeron algunos, que fué de la traída y
postura de los plátanos. Cuenta el Petrarca en sus Triunfos, que en la
señoría de Pisa se despobló una cierta ciudad por esta plaga que vino
sobre ella de hormigas […]y así, cuando Dios quiere afligir las tierras o
los hombres en ellas, no le falta con qué por los pecados las afliga y con
chiquititas criaturas: parece bien por las plagas de Egipto. (Quoted by
Benítez Rojo 1998: 117-18)33

The moment, as it is contextualized by Benítez Rojo, was a crucial one,
economically and socially, in the development of the Spanish colonies,
occuring, as Las Casas himself is at pains to explain, between a catastrophic
"plague" of smallpox, which decimated the Indian population and, in
consequence, the most readily available source of labor power, and another
"plague," otherwise the numerous Negroes who, having been imported in their
thousands to rectify the labor shortage, had escaped from captivity and were
proceeding to harass the white settlers. Benítez Rojo follows other
commentators in viewing such textual interpolations as carefully constructed

33 For the same passage in the 1875-76 edition, see Las Casas 1875-76: V, 24-27.
"fictions" – notwithstanding the importance attached by the author to his own role as eye-witness of the events narrated –, whose seemingly digressive function belies their actual structural significance in the Historia de las Indias as a whole. Let us consider carefully the evidence adduced by Benítez Rojo in support of his claim.

The first indications of the passage's fictional status, according to Benítez Rojo, are Las Casas' own barely concealed doubts as to the credibility of his account. As the Spaniard himself describes it, the solimán attracted ants from within half a league to consume an object as hard as stone, a fact that in itself can only detract from the reality of the event. How, then, are we to account for the interpolation of the passage? The key, according to the Cuban critic, lies in the absence of certain information: "Nótese que la narración habla de indios y de españoles, pero no de negros; de la dulzura de los naranjos, granados y cañafístolos, pero no de la dulzura de la caña de azúcar; de vegas, huertos, heredades, conventos, casas y ciudades, pero no de trapiches e ingenios" (Benítez Rojo 1998: 119). One might imagine, the argument proceeds, to judge from Las Casas' tale, that sugar production was not yet underway in the Caribbean, at the time of the events narrated, when we know only too well, from information gleaned elsewhere from Las Casas himself, not to mention Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Las Casas' contemporary, and modern works by Fernando Ortiz and Eric Williams, that it was in fact quite widespread. Naturally, this raises a further question: why did Las Casas avoid any mention of the existence of the sugar plantations in his account of the plague of ants?

Benítez Rojo's response is that Las Casas's account embodies an instance of the uncanny, in the sense understood by Freud. Thus: "Supongamos que aquí se produce, subliminalmente, en la psiquis de las Casas, la metáfora plaga de hormigas/plaga de negros. Claro, ésta se reprime al instante porque conlleva un retorno de la culpa y la castración. De esta interdicción resulta que Las Casas no puede dar noticia en ese pasaje de su crónica de nada relacionado con la esclavitud y el azúcar. A cambio, sin embargo, su carga de ansiedad produce un 'sueño' o, para ser menos sugerente, una breve pieza de literatura uncanny donde el azúcar es representada icónicamente por el solimán" (133-34).

What are we to deduce from this? Not, seemingly, that Benítez Rojo intends to deconstruct the whole fiction/non-fiction binary, as applied to Renaissance texts (119), although, at the same time, we are left in no doubt as to the contagious power of the uncanny: "basta un solo efecto uncanny para que en nuestra diégesis una noticia histórica se transforme en una pieza literaria" (121). Benítez Rojo's main concern is to emphasize the inwardness of the uncanny effect, together with its originary ties, through dreams, to our early experiences. The uncanny is, in other words, a suppurating symptom of
repression operating within the hidden depths of the individual psyche or consciousness and, as such, stands opposed to an outside world. We will later be returning to the theory of subjectivity implicit in such a claim, but for the moment let us continue to trace the details of Benítez Rojo's unfolding analysis.

Paramount in this respect is one particular portion of Las Casas' text: "La huerta que dije de Sant Francisco, que en la Vega estaba, yo la vide llena de naranjos que daban el fructo de dulces, secas y agridas, y granados hermosísimos y cañafístolos, grandes árboles de cañas, de cañafístola, de cerca de cuatro palmos en largo, y desde a poco la vide toda quemada" (quoted by Benítez Rojo 1998: 122). The Cuban critic observes the following: firstly, the specification of the "cañafístolo" as the tree of the "cañafístola" is tautologous; secondly, the word "caña" is misapplied to this particular plant, which Las Casas more properly describes elsewhere as a "cañuto," which implies a pod-like morphology. These two facts, taken together with information, gained in part from Las Casas, that the Vega of La Española, with which Las Casas is concerned, was notoriously rich in sugar-cane, lead Benítez Rojo to the following conclusion: "'cañas', de todas las palabras escritas por Las Casas, es la única que no debo leer "sous nature" – según la conocida noción de Derrida –; el resto de la narración uncanny, a estos efectos, puede ser tachado; se trata de 'trazas' que remiten a la ausencia de una presencia: la plantación esclavista" (1998: 123).

While the reading is an intriguing one, it has its problems, as becomes apparent if we compare Benítez Rojo's version of Las Casas' text, taken from the 1965 edition of the Historia, with its equivalent in the first edition of 1875-76. In the latter, the relevant phrase reads: "[…] granados hermosísimos, y cañafístolos, grandes árboles de cañas de cañafístola cerca de cuatro palmos en largo […]" (Las Casas 1875-76: V, 25). Note the absence of a comma between "cañas" and "de cañafístola", which, unless I am very much mistaken, transforms a redundant monstrosity into a perfectly innocent noun phrase, in apposition to "cañafístolo." My aim, needless to say, is not to engage in some abstruse, philological game of one-upmanship, to be settled, in the last instance, by an appeal to the relevant documentary sources, but simply to show how precariously poised Benítez Rojo's argument is. The import of the comma's omission is clear: emphatically, we are dealing not simply with individual cañafístolos but with trees of "cañafístola."34

34 I am not personally familiar with the plant concerned. The definition given in the Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado, 2002, is interesting: "Planta arbórea grande y frondosa, de 10 m. de alto, de tronco ramoso, hojas compuestas, flores amarillas en racimos colgantes y fruto en la legumbre leñososa de pulpa negruzca y dulce, empleado como purgante; fruto de esta planta." The tree-like nature of the plant is confirmed by Las Casas himself, who refers to it as a "tree" (1875-76: V, 24). This brings to my mind bamboo, a plant with which I am familiar, that, while often relatively small individually,
Once this detail is resolved, the supporting evidence adduced by Benítez Rojo rather loses its force. To the layperson, "caña" would seem a perfectly reasonable variation upon "cañuto," biological niceties notwithstanding. And what precisely is the point of condemning Las Casas on the basis of information that he himself is perfectly happy to provide elsewhere? We note also, following Benítez Rojo's text (1998: 123), that Oviedo, who refers to both "cañaístola" and to sugar-cane, privileges the former, in the sense that he lists it first, along with orange trees, which would suggest that not too much importance should be attached to Las Casas' omission of any reference to sugar-cane.

The circumstantial evidence adduced by Benítez Rojo in support of his uncanny reading is equally frail. Las Casas, it is true, argues that the ants in question arrived with the banana plants or plantains ("plátanos") that were introduced by the Spaniards from Europe and the Canaries. But the importance that Benítez Rojo attaches to such comments is misplaced: "La frase se hace notar enseguida, puesto que Las Casas nos ha estado diciendo – y lo continuará diciendo hasta el mismo final del capítulo – que la plaga se originó como castigo de Dios a los españoles por los pecados que cometían" (123). In point of fact, there is nothing at all contradictory, in scholastic terms, in attributing the introduction of ants both to the importation of plantains and to divine intervention. What was debatable, as the contemporary scientist, Juan Huarte, indicates, was the relative importance to be attached to each: "La gente vulgar, en viendo a un hombre de grande ingenio y habilidad, luego señala a Dios por autor y no cura de otra causa ninguna, antes tiene por vano imaginación todo lo que discrepa aquí." (Huarte de San Juan 80). As Huarte further elaborates, such a view, while in itself pious enough, fails to take into account the causal processes that dictate the natural order of things. Such remarks serve usefully to remind us of what it meant to read "in feudal," that is to say, to read for the hidden meaning or truth under what passes for textual verisimilitude. As we observed above, there is only one book, according to this exegetical line, namely the book of God (otherwise the World conceived as a Book), upon which other writers simply produce glosses. Las Casas' text, we believe, remains very much a "dual" text in this sense, and needs to be approached as such. We will be returning to feudal dualism below.

While possibly valid in itself, the association that Benítez Rojo seeks to establish between bananas and slavery (1998: 124) finds no confirmation, so far as I can tell, in the work of Oviedo, which indicates, on the contrary, that when they are cured, plantains are similar to dried figs "y aun mejores" (Fernández de Oviedo 1959: 1, 248), and when baked, are allegedly "muy buena e sabrosa fructa" (248). Eaten raw, after ripening, "es muy gentil fructa, y can grow into large clumps that readily pass for "trees."
no es menester comer con ella pan ni otra cosa, y es de excelente sabor, e sana e de gentil digestión: que nunca he oído decir que hiciese mal a ninguno" (248). Among their other virtues, plantains last well, which means they are useful to take to sea: "saben mejor en la mar que en la tierra" (248). What Oviedo does confirm, let us note in passing, is that the ripe plantain is a favorite food of ants, which supports the association between bananas and ants that Las Casas seeks to establish.

_A Case of Conscience_

At this point, Benítez Rojo turns momentarily from the plague of ants to the existence of the slave plantation and its alleged repression from the text of Las Casas. Attention focuses in this respect upon another section of _Historia de las Indias_, cited by Benítez Rojo (1998: 125-26), in which Las Casas explains the circumstances that led to the importation of Negro slaves into the Caribbean and his own soon-to-be-regretted participation in it. Benítez Rojo's first task is to re-write the text, so as to transform it, or more charitably, to emphasize its status, as a _mea culpa_ (127), whereby to engineer an inversion of the master/slave dichotomy, through the violence inflicted upon the white Spanish settlers by escaped slaves: "Al final de su acto de contrición resulta que son los 'negros' los que ejercen presión sobre los 'blancos'" (127). Integral to Benítez Rojo's argument is an attempt to unsettle the meaning of "slave," as the term is used by Las Casas, through its juxtaposition to the notion of "free man."

Now there is much that is troubling about the above, beginning with the citation of the passage from Las Casas and the form that it takes. Allegedly, Benítez Rojo executes "[u]na edición más o menos objetiva del texto del mencionado capítulo" (1998: 125), but if we focus upon the first ellipsis, we discover, after consulting the original, that the omitted material deals extensively with precisely the topic that Benítez Rojo claims Las Casas to be systematically repressing, namely the whole issue of slave plantations. Indeed, what emerges is a veritable history of the early sugar trade, with the names of people and places, and dates to match, extending to information regarding the nature and extent of financial investment, trade practices and technological development within the industry (Las Casas 1975-76: V, 28-29). It was doubtless this passage that explains Benítez Rojo's earlier confession (see 1998: 74n 120) to having based his summary of the history of the slave plantation in part on information derived from Las Casas' own text! Of course, the claim has always been that what concerns Benítez Rojo is the omission of any reference to plantation slavery from Las Casas' account of the plague of ants. We understand that, but the suppression of such references elsewhere can only enhance the force of Benítez Rojo's claim, and in a manner that is not entirely legitimate.
Such tendentious omissions aside, our view is that Benítez Rojo's argument is here at its weakest. The charge that Las Casas surreptitiously inverts the master/slave relation is patently forced. True, the Cuban critic moves quickly to peg back his argument, as if sensing the danger of critical overkill: the suggestion, we are assured, is not that Las Casas was some kind of proto-structuralist, but simply that he was engaged in a little spontaneous deconstruction, within the limits set by Aristotelian scholasticism. But still, no attempt is made by Benítez Rojo to address the concept of the "free man," which suddenly and unexpectedly intrudes into the discussion. What could Las Casas have possibly understood by such a concept? In what way could "slaves of Christ," otherwise "serfs/servants of their lord/Lord," imagine themselves to be free? Textual evidence, as we will be arguing below, was far from lacking: Las Casas was precisely engaged in the chapters that most concern Benítez Rojo with the economic realities of the conquest and the definition of the "free vassal." Indeed, the Spanish cleric was actively recommending experiments with "free" labor, as opposed to both slavery and forms of bound labor or serfdom. But at the moment when another kind of unconscious, of an ideological variety, related to economic reproduction, threatens to irrupt, Benítez Rojo represses it into a footnote (1998: 128n78) — and resumes the debate on subjectivity and, more specifically, the state of Las Casas' psyche.

**Oedipal Torments**

Having established to his satisfaction Las Casas' evasive, guilty complicity in the beginning of the slave trade, Benítez turns to what he describes as the "objetivación escatológica del Edipo." The substance of the critic's claim is that Las Casas was unconsciously or subconsciously repressing what he otherwise intended to confess, namely his own implication in what he came to see as an act of sinful transgression. Crucial to the argument is an earlier part of the Historia (chapter 102) in which Las Casas covers the same factual basis regarding the birth of negro slavery but omits his own complicity, other than through a marginal footnote (subsequently incorporated, within brackets, in the 1965 edition of the Historia): "Este aviso de que se diese licencia para traer esclavos negros a estas tierras dio primero el clérigo Casas, no advirtiendo la injusticia con que los portugueses los toman y hacen esclavos; el cual, después de que cayó en ello, no lo diera por cuanto había en el mundo, porque siempre los tuvo por injusta y tiránicamente hecho esclavos, porque la misma razón es dellos que de los indios" (quoted by Benítez Rojo 1998: 132). Benítez Rojo speculates that Las Casas added this marginal comment "después de que la redacción de la noticia de la plaga de hormigas le trajera la culpa y el miedo que el mecanismo represivo del preconsciente le había hecho olvidar" (1998:132). The suggestion is that the story of the ants, occurring as it does in close
proximity to Las Casas’ guilty confessions, enabled the cleric to decodify the "plague of ants"/"plague of negroes" parallel. Equipped with this insight, he returned to his earlier discussion of slavery to acknowledge his complicity in a marginal aside, as a kind of retrospective amendment. Benítez Rojo suggests that, at the earlier point, Las Casas’ interest "estaba dirigido, en lo fundamental, a las tribulaciones de los indios." Only later, after writing about the ants, did he make the necessary connections, "que su culpa y su temor al castigo divino le habían impedido hasta entonces ver" (133).

The reading is an intriguing one, and worthy of close scrutiny. In substance, the psychoanalytic exegesis hinges on the description of the solimán as being of the size of "two fists," which, following the ravages of the ants, was reduced to an object the size of an egg (135). The logic of argument is as follows: unconsciously, Las Casas envisages the plague of ants as an Oedipal punishment, whose resolution, through the intervention of a heavenly father, is tantamount to a partial castration—hence the reduction of the genitalia to the size of an egg. The supposition here is that the genitalia correlate with the soul, whose condemnation to hell is equivalent, in metaphorical or symbolic terms, to a supreme act of castration. If we accept the reality of such linkages, the possibility exists that the ants/negroes association was indeed a psychic reality for Las Casas, to the extent that it constituted a "préámbulo necesario para su examen de conciencia y su arrepentimiento" (136). The claim is that Las Casas was himself alert, however subliminally, to the relevant connections: "Al autoanalizarse, logró que su temor al castigo del Padre flotara en el umbral que comunica lo uncanny con lo sociológico, lo literario con lo histórico" (136-37).

Is this account convincing? While the association that Benítez Rojo seeks to establish between the plague of ants and the "plague" of Negroes is well founded, the descent into Las Casas' libidinal unconscious is far from persuasive. To begin with, we are asked to take on trust the equation between the soul and the genitalia, which, while it might be possible to sustain metacritically or even mythically, needs textual support at the applied level, if it is to be convincing. The details that are forthcoming are far from conclusive. Everything rests finally upon the existence of the two "bolas" ("balls"), but these would be far more arresting if they were found to correlate with two eggs instead of one.

The web of associations is, in sum, a frail one, and risks degenerating into a playfully libidinal exercise of its own, which, as a theoretical base, is totally unable to sustain the massively idealistic superstructure that Benítez Rojo proceeds to erect upon it: "Hay que tener en cuenta que la performance psicoanalítica del texto de Las Casas es desencadenada por su responsabilidad hacia la esclavitud del negro y hacia la plantación; esto es, al reconocerse ante la
Ley como culpable de haber 'deseado' y puesto sus manos con violencia sobre aquello que era patrimonio privado del Poder Divino. En mi opinión este complejo hace que podamos considerar la psiquis de Las Casas como protocaribeña – también su relato uncanny –, puesto que este proceso de transgresión, culpa y temor al castigo por la 'posesión' contranatural del esclavo africano dentro del degradante régimen de la plantación establecía una modalidad ajena a la experiencia medieval europea, incluso a la concepción aristotélica de esclavitud, lo cual supo distinguir bien Las Casas" (139-40). The leap is a prodigious one, from the specificities of an individual psyche to the level of the Moving Spirit, thinly disguised as a Caribbean way of being. And it is possible because Benítez Rojo was only ever operating at the level of discourse, because the individual "fundador de discurso" whose psyche the critic was scrutinizing had already been abstracted from the material flow of history. Hence the ease with which the solimán is turned into genitalia: when it comes to spirits, anything can become anything. Hence also the inevitability of the final act of transcendence. From the very beginning the stage has been set for the grand finale, when history steps aside to allow for the entry of Repetition: "la literatura caribeña más estimable en Occidente, al igual que la historiografía, repite una y otra vez, dentro de sus variaciones polirrítmicas, el combate mitológico de las hormigas y el solimán en tanto presencia ausente" (1998: 140).

We are loath to join Benítez Rojo in what is manifestly a flight of the Imagination. Why our suspicions? Is our claim that people in the 16th century did not possess individual psychologies? Obviously not. Yet we are going to argue that Benítez Rojo can prioritize what is manifestly the "free subject" ("psychology"), of the kind beloved of bourgeois ideology, only in the absence of a theory and history of ideological production. For it is our view that the key to understanding the texts adduced by Benítez Rojo lies in the historical production of subjectivity. And it is here that the Cuban critic is most lacking, necessarily so in that the kind of post-structural, postmodern methodology that he deploys is unable to provide the necessary historical ballast. A complete change of theoretical terrain is necessary, to facilitate which we will turn to the work of Juan Carlos Rodríguez.

"Pesadillas del yo"

The problem, with respect to Benítez Rojo's position, may be briefly stated: the transhistorical enunciation of "I" is always mediated through the radical historicity of "I am," an enunciation which, in turn, presupposes the existence of a specific set of social relations. Thus, the slave mode is marked by the way in which it is possible to say "I am/am not a slave," whereas under feudalism, "I am" translated into an acknowledgement of servitude towards a lord.
Capitalism, by way of contrast, required "free men," who for that reason had to be "freed" of all their possessions, with the exception of their labor power. The ideological unconscious here at work, or so at least we have seen Rodríguez theorize, is "originally" secreted at the level of productive relations, "subsequently" thematized within the ideological state apparatus, and "finally" returned to the base where it legitimizes the prevailing relations of production. Rodríguez elaborates: "Pero a la vez estoy planteando lo que me parece realmente decisivo: el sentido de la vida como una ontología del ser en tanto que ontología histórica del ser explotado, o más aún, en tanto que ontología de la vida como explotación a través de la relación entre el yo y el yo soy" (Rodríguez 2001[c]: 410).

The reality of the ideological unconscious is clear. But what of the "I"? Nobody, least of all Rodríguez, is denying the weight of our genetic legacy or that it is via the fragmented flux of desire, resistances, and frustrations, otherwise our dreams and nightmares, that we struggle to express the personal pronoun "I." That said, however, everything hinges on psychic processes ("procesos yoicos") as opposed to distinct forms of the ego ("yoes"). Moreover, it is at this point that the "I" intersects with the "I am," which, being historical, belongs to language and thereby to the historical form of individualities. And herein lies the rub: it is always the system that subjectivizes us, that forces us to state our name, that extracts our genetic identity: "En consecuencia si nuestro inconsciente libidinal (nuestro supuesto yo) está desde ya siempre atrapado, configurado, por el inconsciente histórico, por el lenguaje ideológico de nuestra realidad familiar y social, sólo a través de ese lenguaje podemos decir yo soy. Con lo cual las cosas se complican hasta el extremo. Porque si es evidente que el yo no puede existir más que a través del yo soy, ¿qué sentido tiene entonces decir yo fuera de la historia, fuera de nuestra realidad social que es donde el yo soy se inscribe?" (404).

To further pursue this debate, Rodríguez offers a reading of Freud that opposes a "weak" Freud, who believed in the existence of an authentic subject, prior to, indeed repressed by, its Culture or the social system, to a "strong" Freud, for whom the psyche only ever exists as a process, otherwise "un subsuelo de nada," "un poco de humo y un mucho de vacío." The difference between these two subjects, as far as the Spaniard is concerned, is enormous. The first presupposes the existence of a transhistorical, barbaric unconscious, to be contrasted with a consciousness that, metaphorically speaking, assumes all the trappings of civilization. The second concerns a subject that is structured by its entry into the symbolic, an entry that constructs the libidinal unconscious retrospectively. Of course, the first subject has sometimes offered a vantage point from which to denounce the propagators of alienation and antagonists of freedom and authenticity. But the reality is that it has never
existed: "Es el inconsciente libidinal quien tritura la posibilidad de cualquier yo sustantivo y previo (aunque inconsciente), y es el inconsciente ideológico (el surgido de las relaciones sociales) quien nos produce como supuesto "yo soy libre" y sólo después (cuando surgen las contradicciones al intentar decir "yo-soy") aparecen también las posibilidades de reprimirnos" (420-21). The trick of capitalism has been to disperse the system, or rather to turn the system into life itself. To attempt to speak from the position of this "free subject" is thus to fall into a trap set by a system that first produces such a notion. The contradiction, in sum, lies not between some natural, authentic subject and (artificial) culture but between the ideological unconscious of the "I am" and the real conditions of existence.

Doubtless much remains to be discussed and clarified. Rodríguez's text, it is important to state, is but an anticipatory extract from the prologue of a forthcoming book on Freud, la literatura, la escritura, which will obviously elaborate upon many of the statements made above. But it has not been our aim, at this point and in the present context, to undertake an exhaustive theoretical appraisal of the relation between the ideological and libidinal unconscious. Rather we have simply undertaken to arm ourselves with a number of provisional insights with which to undertake a reading of Las Casas that is attentive to the ideological unconscious in evidence in his work.

Juan Carlos Rodríguez: Ideologies of the Transition

We have reviewed Benítez Rojo's attempt to press back the root drama of Las Casas' text into the libidinal unconscious of its author. The textual evidence, we have suggested, is rather less impressive than the critic would have us believe. However, our principle objection to his psychoanalytic perspective is not for what it sees but for what it fails to see, for that to which it is blind. Even limiting ourselves to the textual evidence that the Cuban critic himself provides, we have an obvious contradiction between Las Casas' attempt to legitimate his text from the standpoint of his own subjectivity, otherwise that of the first-person who "sees" ("yo lo vide") or bears witness to events narrated, and the activities of "el clérigo, Bartolomé de las Casas," otherwise the third-person who, amongst other things, negotiates the license for the importation of negro slaves. This contradiction, we suggest, symptomatizes not psychic fragmentation at the level of an individual, libidinal unconscious, but conflict at the ideological level that, according to Althusserian logic, precedes the actual composition of Historia de las Indias. We are talking, in other words, of a structural situation that transcends the psychology of the individual writer. An author, like any individuality, comes to consciousness within the context of an ideological unconscious, which he is born into and
assumes, along with all his other ideological baggage.35

My point of departure is Rodríguez's and Álvaro Salvador's claim, to which we referred earlier, to the effect that Las Casas' works are eminently transitional. What exactly are we to understand by the notion of "transitional"? Manifestly, the transition between feudalism and capitalism in its early mercantilist phase, the implication being that Las Casas' texts register the impact of structural relations associated with two very different modes of production. We have in mind, of course, the conflict, at the ideological level, between substantialism and animism. Substantialism, we have insisted throughout, does not operate through the subject as a category, but through the concept of the world as a book. Its impact on Las Casas has already been well documented. Suffice it to remind ourselves with the following: "Dice más [Solino], que estaba profetizado claro, por Isaías, que de España había de ser el nombre de Cristo divagado por estas Indias. Bien creemos que está profetizado por Isaías y por otros profetas, que de España había de ser predicada nuestra sancta fé de Jesucristo en ellas […] Por manera, que ninguna cosa en su Iglesia se hace, ni á persona particular acaece, que ya en la Sagrada Escritura no esté comprendida, y esto á la larga tracta San Gregorio en aquel capítulo; y así, hemos de creer, que el Espíritu Santo, por boca de Isaías, habló […]" (Las Casas 1975-76: II, 205). The point is surely made: whatever else he might have been, Las Casas was also an inveterate reader, who believed the voice of God to be inscribed in the creation, a creation that is susceptible to textual exegesis insofar as it (re-)enacts the divine message in the unfolding pattern of its historical events.

If writers look to legitimate their claims with reference to the Almighty, does substantialism have a place for "psychology"? Obviously, scholastics discussed the respective role of individual "faculties" of the soul, but their understanding of what we consider to be psychological processes needs to be carefully scrutinized. Under substantialism, one was bombarded by "thoughts" that, ontologically, belonged to the same domain as wasps and flies, with which, metaphorically, they are commonly compared, just as people habitually

35 The Althusserian notion of the ideological unconscious needs to be distinguished categorically from its Lacanian, libidinal counterpart, the symbolic, which is likewise located in the exterior. The incompatibility between language and desire in the French psychoanalyst "follows simply from the nature of language as such" and, in consequence, "returns psychoanalysis to a historical and political vacuum" (Dews 108). It is true, of course, that Althusser himself toyed with the Lacanian notion of interpellation in the constitution of the subject, but in a manner that preserved the individualizing, apolitical, ahistorical foundation of psychoanalytic thought and which, accordingly, proved ultimately unworkable within Marxism (see Lovell 43-46; also Lock). Rodríguez's own approach, as we have characterized it above, suggests the need to withdraw the concept of ideology from the terrain that it was asked to occupy by Althusser, namely the universal constitution of the individual subject, so as to focus once again on historically localized social relations of production.
deploy words that are every bit as material and substantial as tables and chairs. Indications are that otherness was reserved for the next, as opposed to this, world, which led me, some years ago, to characterize the semantics of the Poema de Mio Cid as radically exteriorized, and to emphasize the paramount importance in this work of gesture, action and the spoken word. The suggestion was that there existed a more or less strict parallel between "homo exterior" and "homo interior" (Read 1983: 7), which enabled the reader easily to map the former upon the latter. By extrapolation, the medieval text was concerned not to expose the workings of private emotion but rather to promote "the tangible representation of emotion" (9).

Undoubtedly, there is much to recommend such an approach in that it resists the tendency to "psychologize" the Cid and promotes an interpretation that corresponds more with feudal, as opposed to modern expectations. But the danger with The Birth and Death of Language was always that, its historicist credentials notwithstanding, it failed to problematize the one conceptual category most in need of problematization, namely that of the transcendental subject itself. The assumption was that the latter, while undergoing diachronic variation, remained in essence unchanged. It was a Moving Spirit whose hidden depths were always already there, although buried by the residues of time. Once this inner world was dis-covered or "liberated," or so at least it was implied, "Man" would emerge in his full splendor. The virtue of Rodríguez's work is that it makes no such assumptions: "En estricto: para el organicismo feudal, la relación interior/exterior no se planteó jamás" (Rodríguez 1990: 205). The effect of the transition was to unsettle this correspondence, and so to institute a number of oppositions, between the private and public, mind and body, form and content, etc. that would raise insuperable problems for substantialism, as it was driven to accommodate itself to this new order. By way of a compromise, God's signatures were transferred to the interior of the "soul," disengaging themselves to some extent from external reality, with consequences that Rodríguez is quick to highlight:

Aunque el organicismo no pueda reconocer la dicotomización entre lo privado y lo público, sí que reconoce de algún modo su impacto al presuponer ahora que se ha abierto un abismo entre el reino de las apariencias (o de las "costumbres") y el reino del espíritu (o de la "fe"). (Rodríguez 2001[b]: 234-35).

The ideology in ascendance, we have seen, was animism, the earliest form of bourgeois ideology, which does indeed function through the category of the subject or rather, at this stage, of the "alma bella." It is embodied quintessentially in the tradition of lyric poetry or Petrarchism that entered into Spain through Garcilaso. In contrast to the inextricable intermingling of body and soul, as postulated by substantialism, animism eradicates all hierarchies
other than those defined in terms of sensibility. Sensibility is characteristic of those individuals who struggle to achieve the immediacy of contact with the Other, that/who has now become separated from the poet by a seeming abyss. It is at this moment that the medieval book disappears, to be replaced by "Literature," which henceforth becomes the expressive discourse *par excellence*, expressive, needless to say, with respect to the individual subject. The moment of the ideological "break" is encapsulated perfectly by Garcilaso in the following sonnet:

> Con ansia estrema de mirar qué tiene
> vuestro pecho escondido allá en su centro
> y ver si a lo de fuera lo de dentro
> en apariencia y ser igual conviene,
> en él puse la vista, mas detiene
> de vuestra hermosura el duro encuentro
> mis ojos, y no pasan tan adentro
> que miren lo qu'el alma en sí contiene.
> Y así se quedan tristes en la puerta
> hecha, por mi dolor, con esa mano,
> que aun a su mismo pecho no perdona;
> donde vi claro mi esperanza muerta
> y el golpe, que en vos hizo amor en vano,
> non esservi passato otra la gona. (Garcilaso 65)

From this process of interiorization, many other things follow, including, we would argue, Las Casas' abhorrence of forced conversion and his insistence that faith meant nothing unless it sprang from inner conviction. Likewise, we note the importance that Las Casas will subsequently attach to "consuelo interior" (Las Casas 1975-76: III, 170), which certainly originates in various forms of feudal animism, but which will be transformed during the 16th century into a qualitatively distinct form of spirituality.

Symptomatic of this expressive turn is the transformation of the feudal "book" into the animist "life" (of Lazarillo, Guzmán, etc.), which brings in its train a series of problems, the most important of which is once again starkly posed by Rodríguez, namely: what replaces the authority of the lord/Lord as a principle of textual legitimization? The answer, according to Rodríguez, is to be sought largely "a través de la 'invención' del yo y su desdoblamiento en el tú, es decir, a través del propio experiencialismo del sujeto desde Galileo a Montaigne (yo he visto, yo he observado)" (Rodríguez 2001[b]: 47). This, then, explains the obsessive assertion by Las Casas of his individual subjectivity: "yo fui presente y lo vide" (Las Casas 1975-76: IV, 213).
agora temo decillas, no creyéndome á mí mismo, si quizá no las haya soñado" (94), etc. Hence the significance in the texts isolated by Benítez Rojo of the eye that sees the thing: "yo lo vide tan grande como dije cuando lo pusieron, y desde a pocos días lo torné a ver como un huevo de gallina o poco mayor" (quoted by Benítez Rojo 1998: 117). The Cuban critic disparagingly dismisses such literalism – the focus of his own attention is the libidinal drama. Yet in this I/eye that sees, isolated and alone, disengaged from the broader scheme of things, we discern an ideological phenomenon of unsurpassed historical significance. In the words of Rodríguez: "Cuando alguien se atreve a decir 'esto vale porque lo digo yo' es indudable que la discursividad moderna ha aparecido" (Rodríguez 2001[b]: 351).

Las Casas, then, teetered on the edge of modernity (although not, we emphasize, upon the edge of postmodernity, an emphasis on Benítez Rojo's part that we find to be totally unacceptable). Indeed, so strong is the animist component of his work that his Historia de las Indias threatened constantly to transmogrify from a "book" into a "life," that recounted the public affairs of a private individual. But it is precisely at this point that Las Casas experiences the full force of substantialism, a substantialism that, according to Rodríguez, was resurgent from the third decade of the 16th century. Symptomatic of this regression is the increasing obsession, visible particularly within the picaresque (see Rodríguez 2001[b]: 207 ff.), with individual sin and guilt, under pressure from which a late picaresque work, such as Guzmán de Alfarache, assumes the status of a confession. The first thing to fall is the "literalism" of the animist narrative, since the confession, by definition, is always dual. (The dual optic, we recall, always imposes the obligation to interpret or read the temporal life from the standpoint of the sacred.) The fundamental ontological split again becomes that between this world and the next, between man as a fallen, corrupt creature and man made in the image of God. The "case" (of Lazarillo, etc.) becomes a "case of conscience," in which God's signs are interiorized. At this point, the "alma bella," otherwise the potentially free subject, regresses to the status of a servant of his Lord. In short, s/he becomes a "sinner." The evidence is conclusive: Las Casas' mea culpa is that of a Christian animist who always remained within the ambit of faith. Benítez Rojo, we have seen, abstracts the "caso de conciencia" from its historical context to turn it into a Freudian "case study."

The Textual Unconscious
Wherein lie the basic similarities/differences between Benítez Rojo's and Rodríguez's approaches? By virtue of their common interest in the unconscious, both operate from a perspective outside the textual object, in an attempt to know this object as it cannot know itself. By implication, they refuse
the goal (common to much traditional criticism) of duplicating the text's self-knowledge by way of reproducing its phenomenal forms. The theoretical concepts that they bring to bear, of the ego, id, uncanny, etc. in one case, and modes of production, social relations, ideology, etc. in the other, are their concepts. But from this point onwards, their trajectories begin to diverge. Benítez Rojo's reduction of Las Casas' text to an individual mystery abolishes its character as a determinate ideological production of a determinate historical matrix. The presiding category is that of the transcendental subject, whose internal complexity is partly the result of its having to absorb fundamentally social dimensions of human being. Benítez Rojo's stated goal, from the beginning, is to emphasize the open multiplicity of the Caribbean, collapsed into a textuality that repeats itself, in an endless play of paradoxes and displacements, in a causally indeterminate process that ultimately defies explanation. Las Casas' virtue, viewed from this perspective, is that he exemplifies an early, proto-form of this transhistorical Caribbean writing.

By way of contrast, the Marxist critic, while he might well begin with the subjective understanding that people have of their own society, sees the text as an ideological product that totally transcends the psyche of its author. Certainly, particular ideological structures may only be "real," as opposed to real, but they constitute, and this is the point to be emphasized, objective structures, which are not to be seen as originating in the interior of the "subject." The latter is simply an ideological category whose localized production is to be specified, historically. Agents are individualities that mediate mechanisms totally transcending their consciousness and even unconsciousness, in the Freudian sense, although these same agents may well, and in fact often do, react back upon and "unconsciously" transform these structures. Hence the tendency of Rodríguez to introduce scare quotes that warn readers against discerning "intentions," conscious or otherwise, in agents' actions or states. The oscillation between the feudal, organicist perspective and its animist counterpart, which we have observed at work in Las Casas' text, is neither a function of "psychology," nor emphatically of "psychic richness," but of the productive, ideological dialectic in which it is situated (Rodríguez 2001[b]: 170-71).

To illustrate the practical consequences of these contrasting interpretive stances, let us return briefly to the opposition between slavery and freedom, as elaborated by Benítez Rojo. Las Casas' mea culpa, we recall, was, according to the Cuban critic, the moment when the master/slave opposition underwent an inversion, whereby the slave owners, the Spaniards, were projected as the objects of violence, at the hands of the slaves. What I wish to draw attention to here is not simply the ease with which, in what is obviously a deconstructive turn, the material brutalities of slavery have become an issue of
textual play. More disturbing is the extent to which, in the process, writing collapses into reading, in the sense that the text becomes an accomplishment of the reader. Symptomatic of the slippage is an increasing textual density: 
"[...] la descripción de la figura circular de este canon, tan al uso, ha sido lograda a partir de un origen geométrico" (Benítez Rojo 1998: 128). The end result is an openness to meaning that finally obliterates all recollection of production.

Faced by such over-writing, the instincts of the Marxist critic will be to pull back. Ideologies, he is likely to remind the deconstructionist, do not descend from the realms of some "moving spirit" or materialize spontaneously, as if by magic, nor, for that matter, are they born out of the deep recesses of the Freudian unconscious. Rather they are secreted by specific sets of social relations that it is incumbent upon the critic to analyze in their historical specificity. Textual evidence, after all, is far from lacking in the case of Las Casas, whose narrative throughout is refreshingly attentive to the grim hand of Necessity and to labor relations in the early days of the colonization. Indeed, the Dominican attributes Columbus’ compulsion to enslave the Indian population to his pressing, nay immediate, need to turn his expeditions into profitable enterprises. Even if we limit ourselves to those sections of Historia de las Indias which engage Benítez Rojo’s attention, it will become clear that the critic has spurned material, historical specificities, with respect to the relevant social relations, to raise the debate onto a suitably abstract level, where he can indulge in his instincts for free-flowing post-structuralist play. Indeed, the issue of slavery and the various forms of serfdom or bound labor were always associated in Las Casas’ own mind with the project of populating the Caribbean islands with "labradores" ("workers") from Spain. "Asentada, pues, la corte, y los Consejos vadeándose, comenzó el padre Casas á proseguir la sacada de los labradores, entrando en el Consejo de las Indias [...]. Y porque una de las mercedes que había pedido que el Rey hiciese á los labradores, fue que se les diesen las granjas, ó estancias o haciendas que el Rey en esta isla tenia, que no eran de mucho valor, para que luégo se aposentasen y comiesen dellas (cosa y socorro muy necesario para que los labradores se abrigasen, y consolasen y mantuvesen hasta que estuviesen para trabajar y ayudarse y tener de suyo)" (Las Casas 1975-76: V, 33).36

Our aim, let us make perfectly clear, is not to call into question Benítez Rojo’s use of the categories of "slave" and "freeman." On the contrary, we believe these to be of fundamental importance. The problem is that, as deployed by Benítez Rojo, they serve, in their abstraction, to disengage debate

36 While Las Casas’ suggestions regarding the importation of African slaves may have no direct or immediate effect upon the Caribbean slave trade, his plan for aided emigration "was promptly taken up by the Council [of the Indies] that spring [1518] and finally enacted despite a whole series of obstacles that held it up for months" (Wagner 41).
from the material realities of labor relations, relations that, judged on the basis of Las Casas' own text, are every bit as fluid as the post-structuralist's "fluxes" and "eccentricities":

Pero, porque no parezca que nos aprovechamos de cavilaciones, abiertamente se prueba que esta encomienda es servidumbre, porque, segun todos los que definieron al libre, liber est qui gratia sui est, pues si las vidas, si las industrias, si los trabajos, si los frutos que dello proceden, todo es ajeno y para aquellos que los tienen en encomienda, yo no sé dónde está la libertad de los indios, sino sola escrita en las leyes pero no ejecutada en los que habian de gozar dela. Si decís, señores, que se les da salario y alimentos por sus trabajos, no aprovecha, pues todo aquello no es la mitad de lo que acá se da á un esclavo, y éstos pálios de libertad de que allí se usa se convierten en crucesas y en mayor daño de los indios, porque si fuesen esclavos serían mejor tratados y guardados y sus dueños ternían por jactura la muerte dellos. (Las Casas, V, 62)

Manifestly, Las Casas is engaged in an ideological struggle over the definition of "freedom" within a specific set of conflictual, contradictory social relations, relations that are, ultimately, conditional upon the existence of different modes of production. The limits of the friar's conceptual horizon are not "his," but those of the socially and historically localized ideologies that constitute his world and pervade every aspect of his existence. As such, they are what render his texts determinate and finite, that explain how he can object to the notion of the Indians as slaves without transcending the notion of "service" and so without aspiring to a more encompassing "freedom," understood as the inalienable property of an individual subject. And finally, by the same token, they are the silences within Las Casas' discourse, whose presence corresponds with an absence, a determinate absence that sets precise restrictions upon what can be said and thought.

Obviously, from the liberal standpoint, the result cannot help but seem a particularly painful paradox or oxymoron whereby one "freely" chooses the lord/Lord to whom one is bound through service: "[…] debe procurar que sientan que no son siervos, sino libres debajo del yugo de Jesucristo, nuestro Salvador" (III, 394). The tension is produced by the fact that, while Las Casas is trying to create a realm of "freedom" within servitude or serfdom, he is also attempting – and this needs to be emphasized – to limit the freedom of the Indians: "[…] siendo verdad que libertad absoluta daña a los indios, por su mala disposicion" (395). The end result is a "qualified servitude," defended, with respect to the Indians, on the basis that "la total libertad les dañaba" (412). The seeming illogicality can be resolved only at the level of language, where metaphor transforms slavery defined in terms of economic exploitation
into slavery to sin: "[…] en la verdad, no hay otra libertad verdadera, sino aquella servidumbre que nos estorba el pecado, el cual verdaderamente nos hace siervos" (395). 37

The animism that suffuses many of Las Casas' writings, notably through the importance attached to "bearing witness," is progressively driven underground in Spain, after flourishing briefly during the opening decades of the 16th century, by a resurgent feudalism. Likewise, it disappears from almost all European social formations during the 17th century, although in their case for the reason that it is displaced by more advanced, classic bourgeois ideologies, such as Cartesian rationalism and Anglo-Saxon empiricism. It re-emerges in the 18th century, now specialized in its role as the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie, in those countries, notably Germany, in which the bourgeois revolution remained unrealized (Rodríguez 1990: 347 ff). In France, it assumes a Roussonian cast, whereas in England it survives in a poetic tradition from Donne to Blake. Much modern melodrama, popular literature, including the Gothic novel, and opera fall within its ambit, as does the primitive socialism of Saint Simon, Fourier and Blanqui (Rodríguez 2001[a]: 129 ff). As can be seen, the forms that it takes are diverse, but always mediated through the telltale conception of art as the expression of the soul, staged in the form of an erotic encounter between two beautiful souls. In Benítez Rojo's own words: "En cada lectura el lector seduce al texto, lo transforma, lo hace casi suyo; en cada lectura el texto seduce al lector, lo transforma, lo hace casi suyo. Si esta doble seducción alcanza a ser 'de cierta manera', tanto el texto como el lector trascenderán sus límites estadísticos y flotarán hacia el centro des-centrado de lo paradójico" (Benítez Rojo 1998: 39). The image of this little exchange is a compelling one – its ramifications are infinite – but, for all its claims to transcendence, it is secretly modeled upon the financial transaction. Animism, let us recall, is secreted by social relations of the first, mercantilist phase of capitalism, which unconsciously model all human interaction on market strategy. This same animism will bequeath to classical liberalism the image of society as originating in a social contract, signed by two free, individual subjects.

Doubtless it is their social positioning, caught between two rival,
contending classes, that explains one further feature of ideologues of petty-bourgeois extraction, namely their obsession with guilt, of the kind that absorbs Benítez Rojo's attention with respect to Las Casas. I think it was Jean Franco who once suggested, with respect to Borges, that if writers exhibit an enduring preoccupation with the themes of treachery, it is because they are frequently complicit in acts of class betrayal. Born to defend the downtrodden, off whose labor they feed, they yet find themselves, when the revolutionary tide turns, siding with their bourgeois masters. The basic considerations are structural and relate, as we have been concerned to emphasize throughout, to the pressure of an ideological unconscious, secreted by a matrix effect, at the level of dominant social relations. Any analysis that aspires to explanatory as opposed to descriptive adequacy will necessarily gravitate towards the terrain of social inquiry. Having said which, social relations, we also believe, are always mediated through the activity of individual agents, whose guilty consciences, notoriously in the case of socially mobile academics, are therefore bound to be a constant, albeit displaced, focus of narcissistic inquiry.38

38 For some personal reflections, see Read 1998: 28-29.
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