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THE DISCOURSE OF CAUDILLISMO:
HISTORICAL AND LITERARY READINGS

By

Juan Bautista Orbe

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

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Department of Romance and Classical Languages

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores some of the most authoritative literary and historical readings on caudillos in the southern cone of Latin America, and proposes an alternative model to interpret the phenomenon from the perspective of sociocriticism as informed, particularly, by Michel Foucault and Ernesto Laclau. The focus is on the fiction of Domingo F. Sarmiento, Joseph Conrad, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Osvaldo Soriano and Manuel Puig. As for historical writings the emphasis is on Anglo-American readings (Ferns, Platt, Brown, etc) as well as those of major native Latin American historians and intellectuals (Rodó, Bunge, Scalabrini Ortiz, Luna, Puiggrós, etc).

In the last century and a half almost inevitably all interpretations advance centering the individual as the most natural and scientific approach to understand caudillos. What emerges is a model that problematizes history as diachrony, a metaphysics of origin, and a repertoire of binary constructs: the individual/the masses, reason/irrationality, the active/the passive, the national/the foreign, etc. By expounding this binarism as central, then, the question of power, hegemony and social articulation is forced to a status where the in-

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dividual, reason and the discourse of progress still exercise a considerable presence. Therefore, it is of no consequence whether arguments are against or in favor of particular caudillos (rhetorics of personalism, on the one hand or of dependency, on the other), since the practice of discussing them in metaphysical terms continues in action.

Our text, conversely, poses the necessity to carry out an archaeological inspection of canonical readings of caudillos as a necessary first step to understand them from a sociocritical perspective. By ascertaining the sources of authority that inform the operation of producing caudillos (values, scientific and social discourses, etc) what emerges is the centrality of social practices for understanding particular individuals (caudillos, for example) and not the converse. In this way we are able to read Rosas, Battle or Perón divorced from the metaphysics of categories like the "individual" and the "masses" to privilege the more important field of signification: hegemony, and social discipline. Hence the numerous rhetorics advanced so far by opposing lines of interpretation (charisma, authoritarianism, or liberation, the master of intuition, etc) are displaced to a secondary status.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	THE PROBLEM OF CAUDILLISMO	1
	Reading caudillos	1
	Towards a new model	15
2	INEXPLICABLE MONSTERS AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES	29
	<u>Facundo</u> and the production of the inexplicable	29
	<u>Nostramo</u> as a field of deconstruction	53
3	THE BIOLOGY OF THE MASSES	91
	The antinomy quality/quantity	91
	<u>Tirano Banderas</u> and the space of a silence	110
4	THE LIMITS OF THE POPULIST TERRITORY	125
	From persona to social discourses	125
	Alternative proposals: Puig and Soriano	146
5	<u>CAUDILLO</u> HISTORIANS AND KNOWLEDGE AS POWER	171
	Some Anglo-American voices	171
	The local camp	193
	CONCLUSION	217
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	229

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM OF CAUDILLISMO

Reading caudillos

The relatively recent publication of Argentine Dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas 1829-1852¹ by the English historian John Lynch constitutes an excellent platform to launch an analysis of the phenomenon of caudillismo. Dr. Lynch is the Director of the prestigious Institute of Latin American Studies of University College, London. For over four hundred pages an extensively researched reading of the Argentine caudillo investigates and advances clear-cut interpretations on the first decades of history of a country where independence from Spain had been recently gained. Perhaps the greatest merit of the book lies in the abundant number of sources and documents consulted. Virtually every major source relating to the period has been checked and, when applicable, analyzed in the light of the major lines of argumentation. The notes and bibliography occupy an impressive forty five pages printed in small type. It is not inappropriate to say that this book belongs in the select number of studies on Rosas where the authority of the opinions rendered is basically constructed on an empirical analysis of hundreds of different pieces of information. Lynch clearly intends this to reinforce the authority of the book. After the different opinions are exposed and defended, it becomes clear he understands the profession of the

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historian as essentially permeated by the achievements of endless hours of research. We cannot but sympathize with commitments of this type.

However a considerable number of problems emerges when one tries to understand Lynch's implications of what he defines as "professional historians".² Representative of that tradition of viewing the writing of history as a quest for an objective rationality, Lynch defines his position as historian at the very beginning of the book. He views the studies of three prestigious Latin Americanists as more reliable than the "new myths, from the right and from the left".³ These studies are by an Englishman, H. S. Ferns, an American, Miron Burgin, and an Argentine, Tulio Alperin Donghi, a distinguished authority in the field who has been teaching in the United States for many years now. In Lynch's approach these "have interpreted Rosas from a less committed standpoint."⁴ In other words, these critical voices on the powerful caudillo that ruled over the richer provinces of Argentina from 1829 to 1852 are, at least, more impartial and less biased than the numerous writings trying to vindicate or condemn the caudillo, both at home and abroad. Although Lynch does not proceed to substantiate this opinion in detail - it is not the intention of the book - gradually, as the reading of the text advances, an informed view of his understanding of writing history begins to emerge. Lynch, right from the beginning, has positioned himself in relation to contemporary political leanings and to three major critics in the field: he wants to represent himself to his readers as not on the right or the left, he acknowledges and attempts to advance some established interpretations.

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What is wrong with this? First of all, Lynch is willingly defining the writing of history in terms of "ideological preoccupations" as different from what he sees as an objective and more professional attitude. Secondly, the views of any of those three historians is not devoid - contrary to his opinion - of these ideological preoccupations. Eventually we will have to analyze in detail why this is so. Suffice it to say for the time being that to divide these readings on Rosas, or any other caudillo, between those which are not permeated by ideology and those which are is simply a stance that we cannot possibly share. The preoccupations and findings of the social sciences in the twentieth century bear witness to our position. The strategic assumption of dividing history, writing and ideology as three independent issues which can be mastered and controlled by a skilful subject is a move that automatically places its producer (Lynch in this case) in the framework and concerns of the social sciences prior to the developments that we generically associate to Nietzsche, Freud, Saussure or many others. His Rosas is a perfect example of an attempt to read history as if little or nothing had taken place in the problematic of writing and interpretation in the twentieth century.

It is not in an ironic vein that Lynch regrets that "much of the modern literature on Rosas speaks more of the present than it does of the past".⁵ An analysis of his assumptions, of his lines of argumentation and his selection of data amply corroborates his understanding on the writing of history. Evidently, if a caudillo is going to be discussed in terms of binary oppositions like progress/underdevelopment, democracy (understood in terms of British parliamentarism)/dictatorship,

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and civilization/barbarism, etc, a historian may feel tempted to believe that writing history amounts to a "rational" and an "empirical" evaluation of documents and opinions. If caudillos in the first part of the nineteenth century in the pampas are to be branded as dictators because they do not conform to the standards of liberal political institutions in London, evidently such a reading calls for a response to clarify the issue. Not only Juan Manuel de Rosas, Facundo Quiroga or Artigas, the caudillo of Uruguay, but the problematic of textualizing a historical discourse calls for a treatment more in tune with contemporary preoccupations. If a model to read caudillos does not incorporate the preoccupations and central concerns of discourse production - and a position is taken - one cannot possibly think what reasons may legitimize textualizing the caudillo beyond Sarmiento's Facundo.⁶

As in the case of the critics that occupy several chapters of this dissertation, Lynch's reading of caudillos barely adds to the literary and historical achievements of Domingo F. Sarmiento's powerful study on the subject. That caudillos are discussed in terms of their "barbarous" state in a badly disguised paternalism - a white paternalistic gesture towards the clumsy but at moments articulate violence of native and mestizos - by native and foreign observers advocating the ideology of progress in 1840 seems more plausible, to say the least, that a gesture not completely divorced from attitudes of this type (particularly in its assumptions and closures) in the twentieth century. It is true, at least in my reading of his Rosas, that Lynch wants to build on the idea of rejecting violence as an instrument of political action and on enforcing democratic ideals as the best solution to negotiate social

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prosperity. If only on these counts one should read the book with particular attention, carefully considering its arguments. However, the book is structurally crippled by the critical body that it advances to discuss caudillos and by the inevitable strangeness from the specificity of the phenomenon thus arising.

How to discuss caudillos? What critical options are available to social scientists in order to avoid some of the serious shortcomings of previous readings? If in 1981 a Latin Americanist, like Lynch, still believes that "To understand Rosas is to understand more fully the roots of caudillismo, or personal dictatorship"⁷ reducing the complexity of the phenomenon to the antithesis liberal/democratic = non-liberal/undemocratic, what are the roads that need to be explored even at the risk of finding partial results? On the other hand, what critical body can exercise an intelligent critique of the nationalist and leftist readings of the phenomenon in the last hundred years? Are we to be satisfied with John Lynch's interpretations? In any case, why not subscribe to any of the strong myths upholding an ultimate Je nais se qua⁸ to Latins - they have not been able to develop democracy along British standards - or, a cherished and long-standing interpretation of regional Communist Party ideologues,⁹ to brand caudillos as petit-bourgeois reformists? After all, caudillos have almost always been of military extraction and the military in Latin America - in the stereotypes circulated by these readings - are, by definition, at the service of foreign imperial enterprises, an operation secured on an appropriate amount of cash. The Oxford English Dictionary, of all sources, contributes its portion of ideological support to these readings, furnishing

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additional evidence that Hispanic caudillos are also neo-Fascists. In the Supplement, and not in one of the main volumes, the caudillo is defined as "The head or chief of state of a Spanish-speaking country; spec. the title (El Caudillo) assumed by general Francisco Franco in 1938 as head of the Spanish state, in imitation of # Duce and # Fuhrer. So caudillismo a political system organized under the rule of a caudillo."¹⁰ Should historians like John Lynch - properly backed by some of the flaws of the Oxford English Dictionary - or Communist Party ideologues be granted a measure of truth? After all, culture presents them as strong sources of authority in different areas of the political North. Furthermore why not assume an intermediate position and view caudillos as populist leaders, as pre-democratic formations in the evolution of Latin America, an important milestone in the winding road towards genuine democracy?

These have been and still are major readings of caudillismo. Under different disguises, these interpretations circulate and are circulated profusely. In academia, in Institutes of Latin American Studies, in the press, a readymade stereotype of the caudillo as a "pre", a "neo" or a "cuasi" democratic type enjoys the privileged adherence of specialists, observers, and professionals in the field. In other words, the caudillo is presented as a peripheric formation scrutinized from a center of signification that is democratic, and rational. The center is located in the North, whether East or West. Not that these centers of economic and political power cannot be violent and share with caudillos a taste for blood and war. The important thing to theorize is that in spite of the violence and the non-democratic procedures to penetrate Latin America, European powers were ultimately advancing the cause of material

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progress, the pivot for mass democracy. Not only Lynch but many of the established voices that will occupy our analysis center their readings on these premises. Civilization or barbarism: the hard choice offered as early as 1845 by a native writer, politician and soldier, Domingo F. Sarmiento continues being axiomatic. His text Facundo, a powerful fictional body that incorporates episodes and moments of its contemporary Argentina, presents the ultimate version of the problem.

Starting from the ideological premises that Lynch does it is not surprising that he views caudillismo as "personal dictatorship".¹¹ Furthermore, the Oxford English Dictionary lends its authority to stress the affiliations between caudillos and fascism. In these views what counts, evidently, is the central fact that these political leaders are not liberal, do not subscribe to liberal institutions, do not believe in the efficacy of liberal democracy in Latin America as the least harmful solution to social and political problems. If Latin America instead of having had as many caudillos and "personalistic" and "charismatic" leaders as Rosas or Artigas, if it had had many more Sarmientos, Argentina or Uruguay today would belong in the community of prosperous and democratic nations in the world. Argentina would not look like present-day Argentina but rather like Canada or Australia. Some versions even have it that it could also be a serious competitor of the United States. After all, has it not got as many natural resources as any of those countries? Are not Argentina and Uruguay - and this is what inevitably arises in the discussions, under many disguises - almost hundred per cent of European ancestry? What went wrong in these rich nations populated by whites and not native indians as in Perú,

for example?

Sarmiento put the blame on the pampas, the gauchos and the last remaining natives. His opinion was duly granted the authority and clairvoyance of the clearest reading of the problem. It became the guiding principle of anti-caudillos - forced to live in exile during Rosas government, - it lent considerable support to British and French attempts to control the area and later, in the second part of the century, the official truth in educational institutions at all levels and the press. The old European discursive formation (as Foucault would put it) of viewing the New World as the other,¹² as the wild and barbarous, eventually materialized its interpellations in the voice of an intelligent and articulate native, Sarmiento, thus giving the reading further authority. Via the ideologues of French Illuminism first, but especially later, imbued in the world view of German, English and French Romantics, Sarmiento contributed with the most powerful text to dispense with the last doubts as to European superiority over the barbarous America. The explanation was represented as natural, rational, and deriving from solid, practical "common sense": Europe would contribute its progress in exchange for the raw materials that South America could offer in abundance. The process could only move in the direction of mutual profit and general bettering of socio-economic standards. If only Latin America followed the model, if only it complied gradually and progressively - allowing for errors and frustrations as part of any process of education in politics - with the long accumulated wisdom of European institutions it could not fail to fulfill its destiny of economic and political greatness. The project simply could not move in any other direction. It

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But caudillos were in nobody's plans. These "monstruos inexplicables", as Sarmiento represented them were indeed "reales".¹³ Inexplicable but real monsters. It took a native to remind the forces of progress that something would become an obstacle, a very difficult one, a demonic force of the irrational pampas in the way of civilization. Progress would have to face caudillos, the finished product of the pampas. The dreaded monsters of the Romantics and the machinery of the beautiful and the sublime, as discussed and exemplary processed from Schlegel to Nerval, did more than develop the Gothic novel or an almost bleeding reading of human pathos. They reinforced the European discursivity of branding as barbarous any political project of resistance to imperial aspirations. They did not take the frustrated experience of the French revolution as only leading to a new aristocratic reproduction of pre-revolutionary Europe. The political frustrations and the development of the sciences lead to the need to develop a liberal relation to reality, that is, a man would assert himself at a distance from the amorphous primitivism of the rabble by hard work, discipline and prosperity. The intellect in association with liberal democracy would bring about economic prosperity that would constitute the only and least "primitive" way to control, if unsuccessfully, the satanic monster of human condition. This would constitute an experience leading to formulate a stronger and more articulate theory on the centrality of European intellectual powers. If the rabbles of Parisian streets deserved to be educated in order to control their barbaric and undemocratic habits, what to say about the inhabitants of distant and savage lands? The

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Romantics contributed a monumental amount of readings to the prevailing European understanding of the need to educate the masses at home and abroad in a rigorous social scheme.¹⁴ The revolution had proved that the good intentions of democratic ideals needed centuries and not a few years to be implemented. An aristocracy of businessmen, scientists and intellectuals would provide the mechanisms to discipline, control and educate the masses. Sarmiento became the intellectual in Argentina to carry the project to the limits. Civilization or barbarism was the motto, the most genuine and natural approach to smooth at home the obstacles to the wave coming from Europe. The monsters had to be eliminated at any cost, political or human.

An additional problem was that caudillos were very popular, particularly among the rabble. Almost as if by magic the "charismatic" caudillo would appeal to the poor, the illiterate, the marginal and the natives and mestizos. Even Charles Darwin saw the local much in tune with a European discursivity at the time of his visit to Patagonia: "I know not the reason, but men of such origin seldom have a good expression of countenance."¹⁵ He was talking about the soldiers in Rosas army but it is not unfair - particularly in the light of future broad social attitudes - to stretch the qualifications to the followers of the caudillo in general. In any case, what perplexed so many liberals was not the fact that these people would follow a caudillo but that they would so stubbornly resist being educated (that is, educated into European models) and gradually instructed according to more civilized standards of life. After all, - as they saw it - what the caudillo would give them in return for their sympathy did not amount to more than crumbs

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But let us stop our discussion for a moment and see if we can organize the issues that we started to explore, if we can succeed in articulating the questions that inevitably emerged so that the problematic of representation as power will become the center of our research in the forthcoming pages. At times we adopted an ironic tone by reproducing the objections or the comments that are not only common in the bibliography on caudillos but - and in this we want to place a special emphasis - in every day life as a result of the stereotypes and myths propagated by our culture.

In the few preceeding pages we represented Lynch, for example, in the way we did because, independently of our will, by talking about things we are doomed to re-present them, that is, bring them to our discussion and consequently inscribe them with a certain value in relation to different interests. The practice of representing things is both, a conscious and an unconscious labor. As extensively and brilliantly argued by numerous schools of thought in our century, schools ranging from the applied sciences to poetics, representation is a practice inherent to the production of any discourse. How to re-present reality and experiences - for example Rosas or, as eventually we will have to

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investigate, caudillos in the twentieth century? How do systems of significations shape representations? What are the relations between history, society and interpretation as shown in the representation of caudillos? How do signifying practices relate to the representation generated independently of the conscious and patient attempts of their producers? How do eminently popular discourses produce representations other than those propitiated by prevailing power relations? What are the uses of representations?

What seems to amount to an impressive number of issues around the figure of the caudillo actually constitutes a body of inquiry that is in no way more difficult or beyond grasp than any other scholarly interest. Caudillos and their representations in literature and history have not been the object of more disciplined and systematic analyses for reasons other than strictly academic. As in all discourses we can also historicize the history of reading the caudillo, and the kind of readings that were in turn officialized and circulated. As for our intentions, in this dissertation we will explore what subject has been offered from Domingo F. Sarmiento's Facundo to O. Soriano's Cuarteles de Invierno in literature, and in a number of major historical studies and controversies ranging from contemporaries of Sarmiento to nowadays. We center our efforts on major local readings as well as those in the Anglo-American tradition. Rather than explicating or searching for a continuity in the hundreds of isolated studies and documents on caudillos, we prefer to center on a limited number of primary sources and, consequently, pierce more deeply into them. A critical reading of the textualization of caudillos from Facundo until recently, and the historical writings of

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prestigious nationalists, liberals and leftists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offers rich and varied evidence on the problematic of textualizing caudillos. Rosas in the nineteenth century or Battle in the twentieth century constitute caudillos of which representations for specific social and political purposes were generated. A clear message emerges from the history of caudillismo: at times they had to be bloody and irrational, some other times naive and incoherent, and other demagogic and barroque. For the last hundred and fifty years in the southern cone of South America caudillos had to be the antithesis and negative counterpart to progress. The popular practices and the critical voices trying to read the phenomenon privileging alternative values equally had to be neutralized.

The entry on caudillismo in the Oxford English Dictionary speaks of a phenomenon in operation in the West ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century. While acknowledging that Franco in Spain was a caudillo - an interpretation that calls for careful analysis - it remains completely silent on caudillos like Rosas, Battle, Irigoyen or Perón in South America. The silence speaks of a masterful exercise in the handling of closures. Precisely the most popular leaders, the figures most readily identified with populism, with the masses and democracy have no place in the entry. More significantly - as we will argue in detail in future chapters - those caudillos who got to power through democratic elections, and who remained in power by the same procedures, do not have a space in the entry. Caudillismo has to be the "system organized under the rule of a caudillo", that is of an imitator of Hitler or Mussolini, a political boss who did not achieve power through

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democratic elections. The old British-centered liberal standard of the caudillo as populist neofascist gains new currency and authority here. Risking how to explain in the entry that caudillos in South America constitute genuine political formations with the widest support of the masses, even by liberal mechanisms of consultation (general elections) would not doubt make the task difficult and, particularly, it would conspire seriously against the stereotype of the general and the whip.

However, the misreadings on caudillismo are more eloquently exemplified in the extensive studies on Facundo Quiroga or José Artigas, for example. It becomes clear in this discussion, as inevitably it will in the corpus of analysis in the next chapters, that discussing caudillismo calls for a study of the social forces of signification that make, first of all, interpretations on caudillismo possible. We will be unable to demystify present stereotypes and conventions if we say that Lynch, as an individual historian fails to understand the specificity of a phenomenon, if we reduce the problematic of understanding caudillismo to individual perceptions sufficiently at a distance from the overall presence of discursive formations. Producing judgements on specific caudillos in specific historical moments is not a question of how reliable or how good each individual observer is but rather of his ability to articulate a voice against and from the inside of a social system that imposes and propitiates values and methods of inquiry while rejecting others. The power of social discourses determining what is professional and what is not, what is progressive and what is conservative, what is economic and what is not, what is democratic and what is undemocratic: these are the systems of social signification against which

the caudillo is defined. These bodies of signification are unfixed, changing patterns which auspice certain scientific and social values. The very act of interpreting caudillos is equally conditioned and forced by these systems of signification. Caudillos and their interpreters are both at the mercy of social meaning. Lynch, as many other historians, vainfully attempts to view himself as a detached critic, a distance achieved on the "professional" standards of defining interpretation as more or less ideological, rational or objective.

Towards a new model

Interpretations as strategy, as positioning, as the arena of battle between socially-determined attitudes and the contradictory discourses that antagonize them constitutes a problematic that has mostly appeared in the writings on caudillos of nationalists and those questioning central values of the liberal tradition.¹⁷ Either conservative standards like Lynch's - simply ignoring the problems and concerns of the production of critical discourses as posed by the social sciences in the twentieth century - or Communist Party readings have had a strong saying in the representations of caudillos.¹⁸ The strategic moves underlining these readings have almost always forced Perón, for example, against a set of binary oppositions emerging from abstract liberal notions (progress/stagnation, freedom/dictatorship) of a strong class nature or, in the case of Communist Parties against neo-Stalinist categories. However the importance and significance of the Communist establishment welcoming nationalist readings that tried to explain the caudillo on class interests and the oppression of the majority of the population constitute

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important milestones in the social history of the area. The central shortcoming of communists was its proverbial inability to identify caudillos as one of the political voices of mass counter-discourses against established hegemonical relations. A hard mechanistic reading of social issues always rendered communist policies as strategic allies of reactionary powers.

The counter reading of the caudillo as democratic is first and foremost expressed in the discourse of the masses that followed him. The "perplexity" of liberals not understanding the popularity of the caudillo was evidently anchored on the understanding that the Romantics had of the masses: goodhearted but naive and ultimately to be controlled if chaos was to be avoided. Facundo had to represent the masses as wild, irrational and non-European. The discourse of caudillismo, that is, the socio-political practices of the masses in the provinces and their caudillos, was manipulated and used by Sarmiento to conform to the representation that Europe was propitiating in all its formations: Latin America as the barbarous Other.

The role of the masses, the nature of social discourses, literature and history as locus of representation: these are, evidently the pre-occupations that set limits and priorities in the presentation of caudillos. How to interpret the political choices of the masses? What discourses can be applied to produce a taxonomy of political sympathies? How to read European imperial expansion before 1850? How to avoid the narrow readings on imperialist ventures as exemplified not only by Communist Party ideologues but by a large number of nationalist historians articulating materialist interpretations? In other words, how is

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it possible to understand the specificity of caudillismo as a genuine Latin American socio-political formation in terms other than the ones currently circulated? In spite of all the attempts to neutralize or control the phenomenon in the last century and a half there is an unshakable fact that overrides any reading of the area: since 1810 the masses have chosen caudillos as political leaders in every generation. Precisely, one of the most contradictory facts in the area is that local liberals in association with the military establishment and international power groups have had to topple governments which had access to power through a liberal mechanism - mass election - by using what is represented as a nonliberal procedure: open violence.

The writings of Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau and Edward Said¹⁹ provide us with the methodological concepts to articulate our project. If we persevered in the task of analyzing the relation between social formations and the caudillo in terms of seduction, charisma, personalism or emotions this would only lead us to what has already been extensively theorized: the mythology of irrationalism serving the ideological tenets of European superiority. Our point of departure is that the primary source of information remains in the masses, in their choices and exclusions. If they offered their political support to Artigas or to a colonel using his power as Labor Secretary to produce the most important change in the structure and power of unions - Perón in 1944 - evidently it would be of no use to staunchly stick to the stereotype of the fascist military abusing the naivety or the irrationality of the masses. As we will show in detail, precisely the interpretations that give priority to the problematic of personalism, emotionalism, or "strong men" almost

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always constitute bodies of knowledge whose central function is to cancel defining socio-political practices in terms other than those discussing populism and caudillos as pre-democratic.

Ernesto Laclau, a native Argentine who has taught in England for the past ten years, is the author of, among other titles, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (1977), a book which has gained him the prestige and authority he enjoys not only in the circle of sociologists and Latin Americanists outside the United States but also in a growing number of institutions in this country in the last few years. In 1984 he was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago. His analysis centers on a critique on the teleology of history as a linear development from the backward to the advanced, the agrarian to the industrial, the retrograde to the liberal or - as still nowadays many followers of Sarmiento would see it - barbarism to civilization. Two central notions in his writings are of special application for this dissertation: (1) the concept of popular-democratic interpellation, fully developed and theorized in his second book, and (2) his extensive and profound critique on the concept of populism as used in the social sciences and in politics. What Laclau argues is that populism is a loose term that has been used as part of cultural formations that privilege liberal, European-centered values over any other model. Populism has been a category of argumentation to give power and consistency to the widespread assumption that

- (1) the greater the level of economic development, the less likelihood of populism; (2) after a certain threshold, when the asynchronisms of the development process have been overcome, industrial societies are immune from the populist phenomenon; (3) 'backward' societies today undergoing populist experiences -

whether regarded positively or negatively -
will necessarily advance towards more 'modern'
and 'class' forms of channelling popular
protest.²¹

He argues that these assumptions are disclaimed by such despaired populist phenomena as Hitler, Mao and Perón. We can view these experiences as populist "not because the social bases of their movements were similar; not because their ideologies expressed the same class interests but because popular interpellations appear in the ideological discourses of all of them, presented in the form of antagonism and not just of difference".²² (our underlining)

Two concepts in Laclau explain his critique of previous readings on populism: the people/power block contradiction and power as articulation. The ability to retain power lies in the capacity to articulate into the discourse of the powerful any interpellation. From our perspective it is clear that the strongest tool to handle a form of popular interpellation as presented by the populist movements led by caudillos was to represent the caudillo as a barbarous dictator and the masses as inarticulate in the nineteenth century, and as a cuasi-democratic phenomenon in our century. "Populism starts at the point where popular-democratic elements are presented as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc".²³ Populism is a multi-class discourse that in its many practices (popular art, language, habits, culinary practices, fashions, etc.) presents itself as antagonistic to the discourses of power. Populism - as wrongfully assumed by the majority of previous readings - is not reduced to classes, institutions or regions. It may coincide with them or not: what is important is articulation, that is,

the handling of interpellations and representations into the discourse that holds power. It is wrong, Laclau argues, to reduce social fight for power to the stereotypes of the working class fighting the hegemony of the State, the upper classes as blind and autocratic bosses of the army that suppress the people. Furthermore, Populism in itself is not democratic; it can be only if articulated as antagonistic to reactionary power. The case of general Francisco Franco in Spain as opposed to Perón in Argentina leaves little room for doubt. Whereas the former built on conforming popular interpellations to conservative discourses, the later attempted precisely the opposite.²⁴

It is not a coincidence that Laclau and Foucault eventually end sharing identical grounds of analysis in very important areas of their writings. The Laclau of the mid seventies who still privileged categories like "block" rapidly got rid of these traces of essentialism, as Foucault did with the rigidity of his Archaeology of Knowledge,²⁵ to give priority to power/knowledge. By the second part of the late seventies both had eliminated some static residues to embrace more dynamic concepts: traces, series, networks, and paradigms, rather than "classes" or "structures", for example. As for these last two the change from quasi structuralist understandings - emphases on rigidity and totalization - gave way to the late readings favoring open, changing, differential entities. Of greater interest to this study on caudillismo is, evidently, the Foucault of Discipline and Punish and after. However, the central tenet of Archaeology informs our research: to analyse from the political practices of Facundo Quiroga and the fictional account of Sarmiento's Facundo until nowadays how the discourse of caudillismo became "one of those objects men

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produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy".²⁶ The representation of caudillismo as a form of power shown in discursive formations and practices that not necessarily identify one class, a power group or an individual. In Edward Said's Orientalism further evidence is supplied to strengthen our reading of caudillos. Again, the affiliations of his writings to Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge and Discipline and Punish - clearly stated by Said - translates the priority of materialist concepts as central to expose previous interpretations: "My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse [we can appropriately substitute caudillismo for Orientalism here] one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."²⁷ In spite of well-defined differences between the experience of the Orient and Latin America, one can argue on incontestable evidence, that the central notions of European superiority and, consequently, of the "natural" vocation of the non-European to join her as minor party in the enterprise of "civilization", are of direct application to study the representation of caudillismo.

That the gaucho of the pampas and the moor were joined in the same representation ("No es fuera de propósito recordar aquí las semejanzas notables que representan los argentinos con los árabes"²⁸), a representation abstracting the "type" of the non-European as other than "rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion"²⁹ speaks of formations that in no way can

be understood with the tools displayed by the professionalism that Lynch, as many others, defend. Evidently one has to silence the concerns, findings and proposals present in Laclau, Foucault and Said to write in 1981 Argentine Dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas 1829-1852.³⁰

If a historian writes history completely ignoring the rich fertility of discourse as power - the problematic of popular interpellations in their specificity,³¹ in our case - he will inevitably inscribe his text in the ideological world that views the caudillo as autocratic and barbarous. To write on caudillismo as if the problematic of discourse as power were not of importance is equivalent to attempting to control the caudillo, to force it to the stature of a non-democratic political leader.

But the history of representing caudillos as other than barbarous did not start, needless to say, in the last few decades with European or American intellectuals or even with local writers and social scientists. It is a phenomenon that started with the cultural practices of the masses, and with the abundant material discussing caudillos and the gaucho in the nineteenth century. It is a material that initially started from the premise of the caudillo as populist leader, gradually growing into consistent studies both in literature and history. Major historical lines of research started a long and heated discussion basically upholding liberal pro-European and nationalist lines. Until well into the twentieth century the majority of local intellectuals argued, in different degrees, against caudillos and in favor of French or British liberal standards. As late as 1973, when evidently the tide of social scientists rereading the phenomenon was a majority, Jorge Luis Borges - a brilliant, dialectical voice speaking for many narrow-minded admirers

- would still argue that "Fuera de Güemes, que guerreó con los ejércitos españoles y valerosamente dio su vida a la patria, y del general Bustos, que manchó su carrera militar con la sublevación de Arequito, los caudillos fueron hostiles a la causa de América. En ella vieron, o quisieron ver, un pretexto de Buenos Aires para dominar las provincias."³²

Evidently, his reading of caudillos did not display the sharp fascinating mind of Ficciones.

Our dissertation is not "against" Sarmiento, Lynch or Borges, let alone "in favor" of the proverbial misreadings of the Communist Party. It traces the mechanisms of representation that made possible the caudillo as a non-democratic type. It attempts to explore from a materialist perspective the problematic of discourse as power, the primacy of signification over individuals and the uses of representation. It argues in the analysis of major literary and historical readings of caudillos that the representation as barbarous, or not totally democratic, has been an effective tool for political and cultural domination in the last hundred and fifty years. A model welcoming some of the major tenets of Foucault and Laclau's thinking contributes considerably to reread anti-caudillos interpretations with a broader mind and sounder counter-arguments. The problematic of power will help to dissipate the strong class reductions and mechanistic versions that have so consistently come out in the last three decades, in particular. Likewise, a more articulate understanding of caudillos emerges if they are studied as major political voices inscribed in the problematic of popular interpellations. But the central concern that permeates this study is the production of representation as emerging from strategies of discussion

(whether historical or literary readings, or in every day conversation) that cultural - discursive - formations force on individual interpreters and not the converse. If a better understanding of caudillismo is to be gained in the eighties, it will inevitably be the result of studying the phenomenon privileging supra-individual - discursive and paradigmatic-formations rather than insisting on the narrow mythology of personalism and what Sarmiento defined as the "influencia mágica" ³³ of the caudillo.

NOTES

¹ John Lynch, Argentine Dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas 1829-1852 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

² Ibid., p. 3.

³ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵ Ibid., p.2.

⁶ In this dissertation we will work with the following edition: Domingo F. Sarmiento, Facundo, prologue by Jorge Luis Borges, (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1974).

⁷ Lynch, p.1.

⁸ This dissertation as a whole is a systematic exploration of significant texts that clearly exemplify the constitution of this assumption. Even though a considerable number of readings have been produced in the last few decades in order to explain the sociology of representing Latins as lacking a vocation for democracy, we know of no approaches privileging our model. Our inspection of numerous texts will force us to advance Foucault's theories of power/knowledge as a suitable approach rather than other suggestions by historians and sociologists. The limitations of numerous historians - whether conservative or progressive, liberal or leftist - or sociologists and intellectuals in general are amply overcome by treating interpretations along the problematic of discourse, hegemony and social articulation.

⁹ See Rodolfo Puiggrós, Las Izquierdas y el Problema Nacional (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez S.A., 1967) and also his El Peronismo I. Sus Causas (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez S.A., 1969) for an interesting presentation of the problem. In chapter five we offer a critique of the first book, particularly of the limitations of discussing the issue along a rhetoric that cannot escape the metaphysics of origin and presence.

¹⁰ "Caudillo", Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary, 1972 ed.

¹¹ Lynch, p. 1.

¹²From the crónicas of the colonial period to the scientific writings of Von Humboldt or the chronicles of travelling Europeans (British and French diplomats and business men, Charles Darwin's travellings through Patagonia, etc) perhaps the central notion of Europe as naturally superior is what most clearly governs the assumptions and judgements made in relation to the New World. For different views of the problem see Eduardo Galeano, Open veins of Latin America; five centuries of the pillage of a continent (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), Germán Arciniegas, Latin America: A Cultural History (New York: Knopf, 1967), José Lezama Lima, La Expresión Americana y Otros Ensayos (Montevideo: Arca, 1969), J.M. Ots Capdequí, El Estado español en las Indias (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), Magnus Mörner, La Corona Española Y Los Foráneos En Los Pueblos De Indios De América (Estocolmo: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970), Salvador de Madariaga, Cuadro Histórico De Las Indias (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1945), Tulio Halperín Donghi, Hispanoamérica Después De La Independencia (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1972), Pedro Henriquez Ureñaz, Historia de la Cultura en la América hispánica (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1947), Lewis Hanke, ed., History of Latin American Civilization (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), Waldo Frank, South Of Us (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1940), Jean Franco, The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist (London: Praeger, 1967) and Sergio Bagú and Humberto Gussoni, El Desarrollo Cultural En La Liberación De América Latina (Montevideo: Biblioteca De Cultura Universitaria, 1967).

¹³Domingo F. Sarmiento, Los Caudillos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Jackson, 1930), p. 229.

¹⁴In this sense, Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage, 1979) and Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) constitute excellent interpretations of aspects of this problematic. We also found useful Hayden White, Tropics of Discourse; Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), Dominick La Capra, Rethinking Intellectual History; Texts, Contexts, Language (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), (ed) Modern European intellectual history: reappraisals and new perspectives (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

¹⁵Lynch, p. 54.

¹⁶Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1979).

¹⁷See, particularly, Miguel Angel Scenna, Los Que Escribieron Nuestra Historia (Buenos Aires: La Bastilla, 1976), Alberto J. Pla, Ideología y método en la historiografía argentina (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1972), Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Historia y larga duración: examen de un problema", in Cuestiones de filosofía, I, 2-3 (1962), and also

his El Revisionismo Histórico Argentino (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1970), Juan B. Justo, Teoría y práctica de la historia (Buenos Aires: La Vanguardia, 1938), José María Rosa, Historia del revisionismo y otros ensayos (Buenos Aires: Merlin, 1968), Ricardo Levene, Historia de las ideas sociales argentinas (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe Argentina, 1947), Ernesto Palacio, La historia falsificada (Buenos Aires: Pena Lillo, 1960).

¹⁸This is particularly true, although not without exceptions, of the discussions of the topic outside Argentina. In the local arena, controversies are more frequent between nationalists and liberals (the former presenting caudillos as the leaders of the nationalist movements fighting foreign imperialist formations, and the latter insisting on caudillos as neo-dictatorial characters), or the readings of non-Peronist left intellectuals (presenting the caudillo as a Bonapartist leader) and leftist nationalists (arguing the caudillo as populist and specific of the area).

¹⁹His treatment of social issues along a problematic of discourses, representation and hegemony constitutes a very important contribution emerging from the English speaking world. Of special interest for our dissertation are his Beginnings: Intention and Method (New York: Basic Books, 1975), Joseph Conrad and the fiction of autobiography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1979), and The world, the text, and the critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

²⁰Ernesto Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (London: New Left Books, 1977).

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 153.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 174.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 173.

²⁴The differences emerge with full strength particularly in the areas concerning the mechanism of perpetuation in power (Perón by popular elections, Franco by dictatorial policies), the inscription of popular discourses (antagonical and redefining the discourses of tradition and culture in general in the case of Peronism) and the status of social practices (an innovative and progressive character in Perón's Argentina as opposed to a conservative-reactionary character in Franco's Spain).

²⁵Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge (New York: Pantheon, 1982); Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage, 1979).

²⁶The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 105.

²⁷Said, p. 3.

²⁸Sarmiento, p. 33.

²⁹Said, p. 49.

³⁰For similar problematics in the European scene see above writings by Dominick La Capra and Hayden White. Also, we have found very useful Paul Veynes, Comment on écrit l'histoire suivi de Foucault révolutionne l'histoire (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1979).

³¹Actually this is only one aspect of the problem. Our central concern is to put in evidence the cultural operations that have made it possible for any intellectual to produce caudillos on what they have thought to be either "scientific" or "common sense" approaches. This is the discursive formation in the discourse of the West that is problematized in the next chapters. Specific representations have produced specific knowledge (caudillos as "dictators", the masses as irrational, binary programs to read the situación nacional, etc) thus specific power formations.

For aspects of the problematic of discursive formations we have found useful, in particular, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), Pamela Major-Poetzl, Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Western Culture; Toward a New Science of History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), Barry Smart, Foucault, Marxism And Critique (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) as well as two sources which we discuss in chapter five: Larry Shiner, "Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge", History and Theory, 21 (1982), 382-98, and Michel S. Roth, 'Foucault's "History of the Present", History and Theory, 20 (1981), 32-46.

³²prologue, p. XII.

³³Sarmiento, p. 167.

CHAPTER 2

INEXPLICABLE MONSTERS AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Facundo and the production of the inexplicable

In the second part of Facundo,¹ when Sarmiento is discussing the attacks of those politicians against Rivadavia and the unitarian pretensions of Buenos Aires, he proceeds to explain, and later justify, the failures of those liberals who - right after the declaration of independence in 1810 - proposed an openly pro-European stance as a solution to the problems of the country. It is no use to blame Rivadavia, he argues, for mistakes that his models, that is, European ideologues also made. Liberals in Buenos Aires simply repeated the mistakes of their liberal models in Europe. It is interesting to investigate Sarmiento's mechanics of legitimization:

Buenos Aires confesaba y creía todo lo que el mundo sabio de Europa creía y confesaba. Sólo después de la revolución de 1830 en Francia, y de sus resultados, incompletos, las ciencias sociales toman nueva dirección y se comienzan a desvanecer las ilusiones.

Desde entonces empiezan a llegarnos libros europeos que nos demuestran que Voltaire no tenía mucha razón, que Rousseau era un sefista, que Mably y Raynal unos anárquicos, que no hay tres poderes, ni contrato social, etc, etc. Desde entonces sabemos algo de razas, de tendencia, de hábitos nacionales, de antecedentes históricos. Tocqueville nos revela por primera vez el secreto de Norteamérica; Sismondi nos descubre el vacío de las constituciones; Thierry, Michelet y

Guizot, el espíritu de la historia; la revolución de 1830 toda la decepción del constitucionalismo de Benjamín Constant; la revolución española, todo lo que hay de incompleto y atrasado en nuestra raza. ¿De qué culpan, pues, a Rivadavia y a Buenos Aires?²

The passage accomplishes several purposes. Apart from the naturalness with which Sarmiento explains a South American revolution of independence as a direct product of European ideas, he also builds in the direction of protecting his own writings. European ideas from the Revolution to 1830 failed there - consequently here at home in Buenos Aires - so we have to drop them in favor of fresh, new proposals. It is these new intellectual imports that structure his model and his thought in general: races, tendencies, national habits, historical antecedents, the spirit of history. Five areas of inquiry which are central to read Argentine reality. They structure and give strength to Facundo, Civilización y Barbarie.³ These fresh discoveries of the European social sciences, the new readings after the failures of Rousseau constitute an excellent body of knowledge for a native Argentinian to study and fictionalize local caudillos. They can be analyzed, their practices interrogated, their virtues and shortcomings appraised, all with a machine of inquiry provided by the second generation of Romantics in Europe, a generation which has not only experimented - and matured against - the "failures" and "terror" of the French Revolution but also has become more sceptical on human nature and more secure on the natural superiority of Europe. Tocqueville in North America, Chateaubriand in the Orient, Woddbine Parish in the River Plate provide evidence to advance a project of European expansion on tenets and reasons that appear to be natural and salutary.

Juan Facundo Quiroga, caudillo of the province of San Juan in the interior of Argentina becomes the case study for Sarmiento to theorize the "inexplicable monsters"⁴ of Hispanic America. As a child, and later as a self-taught teacher in rural San Juan Sarmiento had seen the caudillo in action and attested to the popularity and the practices of the leader and his followers. Forced to leave the country in exile for Chile in 1840,⁵ Sarmiento became very active in education, publishing and journalism while using every weapon available to fight Juan Manuel de Rosas, the caudillo in power in centralist Buenos Aires. Facundo had died in 1835, providing Sarmiento with an excellent case to theorize on the problems of how to organize politically and economically a country too fresh into independence, too "Hispanic" to be managed. Furthermore, the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas constituted an excellent contemporary case to test his readings against another caudillo, in this case the leader of the city that controlled all imports and exports in the country and not a provincial enclave. Persecuted by the Rosas regime, undergoing extreme experiences to escape persecution, an ingratious upbringing in a remote provincial town for a man of his intellectual and political appetite: all were the right ingredients to launch the attack on caudillos that is materialized in his text.

The violence and irrationality of Argentina could only be substituted by European standards. Sarmiento was a fervent reader, in the original, of every book available to him in French and English in all areas of the social sciences. Each section of Facundo is prologued by a quote from Chateaubriand, Rousseau, Humboldt, Lamartine or Shakespeare. As his life proved, he knew from the beginning that he would fight in

every form to become an intellectual and politician, a leader of progress for his country, an endless fighter for his convictions. Caudillos were always the main obstacles for his dream of a European, and later a North American, Argentina. His many studies on caudillos were obscured by Facundo, a powerful text of central importance to nineteenth century Latin American literature and socio-political studies. The almost forty years spanning from the first publication of Facundo to his death comprise a very busy period eventually signalled by his post as Secretary of War in 1862, under president Mitre, a position that he used to launch the most repressive persecution known to caudillos and gauchos in the interior of the country. Partly to bring an explanation to the public on his participation in eliminating the last obstacles to the civilizing program of Buenos Aires and Europe, he wrote later in his life a biographical study of Angel Vicente Peñaloza, El Chacho,⁶ a caudillo from the province of La Rioja. Sarmiento used every argument to indict caudillos using his personal recollections and the overall presence of the intellectual resources advanced by Europe. The discourses of European life in the first half of the nineteenth century found in him the native intellectual to materialize -in literature and politics - the economic, cultural and political aspirations of the Europe of the first industrial revolution.

What is specifically talking about Sarmiento when he acknowledges the influence of Guizot and the "spirit of history"? What is it that locals learnt about races, national characteristics and historical antecedents? In other words, what did Europe - more specifically France and England - export as an intellectual machinery to understand what

were and were not "antecedents", "characteristics" or discursive elements to identify the category "race"? What was one to do with popular leaders in the provinces who so stubbornly resisted the superior forms of the West? Furthermore, Sarmiento - who was not only an acute observer but a born politician - knew that the solution was not simply erradicating caudillos since "aún fusilando a Rosas, la campaña no habría carecido de representantes, y no se habría hecho más que cambiar un cuadro histórico por otro."⁷ Evidently the heart of the problem was in the pampas, in the wild plains, in the site of undifferentiation. The famous antinomy civilización o barbarie was given high currency and was extensively theorized as a system of differences to avoid, and oppose and conquer, the undifferentiated and barbarous monotony of the pampas. Thus in 1840 - it is important to stress the date - any writer in South America had to position himself against the overall power of the formations socially propitiated by the writings of Michelet or Hugo but, more significantly, by the social institutions comprising them.⁸

One of the numerous merits of Facundo is the detailed and systematic analysis of the multiplicity of elements that constitute a political and cultural text. Facundo is a prime text in the study of power. In every page it asserts by the use of every textual resource the central concept that power, understood as many of Sarmiento's critics have processed it, is incorrect. Power for Sarmiento is in representation, in social manners, in ways of talking, in ways of praying, and certainly in ways of riding a horse. Many of his contemporaries - as we will eventually investigate - were tempted by the simplistic view of regarding power as the individuals who control the armed forces, the economic

establishment or those who gain the political allegiance of big oligarchic enclaves. Sarmiento knew better. He understood and did the best he could in order to theorize power as something substantially more diverse and subtle than the control of regiments and the sympathies of the local mercantile community. He was undoubtedly the most distinguished intellectual of his generation, the man who most clearly and consciously processed the role of writer, politician and soldier. However his inability to see the local with alternative options to the ones propitiated by European practices turned him, a brilliant intellectual, into the most accomplished ideologue and politician of intrinsically South American inferiority to European models. He failed to understand the local as producing meaning other than non-European but his failure emerged from an obsessive passion for work and political commitment. His quote in Facundo from Villamain's Cour de Littérature evidently says a lot about Sarmiento himself: "Reclamo al historiador el amor a la humanidad o a la libertad; su justicia imparcial no debe ser impasible. Es necesario, al contrario, que desee, que espere, que sufra o sea feliz con lo que narra."⁹ Textualizing reality is a process of painful moments, not a passive reproductive labor but - as attested by his life - an exhausting inquiry into every form of signification at the service of a political enterprise.

Unitarios, that is local pro-European liberals like Sarmiento, were fully conscious of the role of literature as a tool to explore socio-political issues. At the same time that they would be heard discussing "una nueva obra de Jorge Dand, o el último poema de Lamartine"¹⁰ they were actively planning political moves. What are the

multiple factors that must be considered in the analysis of Argentina, the failure of its political institutions, the rule of caudillos and the popular support to them? Sarmiento as a typical Unitario explores, indeed in earnest, what makes people want to turn down flatly - as he sees it - better socio-political alternatives? Humboldt provides him with strong suggestions: "Como el océano, las estepas llenan el espíritu del sentimiento de lo infinito."¹¹ The sublime immensity of the pampas, its inhabitants, its lack of organization must evidently explain all that which is antithetical to the spirit of the city, organized life, urban wisdom, refinements and the reign of the intellect as opposed to bare matter. This is the core of Facundo but we must rush to point out that in no way does the book reduce its scope to this set of oppositions. Sarmiento is constantly represented in text books and in political practices as the man who theorized this set of binary exclusions simply because - and this usually emerges according to the political sympathies of his readers - he was "influenced" by what he saw as the spirit of progress or because he was "colonized" by foreign models.

To discuss Sarmiento's Facundo in terms of liberal sympathies or on the problematic of colonization is a very risky operation that leaves him intact, a move that inscribes itself in the realm of the logical possibilities propitiated by the book itself. The text clearly auspices being discussed in terms of "progress" - thus the caudillo is barbaric, asystematic, emotional, primitive as the majority of Sarmiento's sympathizers have done - or in terms of reversing that logic into the problematic of "cultural colonialism" in the widespread

version of depicting the native as passive reproducer of an imperial package. Two major readings, usually regarded as references for further discussions, illustrate the point. Félix Luna, a supporter of what he calls "la patria de Sarmiento"¹² sees a "no-estructura"¹³ in the practices of caudillos, a lack of "pensamientos orgánicos".¹⁴ He detects in the caudillos only "sentimientos".¹⁵ On the other hand, a reliable historian as Jorge Abelardo Ramos - clearly a major contemporary voice in the left with a highly recommendable record of publications - falls into the trap of discussing the antagonism between liberals and the left in the terms proposed by the logic of Facundo. When he discusses the gaucho before national independence he says:

Conoció el caballo, libre como él, y lo hizo su lugarteniente y su camarada, su torre de vigía, su carro de combate. Inventó sus armas, heredó otras del indio salvaje y se acopló a la naturaleza hostil hasta dominarla con una sabiduría que pareció milagrosa... La relación entre el hombre y la Naturaleza no estaba viciada de hipocresía social y se daba en forma pura; la majestad del escenario y el ocio lo inclinaron a la meditación poética, al proverbio y a la seducción de la música... desjarretaba una vaca cuando tenía hambre... Los más civilizados de estos seminómades se empleaban temporariamente en la yerra o esquila de las estancias o se dedicaban al contrabando. Concluída esa faena de ocasión, el gaucho siempre tenía a su inmediato alcance la carne asegurada, la pampa y su aventura oceánica.¹⁶

In other words, the gaucho was a pure, simple type not corrupted by the taints of civilization and mercantilism. He was the born poet who delighted in the magnificence of the scenery, in the Humboldtian immensity of the pampas. He rejoiced in the "ocio" of poetic meditation and music. Cows had no owners so that the gaucho would kill them at

will whenever the need presented itself. Some gauchos were more "civilized" than others so they would approach civilization periodically to make a few pesos and later return to the temple of the pampas where corruption had not yet stepped in.

Here lies the greatest strength of Sarmiento's text as power/knowledge. For well over a century it has been a major voice in the discussions on caudillos and the gauchos that followed them, in terms of innocence/corruption, order/disorder, production/laziness, civilization/barbarism, order/disorder, progress/stagnation, movement/statism, foreign/native. For as long as caudillos are represented with categories emerging from this logic they will come out the losers. If gauchos are innocent barbaric types resisting civilization the interpretation moves to the right, if they are innocent pampeanos corrupted by mercantilism it will go to the left but the essential discursive practice of European romanticism will remain untouched: let us discuss the masses in terms of how history betrayed their essential innocence.

This has been one of the major obstacles in clarifying the problem of caudillismo. What mechanics of representation will give him a voice without betraying the enterprise by the very language with which he is discussed? Not only that the problematic applies to those - like us - who want to vindicate the caudillo as the most comprehensive popular leader in Latin America. It is a preoccupation that permeates centrally all those critical voices who see him as a minor alternative to European and North American models. Sarmiento is one of them. And in his text there are a number of interpretative devices, fully textualized and directly acknowledged by him, that strengthen his position. He knows

that the mechanics of representation goes beyond a number of assumptions and working hypotheses:

Doy tanta importancia a estos pormenores, porque ellos servirán para explicar todos nuestros fenómenos sociales y la revolución que se ha estado obrando en la República Argentina, revolución que está desfigurada por palabras del diccionario civil, que la disfrazan y ocultan, creando ideas erróneas; de la misma manera que los españoles al desembarcar en América daban un nombre europeo a un animal nuevo que encontraban, saludando con el terrible de león, que trae al espíritu la magnanimidad y fuerza del rey de las bestias, al miserable gato llamado puma, que huye a la vista de los perros, y tigre al jaguar de nuestros bosques. Por deleznales e innobles que parezcan estos fundamentos que quiero dar a la guerra civil, la evidencia vendrá luego a mostrar cuán sólidos e indestructibles son.

La vida de los campos argentinos, tal como la he mostrado, no es un accidente vulgar: es un orden de cosas, un sistema de asociación característico, normal, único a mi juicio en el mundo, y él solo basta para explicar toda nuestra revolución.¹⁷

It is essential to give "tanta importancia" to minute details - as Sarmiento sees them - because they will eventually prove to be decisive in the production of literary or historical texts. In other words, representing all aspects of life from daily habits to the functioning of the imagination or the political sympathies of a gaucho with the archival¹⁸ resources of European romanticism is not an unnecessary task: it is defintory. The enterprise of conquering the other - destroy Rosas or local caudillos - is a historical task which consists also in describing and representing the other with a system of signification that will render the other as less appealing. Power is also the process of representing the other and of forcing by different devices to think of the other in those terms. It is not only important

that the gaucho is not of the "hard working" type as the European immigrant, it is far more essential to make it sound natural so that the representation will make its way into language thus forcing future discussions to reproduce that representation. The above examples from Félix Luna and Abelardo Ramos, two historians from opposing political grounds, exemplifies the issue with full eloquence.

The discourses of Europe came to help Sarmiento in his enterprise, or rather it will be more appropriate to say that Europe spoke through him. What Foucault and Laclau put in a language that some people may find too abstract can also be expressed with a different choice of words. A focal interest in these social scientists is the fact that - when applied to our discussion - Europe had developed through centuries accepted and non-accepted systems of signification with a specific social value: ways of talking, arguing, analyzing, dressing, reaction, joking, playing politics, processing information, gossiping, judging sexual, moral, educational and political values. That rich and complex network represents a system of differences that governs life, a network of power strategies and practices that first and foremost represents differences as natural and rational. Women need no special education since they labor in the kitchen or the dairy, blacks and indians are intellectually inferior, etc. Those values were "natural" and "rational" in 1840 and they exercised pressure because of being the accepted (the "interpellating" as Laclau would put it) values that articulated the lives of all individuals. Furthermore, they were intimately linked to other forms of signification that governed human behaviour individually and socially. They were in a constant feedback with a system of economic

relations further authenticating their status as social truth. All social classes behaved or were interpellated to do so according to those formations: the writings of Sarmiento are perhaps the best example in nineteenth century Argentina. Humboldt, Chateaubriand, Michelet or Hugo were some of the names coparticipating of that discursiveness, of those unconscious and conscious systems of value interpellating the public. Sarmiento, as Humboldt for the purpose, read this phenomenon from an idealist perspective (a self-sufficient and rational observer, power as progress) but fully conscious of the social inscription of their writings nonetheless. As already indicated, and as we will have to explore, it is significant how nowadays some social scientists still ignore the issue completely thus enabling themselves to read Latin America in no other terms but the Romantic naturalism of Sarmiento. John Lynch proved to be very close to this in 1981.

What Sarmiento and the majority of writers and historians usually identified with liberalism, in the neo-colonial version of Argentina and Uruguay, have not been able to see is precisely that the caudillo and popular forms of government produce, in essence, counterreadings of European values. Or rather, it will be more appropriate to say that, as Sarmiento, many of them have seen this but have deemed it unworthy of competing with the "superior" forms of the West. "Facundo traía esa unidad que dan el terror y la obediencia a un caudillo que no es causa, sino persona y que, por tanto, aleja el libre albedrío y ahoga toda individualidad."¹⁹ The caudillo leading his montoneras of several thousand natives is not a "cause", he is not standing for the claims of people that in the anarchy of the country either defend themselves

from neighboring provincial attacks or from, more commonly, the attempts of the unitarian Buenos Aires. Here is one of the most established myths in Latin American historiography. The caudillo needs to be represented as a personalist that stands for no cause: he is the epitome of wild, individual power. The masses, in their ignorance, candor or because of needs have to comply with his fits of grandeur and bloody standards. So the circle is completed: the masses are naive and easily manipulated, caudillos are the extremist of individualism that only the restrained sobriety of liberalism, implementing a distribution of powers, can control. In other words, caudillismo has to be discussed in terms of the irrational as opposed to the rational, the emotional to the controlled, the masses to the individual. Here is a full enactment of the idealist reading of a man either as the "simple" type at the mercy of the irrational power of matter, as in the case of the masses, or the satanic monsters of history that by blood, seduction and emotionalism control the world. Only British parliamentarism can control - in the views of those upholding these representations - the Rosas and Neros of history.

Not for nothing Sarmiento says that the problem of caudillismo is "una cuestión del mundo cristiano".²⁰ The Christian mission of Europe is to redeem America of her monsters. Europe has accumulated through centuries, in her own experience, the sad record of individual ambitions. The role of history, of art and of commerce is to advance a cause that will bring economic greatness so that in turn the well being of the people will restrain their potential for irrationality. Economic prosperity in Argentina will do away with its present feudal standards as England did it in her own history. But unfortunately the

world is full of "árabes asiáticos"²¹ and caudillos. Worst of all: they have a wide, popular support. They throw crumbs at the masses and in turn they are followed because of economic necessities or as a result of the witty connivings of a Facundo betraying the spontaneous innocence of the masses. So the myth picks up momentum again. History is the linear transit from barbarism to civilization. Caudillos and popular movements need to be educated into the superior standards of civilized life.

And so we return to the core of the problematic of representation. What are some of the central characteristics of Sarmiento's representation of caudillos? The quote above on page 8 constitutes a good example to be analyzed. It says much more about misrepresenting caudillismo that one would first suspect. What is, in Sarmiento's reading, the problem of the "diccionario civil", that is the systems of social signification that Europe has contributed to America? His answer is that it has misrepresented America. A miserable puma was represented as a lion, simply because Europeans did not have other ways to do it. Sarmiento not only believes that America profitted from a system of signification which was superior to it - America should acknowledge the involuntary gift from Europe - but, and this is very important, it also profitted from the vocabulary of socio-political institutions that are good to describe French institutions but not Facundos or Rosas. European categories of knowledge "disfrazan y ocultan", that is, misrepresent phenomena here in America. Again, in his reading it is Europe that pays, because of the inevitability of language, lip service to the degenerate malformations of South America. Rosas is termed

"democratic", or "popular", or "nationalist" not because he is so but because there are no other words to describe the person who has been so bloody and despotic but who anyhow saved the country from two imperialist attacks, one from France and the other from England. The European dictionary misrepresents South American reality. It needs a local, native intellectual to smooth the differences and redefine the semantics of that catalogue.

The operation can be carried out with the prescriptions furnished by Guizot and a European science of history. Sarmiento has to demonstrate that life in the Argentine countryside is not an accident, that it is "un orden de cosas", a system of associations not because of caudillos but "tal como la he mostrado", because it has been subjected to a proper analysis where the most actualized ideas on races, historical trends and the spirit of history have had a place. South America has an order, a system only when it is represented by the discourses of European science.

We showed how Sarmiento achieved his goal by scrutinizing reality on the basis of a binary logic (emotionalism/propriety, barbarism/civilization, etc.) that basically reduced the Christian reading of reality as the dialectics of positive and negative historical forces. In other words, a theory of representation is fully conscious and developed in Sarmiento. There is a South American version of a European discursivity that sees representation as (1) performed by an objective narrator that is not contaminated by the language that he uses. (2) an essential tool that in its fundamentals - which may look, as Sarmiento says, "deleznables e innobles", - eventually proves that representation is power. (3) That the discourse of representation is inherent to any

system of signifying practices (in this case the "diccionario civil").

(4) That it is historically fallible and that (5) it is a tool handled by intellectuals, the property of historians and artists in its scientific form as opposed to the incoherent attempts of representation (Rosas against his political enemies) in the caudillos.

What Sarmiento saw as a European social science, and not as an epiphenomenon with traces in every aspect of what could be termed "European", consciously and unconsciously furnished him with the appropriate criteria to materialize his readings on caudillos, populism and the civil war he escaped. His conclusions are valid for Sarmiento because of the proofs he displays in his text and the discursive treatment of them. For example: phrenology. "La frenología o la anatomía comparada ha demostrado, en efecto, las relaciones que existen entre las formas exteriores y las disposiciones morales, entre la fisonomía del hombre y la de algunos animales a quienes se asemeja en su carácter. Facundo... era de estatura baja y fornido... sus ojos negros, llenos de fuego y sombreados por pobladas cejas, causaban una sensación involuntaria de terror... y miraba por entre las cejas, como el Alí-Bajá de Montvoisin."²² Nature physonomizes negative types, the margins of Europe - whether the African desert or the Argentine pampa - are marked by nature as nonrational, fearsome and racially inferior. By the same token, the natural disorganization of caudillos is shown in the course of the battle between the impressive forces of Facundo and general Paz, a caudillo against the hegemonic power of Buenos Aires and Europe. Whereas Facundo is the

ignorante, bárbaro, que ha llevado por largos años
una vida errante que sólo alumbran de vez en cuando
los reflejo siniestros del puñal que gira en torno

suyo; valiente hasta la temeridad, dotado de fuerzas hercúleas, gaucho de a caballo como el primero, dominándolo todo por la violencia y el terror, no conoce más poder que el de la fuerza brutal, no tiene fe sino en el caballo.²³

General Paz

es, por el contrario, el hijo legítimo de la ciudad, el representante más cumplido del poder de los pueblos civilizados... es militar a la europea: no cree en el valor solo, sino se subordina a la táctica, la estrategia y la disciplina; apenas sabe andar a caballo; es además, manco y no puede manejar una lanza.²⁴

Additional binary oppositions are textualized in order to give more strength to his reading: the knife of the caudillo/military strategy, terror/professionalism, brutal force/control. Furthermore tactics, strategy and discipline can only be European. This is one of the strongest assets in the machinery of representation that Sarmiento uses. The text is prolific in countless other examples but we will restrict ourselves to one more, one that is of great importance to fully grasp the intentions of this writer's program: his understanding of americanismo. The following passage is of special significance:

El bloqueo francés fue la vía pública por la cual llegó a manifestarse sin embozo el sentimiento llamado propiamente americanismo. Todo lo que de bárbaros tenemos, todo lo que nos separa de la Europa culta, se mostró desde entonces en la República Argentina organizado en sistema y dispuesto a formar de nosotros una entidad aparte de los pueblos de procedencia europea. A la par de la destrucción de todas las instituciones que nos esforzamos por todas partes en copiar de la Europa, iba la persecución al frac, a la moda, a las patillas, a los peales de calzón, a la forma del cuello del chaleco y al peinado que traía el figurín; y a estas exterioridades europeas se substituía el pantalón ancho y suelto, el chaleco colorado, la chaqueta corta, el poncho, como trajes nacionales, eminentemente americanos.²⁵

The passage makes several points that are of importance for our discussion: (1) foreign imperial attempts to control the country gave birth to public manifestations of americanismo, that is, the nationalist feeling of being South American, (2) Americanism is the dictionary of our barbarism, of all that is not European, (3) the European frac, even the form of the collar of a vest, was rejected as a symbol of the foreign which confirms the value that systems of signification have as social tools.

This is an interpretation skillfully misrepresented because Sarmiento adscribes the birth of systematic nationalistic feelings to the presence of the foreign as if the concrete practices of the caudillos and their montoneros in the interior of the country did not constitute systematic languages of resistance. Sarmiento, as many liberals, strategically adscribes importance to social systems of signification and power, as clothing for example, only when they are used to misrepresent the other. In other words, semiology and power theory are only valid when they are presented as systems of power to attack barbarism. Power/knowledge in the form of popular interpellations to European standards - for example Facundo Quiroga and his people - are asystematic, they do not constitute texts, barbaric forms that can only be analyzed as systems when represented by European science. Power/knowledge cannot be other than European.

Here is a full enactment of the blunt contradictions that permeate centrally the readings of all the adherents that Sarmiento has had in history, particularly the social scientists and political movements that went against - and in many cases succeeded - democratic popular governments. This is the way Sarmientistas have processed the "inexplicable monsters" of South American history: inexplicable because they are

barbaric, because they have wide mass support in spite of being suppressed through various discourses of power, because Latin American masses are essentially unsystematic, unpredictable, often uncontrollable and above all lazy.

But far more important has been the articulate manipulation of representations, the apparent neutrality with which they were incorporated into language and the effacement of the violence that the operation purported. As Sarmiento shows in his text, representation is a supreme tool of controlling the other. The best proof to this is how even nowadays the myth of the local as lazy - even though there are no jobs - as opposed to the enterprising foreigner has high currency, a power obviously supported by every system of signification ranging from clothes to mass media. If it is foreign it must be good.

Power/knowledge as theorized by Foucault and the concept of popular interpellation in Laclau constitute important concepts to be articulated into a model to inspect the problematic of the representation of caudillos in ways that have not been attempted. It is a stronger model that does away with the serious limitations that many studies have displayed. Not only the strong metaphysical components present in history and signification as evidenced in Sarmiento, and those close to his ideas, are invalidated but also more systematic and less essentialist readings are open to the materialist ground avoiding the usual trap of class reductionisms. The main lines of thought in these social scientists - properly informed by Edward Said's Orientalism - help us devise a model of interpretation that proposes (a) a theory of social discourses, defining discourse simply as the set of instances that when articulated have social value. For example, the discourse of fashion - the frac

as opposed to the poncho, in a certain context, or the definition of representation (Sarmiento's metaphysical conception as different from materialist-oriented interpretations), (b) social discourses as a concrete manifestation of power, (c) power as a set of relations constantly changing, as an exercise rather than a possession, (d) power as residing in social relations and not exclusively in individuals or classes, that is, as often a multiclass and supraindividual phenomenon, (e) democratic interpellation as the set of social discourses that is usually multiclass and that simply aims at offering power alternatives to those prevailing, (f) power as the ability to articulate, and thus control into one's discourse, outside interpellations.

Evidently the most serious shortcomings in the presentation of Facundo is the systematic attempt at representing the local as inarticulate. They constitute an order only when European discursiveness says so. It is a shortcoming both conscious and unconscious in the writer. Even better, it is safer to dispense with the discourse of consciousness as rationale for the practice of writing and to adopt the more dynamic categories of the model we are advancing. As argued above, it is erroneous to imagine the historian as a detached rationalist judging good from evil from the impartial arena of science, at a wise distance from the object of inquiry and not permeated and interpellated by systems of signification - the language he uses, the values that guide him - and social practices. The distinction between subject and object of Romantic theories of history constitute a power operation to handle representation in the way Sarmiento does. Sarmiento, a typical South American romantic writer, mimetizes the understanding of writing from

his French counterparts. He sees the intellectual as an individual who judges reality from a certain distance, an impartial observer who precisely achieves that impartiality away from any social or political pressure on the strength of his individual sacrifices. The historian is not overdetermined by other forces that speak through him if he is a professional historian. He is the objective defender of freedom patiently constructing a critique of the negative forces of nature and history as embodied in Facundo, the caudillo of his youth. How would he otherwise establish what is barbarous and what is not? Phrenology, the spirit of history and a metaphysics of subject/object are concrete tools of enquiry that ensure a certain type of product, namely, white European superiority. In turn when the tenets of that superiority are inspected, they lose all validity.

But we must insist that Sarmiento was a very intelligent writer who knew the power of articulation, the concrete political value of texts and the uses and conflicts of signification. Other people might see his semiological argumentations as "deleznables e innobles" but it is not his case. Another major limitation is his inability to see a South American dictionary, that is, the set of social practices emerging from that locale which redefines the semantics of Europe.²⁶ It is a mythical reading of the local that under many disguises appears even nowadays in the most radicalized nationalist historians. If Sarmiento and neo-colonial liberals saw "ocio", that is laziness, in the gauchos, the majority of social scientists proceed to counterread that vindicating ocio as a good thing in life, as the anarchistic side of the gaucho who (as we saw in Abelardo Ramos) lived in a sort of natural purity, uncorrupted by capitalism. Antagonists antagonize Sarmiento

with the weapons he considers appropriate. In other words, even for non-Sarmientistas ocio has to be a passive activity - disguised by sympathy - as opposed to the movement of industries. These social scientists fail to see ocio - as many other practices of the gaucho - as to be defined by a semantics specific to it and not a European one. "Ocio" as a productive lifestyle may well not suit somebody in Edinburgh but it constitutes a production of happiness. The problem is that Sarmiento still sees happiness as defined by the cultural practices of industrial London. Likewise, his antagonists' notion of the locals as colorful, anarchistic good natives resisting the necessary evil of technology constitutes another form of representation to control the local. Actually these people - although one must stress that unwillingly - are not so far from the Jorge Luis Borges who thinks that "si lo [Facundo] hubiéramos canonizado como nuestro libro ejemplar, otra sería nuestra historia y mejor."²⁷

Not only Borges but numerous historians and fiction writers - as we will see in forthcoming chapters - have made this "mistake". And we must relativize the statement with inverted commas because the word needs to be explained in this context. History is the key factor that marks whether a scientist studying caudillos stands closer or not to mythical representations. Evidently it proves Foucault's point that signification is a social supra-individual activity that overdetermines and conditions the production of commodities, in this case interpretation. That great European discursive practice of defining productivity as control, as elaboration of material goods, as economic activity not in vain has condemned millions in the last two centuries to be "lazy and

unproductive". If Sarmiento had granted the populist practices of the provincial masses under Facundo a structural voice of a different specificity from Europe, evidently his text would have had a substantially different shape. All anticaudillos critics share the inability or unwillingness to escape a European definition of production, the ideology of production as opposed to non-production. The only dictionary that explains human behaviour has to be European.

Consistent with this outlook the perceptive and incisive analysis of Sarmiento does not fail to point out that "Facundo no es cruel, no es sanguinario; es el bárbaro, no más, que no sabe contener sus pasiones ... No es otro el motivo que hace del terror un sistema de gobierno."²⁸ The violence of these monsters is no other thing but another by-product of the pampas, the antithesis of the city. Only when a caudillo moves from his estancia to a European city like Buenos Aires does he start to mimetize the positive resources of civilization. But exclusively for puposes of terror. Caudillos cannot articulate any "teoría", that is a system of ideas... they only do it once and that is in relation to terror. That is how far the barbarous imagination can stretch: "Facundo es cruel sólo cuando la sangre se le ha venido a la cabeza... Rosas no se enfurece nunca: calcula en la quietud y en el recogimiento de su gabinete, y desde allí salen las órdenes a sus sicarios."²⁹ Only that little bit do caudillos learn from the panoply of applications that European tactics, strategy and discipline offer. The Europeans managed to control the negative effects of violence through a "derecho de agentes"³⁰ that can only be the product of centuries. Their use of terror can only serve the strategic needs of progress without excesses.

Sarmiento refused flatly to consider any internal logic in caudillismo and he came out the winner in the short term. However, the practices of provincial caudillos - even after eliminated or politically neutralized by the centralist power of Buenos Aires - and, especially, the counter reading of European values in the daily practices of the people gave rise to a reading of the phenomenon that opposes diametrically that of Sarmiento's. We need only to be reminded of the *poesía gauchesca* as evidence of this phenomenon.

The historical counterreadings to Facundo started where it inevitably had to: the average gaucho and his misfortunes as the victim of a country involved in a civil war, first, and later forced to fight in the frontiers against the indians. As we will gradually investigate, the defense of the caudillo as leader of popular movements also emerged in the nineteenth century to dominate historiography in our century. The defense was articulated first on the temptation to overstate the role of the strong man while inevitably playing down the masses.³¹ A strategy that moves well into our century, this position was gradually superseded by nationalist studies of the revival of populism and caudillos as exemplified by Battle in Uruguay and most notably Yrigoyen and Perón, in Argentina.

The importance of Facundo as the most informing source to study caudillismo in the nineteenth century cannot be overstated. Its central myths and assumptions informed every discussion of the phenomenon in the future. Finally, we must point out that it is not so much the binary exclusions posed by the novel that have by themselves helped with the formulation of policies and the subsequent reprieve of popular movements, for example, as also have the unconscious discursive formations and

the archives to which Facundo so much contributed by forcing future discussions of the problem along the lines of: history as cause/effect, individuals as leaders of blind masses, emotionalism as populism, terror as the property of "subversive"³² caudillos, Latin America as the undifferentiated other in need to be represented by Europe. The representation of a caudillo as "tirano bárbaro"³³ was a politico-cultural operation that fulfilled to perfection the needs for expansion and modernization of the west.

Nostramo as a field of deconstruction

When Facundo is read from the premises of our model, substantial evidence emerges to throw light on the problematic of representation as power. It becomes obvious how the still numerous attempts to read caudillos as barbarous leaders manipulating the incredulity of the masses lose strength and coherence. Furthermore, the uneasy feeling of lacking a vocabulary to speak about the caudillo gradually gains the center of the discussions. If Facundo - or for that purpose any caudillo in the nineteenth century - is not the cruel, whimsical "hombre supremo", what is he? Don't we have every piece of historical evidence to know, beyond any measure of doubt, the Rosas was a dictator who spared no resources to discipline citizens with terror? Even if we dispense with Sarmiento's reading of Facundo Quiroga, don't we have other sources of reference to corroborate the information pointing at Facundo as personalistic, cruel and at the same time with a great following? Are we going to distort history and say that caudillos remained in power in the nineteenth century as a result of popular elections when we know that was clearly not the case?

It is with questions of this strength that the caudillo as a democratic type - and not the opposite - can be best appraised. First, because the concerns and values that underline these questions speak of a clear position from where the problem is read - namely, a neo-liberal stance - and, second, because the caudillo forces the inspection of the most inherent and established assumptions that inform that position. In other words, rather than weakening the caudillo as democratic, those very questions ultimately end up reinforcing the opposite model they propitiate. The caudillo is the strongest text against which the discourse of European liberalism can be tested in the reality of Latin America. The discourse of caudillismo - whether granted a specificity or not - constitutes a complex set of social discourses that by their very nature become antagonical with the program of parliamentary democracy as understood in their concrete practices in Latin America. This is one of the obvious reasons why Sarmiento becomes so preoccupied with elaborating tables of differences - his understanding of americanismo is a perfect example - to draw a clear understanding of what is what. He does not discuss abstract or elusive concepts but rather he systematically and extensively undertakes the burdens of a clever semiotician with concrete political aims. Not only do there have to be a clear understanding of what democracy, progress or good tone is but also - and clearly in the direction of these concepts - what are the correct and most updated scientific tools to carry out the operation. An intelligent writer like Sarmiento correctly perceives power as the program of representations substituting for his contemporary alternatives (Rosas or Facundo) because they are shown to be better. Anglo-French models are more resourceful, in the widest possible sense, because

Argentina is in the hands of barbarous caudillos. For Sarmiento only the institutions of what he perceives as freedom and democracy will relieve the country of its tyrants. Furthermore, a dictionary of our barbarism has to be written because a European dictionary of social practices unfairly ends up representing our barbarous continent as if it were not so primitive.

And, as we saw above, this is the very step of Sarmiento's analysis that suddenly jeopardizes his whole enterprise. He has to acknowledge that Europe and Latin America constitute two different patterns of signification. No matter how hard he tries to neutralize America as a system, an order with its own specificity, reality ultimately ends up plaguing his reading with contradictions that subvert the enterprise in its entirety. Naturally, he will propose a European semantics to replace the native, a violent process of signification to conquer and reduce the native, an operation that in the end will require regular armies and sheer butchery. When in 1861 he advised general Mitre "No trate de economizar sangre de gauchos. Este es un abono que es preciso hacer útil al país. La sangre es lo único que tienen de humanos"³⁴, he was not in any way betraying the tenets of a program of interpretation and action. On the contrary, he was implementing other strategies inherent to the very core of that Anglo-French semantics.

But, then, wasn't he simply resorting to violence in the same fashion as caudillos were regularly doing it? Precisely so. The fight for signification is a violent process that more often than not achieves victory - that is recognition and power - on the strength of weapons. This is one of the central deconstructive powers of caudillismo in relation to the supposed rationality and non-violence of its enemy,

liberal Anglo-French progress. The representation of Europe as rational, non-violent and humanistic (the central assumption of Facundo) loses all validity when tested against the native caudillos of Latin America.

It is not surprising then that authoritative and prestigious British historians unable to detach themselves from the myths of European centrality stubbornly cling to a variety of myths in order to explain imperial ventures. An otherwise reliable historian like H.S. Ferns, for example, clearly fails to understand the specificity of the Latins and the overriding violence of gaining foreign markets for British goods. Speaking of the French blockade of Buenos Aires, in 1838, he says that "the French, like the British thirty years before, had not clearly defined their objectives nor discovered a settled policy for their achievement."³⁵ In the same vein, and in relation to the Memorandum on British Trade of 1841, he regrets that the position taken by the English "was loaded with disaster, because it meant not neutrality but taking sides; not good offices but the use of force".³⁶ Ferns falls victim to the myth of "good offices"; he advances the impossible idea of penetrating a market without open violence. It is not correct to say that Britain at the time of the invasions of Buenos Aires (1806-7) "had not clearly defined their objectives" unless he means by that the strategies and methods euphemistically referred to as "good offices" - but that is clearly not what he means. It is true that Britain in 1806 had not evolved the articulate and refined machinery to gain foreign markets that it displayed in the 1840's but if Ferns considered the problem from the perspective of South America, and not only from that of Imperial Britain, he would immediately see an operating pattern in the

forty years stretching from the first invasions to the blockade. The principle underlining the phenomenon was the same, namely, no doubts in the City or in the Foreign Office as to which would be the essential tool to ensure future prosperity: the sale of English goods. As we will see in forthcoming chapters, many historians belong in different degrees to the readings of H.S. Ferns and the interpreters that assume, for purposes of historical interpretation, a divorce between good offices and the use of violence.

On the other hand, for the caudillo there was no difference. The very practice of voicing or leading popular discourses gave him a first hand knowledge of the language of violence - whether armed struggle or confrontation posed as difference in other discourses -, and of the real extent of trying to vindicate and legitimize other systems of signification. "The words one knows so well have a nightmarish meaning in this country. Liberty - democracy - patriotism - government. All of them have a flavor of folly and murder", says Charles Gould in Nostromo.³⁷ Evidently Joseph Conrad proved to be a reader of the colonies with a disposition and a critical apparatus in 1905 that a considerable number of his colleagues and historians in the nineteen eighties seem to ignore. The "material interests" that eventually explain the real meaning of Charles Gould's comment on Costaguana prove the extent to which Conrad was problematized by the materiality of signification, and the mechanics of representation.

If the "diccionario civil" proved to be a major headache for Sarmiento's reading of his native South America, a lot more was in store for Joseph Conrad at the time of investing his two and half years³⁸

writing Nostromo. This is the very romance that most dramatically and exemplary articulates the dominion and significance of knowledge as power. With the sole exception of his Heart of Darkness - although it never particularizes issues as the novel that would follow it - no other piece of fiction emerging at the same time from the heart of the Empire dramatizes the extent and limitations of attempting to grant a voice to the Other.³⁹ In the sixty years that go from 1845 to the publication of Nostromo, caudillos in the southern cone of Latin America have been eliminated but a fresh new revival is already perceptible. Although the caudillos of Uruguay and Argentina (Battle is soon to become the most progressive democratic caudillo ever known up to that time in Latin America) will no longer conform to the stereotype of the man-on-horse, heavy moustache and sombreros, they will share more essential aspects of their condition with those further north: leaders of popular interpellations, deconstructors of local, neo-colonial liberal ventures, launchers of mass politics. Battle in Uruguay (1903/7; 11/15), Irigoyen (1916/22; 28/30) and Peron (1947/55; 74) in Argentina will share more with Vargas or Sandino, or the fictional characters of Nostromo, than many readings of the problem would suggest.

The difficulty of defining what makes a caudillo a democratic type speaks by itself of the overall power of the West as a discourse that in its assumptions and closures has skillfully managed to develop a system of differences excluding specific Latin American formations. No wonder Charles Gould, that "severely practical and too idealistic"⁴⁰ Anglo-Costaguanero finds it torturing and incomprehensible to try to understand what a Costaguana dictionary of social practices would pose

as liberty or democracy. The West developed since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and as a direct result of Anglo-French expansionism and the wars of independence in Latin America, an understanding of caudillos as the other to defeat if progress was to make its way into the barbarous regions of the New World. Our analysis of Facundo explored central aspects of the mechanics that European discursive practices - whether in Europe or in Latin America through the voice of native intellectuals - put into practice in the first six or seven decades of the nineteenth century. A line from a popular song of the north of Argentina at the time summarizes the operation in conclusive terms: "la razón se fue a los ricos".⁴¹ No matter what, reason was a commodity in the hands of the affluent.

But reason at the beginning of the twentieth century was under attack as much from outside as from its internal quarters. At least, this is true in the case of the unavoidable contradictions that gained the terrain as a result of Queen Victoria's death. The suffocating discipline of the mechanisms of social coherence in England suddenly began to give way to social unrest, pessimism and a direct questioning at the fundamentals that legitimized imperial policies. The process was the inevitable result of a certain state of things. It was no longer possible to defend blindly the British empire, a world situation and, indeed, domestic issues on the assumptions and mechanisms that had legitimized what up to the time was seen as a mission to civilize the world with British standards. Decoud, the "idle boulevardier"⁴² of Nostramo constitutes a primer of deconstruction, undoubtedly a frequent alter ego of Conrad's, that voices some of these issues.

His combination of superficiality, scepticism, occasional joie de vivre and endowed eye to spot the weaker flank of any falsity officialized as dogma, clearly fulfills the role of demystifying many of the central assumptions of the discourse of the European in Costaguana. Although he fails in part to understand the specificity of his native country, he knows too much to defend social and political ideals upholding the status quo of the numerous Goulds, Germans, Italians and foreigners. He cannot see Hernández or even Sotillo as anything other than robbers and actors in a "farce macabre",⁴³ thus rendering a reading of the mechanics of social fights in his country with a delectable European interpretation. It is precisely in this area where Decoud proves himself to belong in, and unconsciously acquiesce to, the discursiveness of a West that should not take Latin America seriously, in order to control it. Farces in politics have to be allocated a geographical area: in Europe close to Africa, in America south of Río Grande. If Anglo-Saxon, parliamentary models were even suspected of being farcical the whole program would lose its consistency and power. By the same standards, Napoleon may have killed thousands in France and may be directly responsible for plunder, violence and irrationality in every corner of Europe but he cannot be farcical, even less macabre. In the European dictionary it is the likes of Pepe Montero who fulfill that role.

This gross, contradictory attitude towards his native Costaguana makes of Decoud a richer deconstructor than many of the other sceptics in the novel. The fact that "It seemed to him that every conviction, as soon as it became effective, turned into that form of dementia the

gods sent upon those they wish to destroy"⁴⁴ launches him as a supreme conspirer against dreams of imperial destinies. He is no doubt fascinated by Paris but it is this fascination that makes of him such an interesting character. In the first decade of the twentieth century in Latin America the Decouds began to amount to a numeric presence that made of them the very stuff of which numerous local intellectuals were made. In fact, it would not be improper to say that within the paradigms of social value advanced by neo-colonial formations, the Decouds conformed the healthiest and more courageous sector of native intellectuals creating a countervoice to the prevailing groups (usually enjoying the sympathies and political favoritism of the State) that surrendered inconditionally to the appeal of the Paris-London model. At the risk of oversimplifying, one can see that the closer writers stayed to the practice of journalism the more suspicious and antagonical they became towards the representation of Europe as order and reason.⁴⁵ Decoud knows he is only making a living by representing Montero as a "gran bestia",⁴⁶ but it is the very practice of journalism that ultimately gives coherence to the events that for one reason or another override his plans. A rich arena of signification stretches from Decoud's understanding of participating in a revolution not because of convictions but because of his love for Antonia, and the derivation of his practice as journalist.

The second part of the nineteenth century in popular culture and in criollista poetry had textualized in hundreds of memorable lines and "serious" poetry the spoils to which the country was exposed because of the material interests of the foreigners. However, in the literature

of the empire it had had no such presence. It is Decoud who first exposes the real projections of the circulation of materials in the relation between a colony and a metropolis. When Mrs. Gould is yet not completely disillusioned at the turn the events are taking, when she still wants to believe in a more humane version of her husband and Holroyd's business with the mine, it is Decoud who points out to her, in relation to the silver shipment, "Let it come down, senora. Let it come down, so that it may go north and return to us in the shape of credit."⁴⁷ His lack of convictions in the sacralized stereotypes of the ideology of progress makes it possible for him to invalidate the efforts of local neo-liberals at mimetizing the political institutions of the metropolis. What appears as an imminent arrival of general Montero - who has defeated the local forces after he rebelled against President Riviera - prompts the leaders of Sulaco to deliberate urgently on their next moves. Decoud watches their discussions and ironically tells Antonia that they were "Hiding their fears behind imbecile hopes. They are all great parliamentarians there - on the English model, as you know."⁴⁸

It has taken only half a century for Europe to produce a Conrad that greatly redefines the powerful Sarmiento of civilización and barbarie. The British Empire and the imperial presence of the West can only arouse scepticism and deception in some of the finest minds of the metropolis. In 1905 the Decouds of British fiction officialize the Other as different, as specific in spite of what is still perceived as farcical or tragi-comic. The European model does not work in the colonies, not so much because of the barbarous nature of the margins as for the inevitable

fact that Europe cannot reconcile its material interests with its humanistic projects. There are many more Decouds and Monyghams than Charles Gould would be willing to admit. They are exposing some of the interconnections between material interests, Europe as model, the conquering enterprise of the Christian West, and the uses of representations. The language with which the operation takes place is with the discourse of deception and pessimism, by articulating an extreme individualism in a world of "fairy tales",⁴⁹ of the ones that Charles Gould goes through in order to process reality.

This enterprise puts into commotion the whole semantics of Europe as model, as source of meaning, as power. One of the central achievements of Nostromo is precisely to explore the problematic of signification, how and why things signify and what are the social projections of the phenomenon. Already in Sarmiento we saw the titanic enterprise of restricting fields, drawing boundaries, legislating domains and representing the Other as different and unworthy. Not only that a theory of representation can be inferred from Sarmiento's writings but also that he himself also explains to his readers what he understands by representation. As for Conrad, he obviously doesn't bother to present himself as master of representations but rather as an expert in the arbitrary power of knowledge. The very anthropology and semiotics of signification is theorized as part of his program by investigating why European powers simply fail to understand Costaguana or why the language of the foreign doesn't have power to effectively control the local.

"No such word in your dictionary?"⁵⁰, asks doctor Monygham to the engineer-in-chief. As a doctor with several decades in the country,

frequently at the mercy of self-deception and frustration, he is one of the few that in spite of not understanding some specificities of the local still knows things that the other English people cannot understand. Evidently, Conrad creates this character, or Decoud, to dramatize the point. The local as different but also knowledge and experience as convention. Not coincidentally, again, it is Monygham who signals the reader - in his bitter sardonic style - how knowledge is produced: "Ah, yes!" snarled the doctor, suddenly. "Women count time from the marriage feast. Didn't you live a little before?"⁵¹ Knowledge as representation, representation as the dialectics of the social, the unconscious, and the individual. In Nostromo we find a problematization of the construction of meaning in terms which clearly inscribe themselves in the twentieth century in the sense of dealing with language as an arbitrary system of information, and signification as power resting on authorities other than spiritual or - as Sarmiento insisted on seeing it - of a humanistic and rational type.

What grants authority to the words of a dictionary - whether in book form or as a repertoire of signification? This is unquestionably one of the main concerns that informs Conrad the novelist. If a romance is to be written evidently an exotic locale will be appropriate as not only background but as a field of signification that offers a constant challenge to the writer. A fictional country that synthesizes traces of individual countries in the Latin American world however will not passively lend itself as mere prop to a story. It gains presence, consequently authority. The "mixture of customs and expressions" that Costaguana stands for - as Conrad described it to Cunningham Graham -

this "combinación telescópica de Costa Rica, Nicaragua y Argentina",⁵² poses a challenge that eventually goes beyond Conrad's control. After the writing of Heart of Darkness the preoccupations that beset Conrad need to be fictionalized in the colonies because of what the colonies as such purport. They are not only an unavoidable reality but the very terrain where the Empire processes experience. The colonies are the Other, the countertext that has been silenced for centuries but that in spite of its irrationality - or perhaps because of it - has made the English aware of the contradictions and the inevitability of life, has sharpened critically the differences between the Goulds and the Monyghams. The more the Goulds persist in their practical idealism, and the Holroyds in their hobbies and spiritual missions, the more the Other gains as countertext.

The problem of authority in signification does not rest on abstract notions or on imperial missions: here is the central message of the Other in all its practices. Conrad did not pursue this road as far as investigating the native as an equal partner in its specificity but his novel made the most important contribution to the problem, from the heart of the empire. Not only does his novel display meaning as convention and representation but also it investigates the materiality of authority. When Hirsh has finally succeeded in approaching the King of Sulaco in order to gain visibility in the eyes of the local upper classes, a silence from Charles Gould indicates his interlocutor what his reaction has been. The narrator adds:

His silence, backed by the power of speech, had as many shades of significance as uttered words in the way of assent, of doubt, of negation - even of simple comment. Some seemed to say plainly, "Think it over"; others meant clearly "Go ahead"; a simple, low, "I see", with an

affirmative nod, at the end of a patient listening half hour was the equivalent of a verbal contract, which men had learned to trust implicitly, since behind it all there was the great San Tomé mine, the head and front of the material interests. (our underling)⁵³

The authority of signification derives from the material interests that are associated to it. If other empires before the British had afforded representing authority in signification on tenets of spiritual or immaterial character, this time the operation is not possible. At the turn of the twentieth century the Moryghams and Decouds of hemispheric areas of influence can only position themselves in relation to this fact by articulating a discourse of bitter irony and frustration. As for the Goulds - and partly Conrad himself - the "darkness", as the narrator constantly insists, of a metaphysical idealism coupled to a blind fascination for conquest, and therefore life as meaningful only when lived as duty, is all that is left. This extreme dramatization of the notion of the Empire, the representation of the process as a fractured exercise in self censorship and disciplining, constitutes an exemplary reading of the inability of the party of material interests to legitimize a European project in the light of a European semantics.

But Conrad is a British subject that cannot avoid being partly stranger to the Other. He constitutes himself from inside and against a network of signification that generically makes up what we call a European dictionary, that is, a system of discursive and non-discursive practices (and more generally, a system of signification) that interpellates the Other. In spite of the deconstructive power that Nostromo clearly has it cannot avoid emerging from the inside of a system that

has officialized values through centuries of friction and exclusions. That dictionary has decreed the semantic features of words like "democracy" (thus Charles Gould's inability to see the local as in any way associated to that concept) but also of other important linguistic entities which prove exceedingly difficult for Conrad to control. At times through Decoud, for example, he manages to relativize and occasionally redefine in radical terms the semantics of concepts like "parliament" but more frequently he is betrayed by his own assumptions, the assumptions of any (or the most critical) speaker of a language.

An inspection of Conrad's understanding of what is or what is not a "thief" in the terms of a European dictionary when applied to Costaguana, reveals a full enactment of the sagacity but also the limitations of his enterprise. Because of the importance for the European to discuss the Other, in order to understand himself, it is substantial to delimit the semantics of certain words in the text of the novel. Conrad understands the Other and himself precisely because of his critical inspection of concepts like "democracy" in the light of a alternative semantics. But the limitations of his enterprise is fully grasped when concepts like "oligarchs" are mapped in the text. An inspection of his sources of authority reveals how constrained he is by the archives of his own culture. How does Nostramo define in its multiplicity of strategies concepts like "activity", "deal", "primitive", "shocking", "weird", "grotesque", "normal", "practical", "stability", "picturesque", "rational", "better class", "immaturity", "indolence", "darkness", "irony", etc.? The selection is arbitrary but unquestionably informed by the importance that Conrad himself attaches to them.

He needs to operate with these concepts in order to relativize the authority they have in the Empire if he is to succeed in his job. Writing a romance without attempting to redefine the semantics of those words would only amount to an artistic excursion in the then popular genre of adventures and light reading. A brave Italian sailor participating in grotesque revolutions in Latin America, falling in love with a beautiful paisana, stealing a treasure and finally dying because of a fatal mistake. The ingredients are there but not the deconstructive logic of Conrad's. He needs to shake some of the foundations of his own language if he is to assert himself as more than a writer of adventures.

What are the textual strategies that a gifted writer must display in order to locate, for example, the domain of the verb "to rob"?⁵⁴ For a European dictionary the local people in Costaguana were trying, as Charles Gould believes, to rob his family of some of the profits made at the San Tomé mine. If the European dictionary were the solid and unique source of meaning that it was for Sarmiento the statement would not present any problem. Obviously, Conrad intends precisely the opposite by inspecting, first, and then exposing the incongruities of that logic. Who is "robbing" who? And so, the network of associations that legitimize the representation of the empire as the honest, enterprising and rational beholder of the banner of progress becomes the prey of Conrad's attack. The semantics of the verb "to rob" becomes the foundations where Charles Gould, first, and gradually his wife and the rest of the mercantile community, later, find legitimation in the novel. European representations begin to give way to other representations

as a result of the direct presence of the Other. Conrad succeeds in inspecting and disarticulating the semantics of a discursiveness that is his own too.

The result is different when Nostromo has to define what is "simple". The young ladies of Sulaco have a "simple intelligence",⁵⁵ masters and dependants sit in a "simple and patriarchal state",⁵⁶ the Excellency has a "simple soul".⁵⁷ Sotillo's corruption is "as simple as an animal instinct".⁵⁸ In other words, the Other has to be simple, devoid of the "disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity".⁵⁹ The Other, Latin America, is fortunate not to be intelligent. If it did it would find itself trapped in the uncomfortable nests of disbelief. It may be picturesque and occasionally bloody but it is fortunate not to taste the bitter pill of material interests - from the perspective of the Goulds and Holroyds. This "pastoral and sleepy"⁶⁰ Sulaco has the "frankness of a brazen and childish impudence characteristic of some Spanish-American governments."⁶¹ From time to time it may implement some "primitive method of torture"⁶² but there is life in its simplicity. The Other is primitive and childish but their lives constitute a romance of strong emotions, feelings and wild enthusiasm for life. One of the central reflections that Nostromo entertains is, precisely, what is the point of reaching the status of a Rey de Sulaco, immersed in the "true English activity",⁶³ if the prize is only Mrs Gould's deception, in the best case.

What other choice is left? Here is the central question that constitutes Charles Gould. Either a society is "primitive" and "childish" - a course that England simply cannot follow - or it does the best it

can with the contradictions arising from the enterprise of material interests. Nature and history have put the human species in that spot. After all the locals can be thought of as that "primeval man" who was "indolent and pure of heart", who "brained his neighbor ferociously with a stone axe from necessity and without malice".⁶⁴ Pepe Montero, or even Guzmán Bento, are not bad sorts after all. As Decoud points out to Antonia, when they discuss Hernández, "Well, there would be some poetical retribution in that man arising to crush the evils which had driven an honest ranchero into a life of crime".⁶⁵

From the 1830's of Sarmiento's Facundo the operation of representing the non-European as childish and cruel but ultimately as an innocent brute remains a major operation of controlling the Costaguanas of the world. Napoleon was far more cruel than Guzmán Bento but he was intelligent, rational and heroic. Even torture was not "primitive"⁶⁶ in Europe. In spite of the massive attack on the enterprise of conquering the world on an imperial scale, Conrad's novel continues operating on the deepest and most effective archival resources of Europe as center. Those key notions that give coherence and strength to the imperial project of the West interpellate Conrad in the form of established assumptions, disguised as common sense or accepted knowledge. Nostromo constantly emphasizes what should be justice, reason, decency or common sense. Furthermore, it constructs very careful models of who and what is a popular leader in the Sulacos of the world. It invests lengthy portions of its structure in order to represent why the people of Costaguana channel their protests in the way they do it.

Thus Facundo as paradigm continues being sold to the public as the model of the "man of the people".⁶⁷ The model is shared now by

Nostromo, Hernández and the other revolutionaries of Costaguana. The masses continue being seduced by adventuristic egotists who control them by the use of charisma and wit. The Empire cannot give up the idea of its holy mission in the wild corners of the world, it cannot share with it its most precious commodity: intelligence. It will allow for the margins to produce wit, sagacity and conniving minds but intelligence can only be produced in selected factories of the metropolis. Nature in its blind doings so determined. The masses choose leaders who are macho-like (Nostromo is "much of a man"),⁶⁸ the object of "adulation",⁶⁹ personalistic ("His work is an exercise of personal powers"⁷⁰), who control the lower by a skillful use of force ("his extraordinary power over the lower classes"⁷¹), combination of a "naive/masterful/generous"⁷² personality, with a prodigious "vanity of an artless sort",⁷³ a leader who has "mysterious means to keep up his influence".⁷⁴ First it was Facundo Quiroga in the West of Argentina, then Juan Manuel de Rosas in Buenos Aires, Artigas in Uruguay and now Nostromo in Costaguana. If a native caudillo leaves his ranch to move to a civilized city, he will mimize from the dictionary of Europe only the ability to control his murderous nature... in order to be more cruel - Sarmiento's reading of Rosas. If a strong man from Europe stays too much in contact with the popular classes of the margins he will turn himself into a Nostromo. Presumably the same fate was in store for the Basque and Italian workers under him who had been in the country too long. Coming from the margins of Europe to a Costaguana was not a propitious move.

The multiplicity of strategies to play down the local clearly speaks of a phenomenon which - as we argued in chapter one in relation to the British historian John Lynch - in no way may be analyzed from

the position of a teleological reading of history, the metaphysics of origin or the primacy of the individual observer. As the writings of Foucault, Laclau and the Umberto Eco of especially the seventies and the eighties show, the analysis of signification reduced to the assumptions of a rational interpreter viewing from a safe distance the stream of history, constitutes a body of enquiry that only serves the project of the West as center of signification. In other words, the sciences of interpretation historically produced logics and tools of research in order to implicitly legitimize a European project of conquest. The romantic naturalism of Sarmiento furnished indisputable proofs in this sense. Conrad, on the other hand, operates in a field of interpretation that is framed by two distant boundaries: a deconstructive program of the West, in one extreme, and a process of further consolidation of the New World as barbarous, in the other. Only from the arising tensions that the field inevitably generates, a rich and exemplary text emerges. Our reading of this text, on the other hand, renders a more articulate inspection of that world with the help of a set of notions that interpreters like H.S. Ferns, for example, ignore: the archive, knowledge as power, interpellation, social practices as a dictionary of authority.

But if Nostromo, the man of the people, conforms to the paradigmatic seductions of that network of discursivities that we identify as "Europe", many of the other local figures do it even more. The logic and semantics with which they are discussed is what interests us most. Although Conrad gives them a better chance to achieve legitimacy - Hernández became a "chief of vulgar salteadores"⁷⁵ not because of his

own will - he has to discuss them in terms of a true Costaguana fashion.⁷⁶ Not that the irony behind it should be "resented"; quite the opposite. What is arguable is the structure of that irony. What Nostromo as text says is that irony as a trope can be constructed on the basis of representing the native as dull and the Empire as an intelligent skeptic. Likewise, whatever formations the popular resentments take have to be ironically deconstructed because they do not conform to the definitions of a European system of representation. Hernández, again, is a popular bandit with a following that is presented as a "mounted band"⁷⁷ and the men of Pedro Montero as an "army".⁷⁸ Tracing the origins of general Montero, one discovers an "obscure army captain"⁷⁹ who looks as a "disguised and sinister vaquero",⁸⁰ the same person who "had declared the national honor sold to foreigners".⁸¹ Gamacho and Fuentes are forced into the same logic. They are the ones who have the rabble yelling ' "Down with the oligarchs! Viva la libertad!" ' ⁸². The set of possible meanings with which any local attempt to interpellate the foreign is to be discussed is in terms of representing the local as pale and grotesque reproductions of the original.

The same Conrad that constructs a masterful counter-reading of the relation between material interests and a European definition of "Good faith, order, honesty, peace",⁸³ is the fiction writer that cannot discuss the local in its specificity. His irony serves the purpose of exposing some of the central incongruities of established values but the English language and the archives of Britannia make sure that if any deconstruction takes place it has to be represented primarily as an inner voice advocating moral changes, and not as a result of a

foreign interpellation. The armies of the empire should ignore the wild bands of Costaguana. There may be a measure of truth in their complaints but that doesn't invalidate the fact that the world does not belong, because history and nature so demonstrate, to dull minds or "clumsy"⁸⁴ Spanish galleons but to British "modern"⁸⁵ ships. The local must be discussed in terms of a pastoral, unprofessional, incoherent, brutal good-hearted types as opposed to modernity - and the heavy burden of facing it. In the light of Nostromo British Modernism should also be defined as the cultural operation to deconstruct foreign, marginal interpellations with the language of "scepticism". That sceptical deconstruction also served the aim of preventing the Other from rewording the dictionary.

And, naturally, some of the closures of the novel serve the purpose of building by exclusion. Avellanos and the old Viola, the Garibaldino, appear at first sight as moral messages that are eventually cancelled in successive deconstructive steps. They serve this purpose but they accomplish goals which, even many years later after the publication of the novel, still are cherished resources of representing Latin America as wild and unsystematic. Avellanos and Viola indirectly undermine any attempt of legitimacy in the local strong men fighting for power. The former, "who had represented his country at several European courts (and had suffered untold indignities as a state prisoner in the time of the tyrant Guzmán Bento)",⁸⁶ stands for the voice of authority in the neo-colonial version of a liberal parliamentarism, a project which obviously shares Conrad's deception. The model fails at the hands of the Pepe Monteros of Sulaco but the strategic message of representing

the popular as anti-Avellanos, as anti-liberal take full effect. The idealistic liberalism of Avellano falls prey to the dialectics of material interests (a very accurate reading of the phenomenon) but also to the violent standards with which the masses articulate their interpellations. Unquestionably, Nostromo is permeated by a nostalgia for the cherished ideals of a parliamentary Britain, an Empire that stands behind the Garibaldis of the world. Sadly, history had condemned Avellano and Viola to exercise a loose "moral influence"⁸⁷ in a world of skeptic and pragmatic Anglo-Saxons, and personalistic dictators. The novel does not attempt to create a space where Hernández, Sotillo, the Monteros or señores Duentes and Gamacho are represented as different individuals. There is no attempt to represent them beyond the stereotype made up by a few traces from the subcontinent.

The leaders of popular uprisings in Costaguana conform to a paradigm officialized by European readings in the first part of the nineteenth century. Viola is one of the characters that best serves Conrad in this respect. He had fought in his youth "against the encroaching tyranny of Rosas",⁸⁸ the caudillo that ruled Argentina from 1829 to 1852. In Uruguay many of his paisanos "had poured their blood for the course of freedom in America".⁸⁹ It is on the basis of assumptions and closures of this type that the novel constructs its text.⁹⁰ The old operation of representing the caudillo on Sarmiento's recipe proves Foucault's point: fiction is written essentially against the archives of the language. A writer may succeed or not in this enterprise by the undeniable presence of being a British subject, for example in this case, amounts in 1900 to produce oneself and the world on the

lines of a discursiveness that "proves" that the Other is dull or that all caudillos are personalistic barbarians. The politicians of the Other are either an undifferentiated collection of strong men or a few remaining Avellanos, the idealist liberals who could not foresee that the healthy standards of European parliamentarism were not fit for the Guzmán Bentos of the world. Being British at the turn of the century amounts to producing a subject interpellated by a discursivity which also profits from the arguments already theorized and enacted by the Romantics in their readings of the world. It is precisely in the complex articulation of positioning oneself in relation to that world that a writer emerges in as disparate forms as Conrad, on one side, or, say, Kipling, on the other. However both operated on representations of the Rosas of the margins as presented, for example, by Sarmiento.

Does this mean, then, that Rosas was not cruel and that he did not have mazorqueros at his order killing his political enemies? Does this imply that Rosas was a genuine democratic leader in spite of what has been said and written against him? Were not Facundo, Artigas, López, Ramírez, Angel Peñaloza or Felipe Varela - or the fictional characters of Facundo and Nostromo - personalistic, macho-like, charismatic men-on-horse, moody and whimsical men of the people who managed to retain power by seduction, an immense vanity and an ultimate indiscribable power of suggestion?

These are the very questions that the European dictionary by its own logic - and power - constantly forces on caudillos. If caudillos are to be investigated the tool of that investigation (questions, comparisons, hypotheses, closures, assumptions, inferences, etc.) will

be constituted on the semantics of Europe as source of legitimate power. Furthermore, this has to be the rational, the natural, the most appropriate way to conduct the operation. A historian, a writer, a social scientist must "naturally" ask himself those questions and proceed along the paths of enquiry that reason dictates. Sarmiento and Conrad have to "know" that Rosas was cruel because he had mazorqueros but they do not have to investigate - let alone bring to the same field of enquiry for the purpose of comparison - the discourse of European violence as exercised in America. What is violence in the dictionary of history and fiction? It is the tool that dictators in the dark regions of the world use in order to control power, never the system of practices of Europe to control the Other. What is "intelligence"? It is the mechanics of reasoning of the non-violent, that is, Europe. What is vanity? It is the language of personalistic dictators, the way dictators manage to convince themselves that they are chosen by the gods to lead their people, never British politicians - let alone the royal family.

The mechanics of representing, thus controlling, the Other is by a combination of closures (Rosas is violent, the Empire is not), assumptions (popular leaders have to be somewhat like Rosas) or ideology disguised as common sense (parliamentary democracy is a better alternative to the Hernández and Monteros because it is non-violent, rational, anti-personalistic, etc.). It is also done with the tools of inquiry (history as cause-effect, the metaphysics of individual primacy over the social, human behavior as a repertoire of individual motives) or by presenting the Other as undifferentiated (all caudillos are more or less the same). The complex set of discourses that constitute this

practice evidently serves the power operation of forcing any discussion of the Other on the basis of not allowing the Other, right from the beginning, to have a specificity of its own. With Sarmiento the European dictionary was the only source of meaning, with Conrad it proves to be the better of two alternatives in spite of the scepticism that prevails.⁹¹

The exclusions of British modernism at this time constitute some of the strongest moves to control and prevent the Other from poking his nose into the most cherished semantic features of the Empire. Nineteenth century Europe provided a tool to discuss leaders of popular interpellations on the basis of a double operation, a plan that still permeates Conrad: first, by representing caudillos as monsters and, second, by explaining them as inexplicable. "Monstruos inexplicables, pero reales" as Sarmiento said. The metaphysics of the sublime continues, in 1905, skillfully interpellating, asserting its presence, emphasizing its naturalness, ultimately vindicating itself as European, as meaning, as discourse. If the ladies of Sulaco instead of their dull siestas had the "activity" of Mrs. Gould, if Hernández were "rational", or the "mobs" intelligent, the whole system of representation would fall to pieces. The locals may be "exploited" - as Decoud almost accidentally retorts to Mrs. Gould, - they may be right in their rebellions but will never be democratic and they will have to manage as best they can with caudillos/dictators. The "fundamental causes" that explain the phenomenon share the guarantee of nature: "the same as ever, rooted in the political immaturity of the people, in the indolence of the upper classes and the mental darkness of the lower".⁹² So Nostromo adds the missing paternal gesture already acted out by Sarmiento. Avéllanos

concedes that Guzmán Berto had "loved his country. He had given it twelve years of peace; and, absolute master of lives and fortune as he was, he died poor. His worst fault, perhaps, was not his ferocity, but his ignorance".⁹³

Ignorance, brutality, personalism, clumsiness, picturesqueness, irrationality, darkness: here is the rhetoric with which leaders of popular movements have to be discussed by detractors and adherents. Europe as knowledge/power. If the hundreds of historical and literary critiques that have been produced on the caudillo were deprived of that rhetoric, very few would survive. Facundo and Nostromo are prime examples which, however, should be studied in the light of a comprehensive historical frame, that is, as parts of a program of the West, and the Other, to develop a "modern" society. Our chapter on the readings of the caudillo from the historical community in Anglo-American tradition, as well as by native intellectuals, will attempt to locate the individual responses that historically have represented the phenomenon of caudillismo. The most profitable way to do away with the notorious shortcomings of many stereotypes circulated in every day conversation as well as in scientific studies will be to continue allowing our model to force an important number of questions that are usually bracketed under the robe of common sense. Some significant silences in Sarmiento and Conrad will structure our search. Namely, what are the possible ways to distinguish caudillos from dictators? How can we analyze the specificity of popular discourses avoiding essentialist reductions? How do the practices of caudillos inform on approaches to understand the "instinctual darkness" of the mobs? Are Caesarism and Bonapartism

good approaches to get a better understanding of class relationships in the world of the twentieth century caudillo? What are some of the shortcomings and confusions frequent in Marxist readings of the phenomenon? Is it feasible to think of the practices of caudillismo as a text that may help us explain Latin America at a distance from the models advanced from the political North, most notably parliamentary and Soviet-socialist models?

As other political novels of Conrad, Nostromo seriously speculates on Caesarism as a possible model for the Other in the person of Pedrito Montero. Not by a strange coincidence it is precisely at the end of the century when an abundant bibliography in Europe, and in Latin America, emerges along these lines.⁹⁴ Again, Conrad cannot avoid seeing the option as common sense. As part of his deconstructive enterprise he takes good care to relativize the proposition by discussing the phenomenon using a memorable model of the relative-of-the-general type of character. A model of innumerable grotesque characters in the Latin American novel of the last four decades, Pedrito tries to get the message across in his tense meeting with Charles Gould. There he said "suddenly that the highest expression of democracy was Caesarism - the imperial rule based upon the direct popular vote. Caesarism was conservative. It was strong. It recognized the legitimate needs of democracy, which requires orders, titles, and distinctions... Caesarism was peace. It was progressive".⁹⁵ Again, the novel misrepresents the type of the local by circulating the stereotype of the strong man as ultraconservative and consumed by an unfathomable vanity. From the logic of the phenomenon several aims are accomplished, aims which have

been central in the last century and a half to process caudillos: no difference is even suggested between caudillos as democratic leaders and dictators. The question of foreign support to native dictators is consequently erased. The text itself says that Caesarism is an option because of the darkness and undifferentiation of the masses which is totally invalidated once - as we have seen - the logic of the argumentation is deconstructed.

The stereotypes of our culture are so strong when applied to caudillos that not only the public at large but a number of authoritative and valuable readers of the phenomenon find it difficult to question the validity of their assumptions and what inevitably emerges in the mass media as common sense knowledge. A quick inspection of any covering by the media on Latin American issues inevitably renders the workings of these discursivities in apparently dissimilar discourses.

The exemplary redefining tensions of Nostromo will help us in the analysis of the forthcoming chapters. It was of central importance to discuss Conrad in relation to caudillismo because of the fruitful conflicts and ideological assumptions that inform his text. His logic will be of great use to our coming readings. "The fate of the San Tomé mine was lying heavy upon her heart. It was a long time now since she had begun to fear it. It had been an idea. She had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into a monstrous and crushing weight",⁹⁶ the narrator tells us in relation to Mrs. Gould's recognition of the real implications of her husband's business. The logic of presence-fetish-monster, the ethnological approach with which Conrad processes a good deal of the problematic of

of material interests offers us an excellent counter-reading to the parallel assumption of explaining caudillos as inexplicable monsters. This is the real space where caudillos operated in the project of the European dictionary.

NOTES

¹Domingo F. Sarmiento, Facundo (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1974). Of the numerous editions of this work we have chosen this particular one because it has a prologue and notes by Jorge Luis Borges. The fact that it was published in 1974 gives a special value to a commentator that is obviously writing at a time when Montonero guerrillas (who borrowed their name from the popular masses that followed nineteenth century caudillos) emerged as the most important and numerous urban guerrilla movement in Latin America.

²Ibid., p. 99.

³See Raúl A. Orgaz, Sarmiento Y El Naturalismo Histórico. (Córdoba: Imprenta Rossi Argentina, 1940). In spite of having been published forty five years ago, it provides interesting views for contemporary observers. Also Norberto Pinilla, La polémica del romanticismo en 1842: V.F. López, D.F. Sarmiento, S. Sanfuentes. (Buenos Aires: Américalee, 1943)

⁴Domingo F. Sarmiento, Los Caudillos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Jackson, 1930), p. 229.

⁵See, for example, Manuel Gálvez, Vida de Sarmiento (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Dictio, 1973), Alberto Parcos, Sarmiento: la vida, la obra, las ideas, el genio. (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1951)

⁶In Los Caudillos.

⁷Facundo, p. 128.

⁸Readings on Sarmiento, of any political inscription, inexorably build on privileging his individual figure rather than on analyzing social discourses along the lines we propose here. See, for example, Emeterio S. Santovenia, Sarmiento Y Su Americanismo (Buenos Aires: Américalee, 1949), Aníbal Ponce, Sarmiento: Constructor De La Nueva Argentina (Buenos Aires: Iglesias y Matera, S.R.L., 1950), Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Sarmiento (Buenos Aires: Argos, 1946), Alfredo Orgaz, Tres Ensayos Sarmientinos (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1967). As for critics, whether nationalists of a leftist or rightist leaning, sociological considerations usually build on the metaphysics of presence and reason or on binary oppositions that cannot decenter Sarmiento from their programs. See, for example, Roberto Tamagno,

Sarmiento, Los Liberales Y El Imperialismo Inglés (Buenos Aires: Peña Lillo Editor, 1963), Noé Jitrik, Muerte y resurrección de Facundo (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1968).

⁹Ibid., p. XV.

¹⁰Fermín Chávez, Civilización y Barbarie en la Historia de la Cultura Argentina (Buenos Aires: Theoría, 1974), p. 29.

¹¹Facundo, p. 19.

¹²Félix Luna, Los Caudillos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1966), p. 26.

¹³Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶Jorge Abelardo Ramos, Las Masas y las Lanzas (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Mar Dulce, 1970), p. 38.

¹⁷Facundo, p. 42.

¹⁸We should stress our use of the notion of the "archive" not only as conscious use of the resources of any culture but, especially, as the unconscious and supraindividual assumptions in the sense described by Foucault, particularly from his archeologies of medical perception onward.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 170.

²⁰Ibid., p. 250.

²¹Ibid., p. 16

²²Ibid., p. 62.

²³Ibid., p. 132.

²⁴Ibid., p. 133.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 230.

²⁶ In any case, he renders South American practices as inarticulate and forces inspecting them from a metaphysical binarism expounding diachrony, reason and the founding subject as central notions.

Our original intention to write this dissertation starting from the notion of the "dictionary" as a set of signifying practices received further stimulus from Sarmiento's discussions of the clashes of signification between what he calls a "diccionario civil" (a European semantics) and the problem of naming objects and practices in the New World. By discussing representations of caudillos along this understanding an important number of limitations are overcome: history as diachrony, ideology as false consciousness, the division between an essence and its representation, the rigidity of historical "structures", reason and progress as the motors of history, and the essentialism implicit in dichotomies like base/superstructure.

The dictionary as paradigm of signification and locus of signifying practices has the important advantage of forcing discussions on caudillos not along rhetorics of personalism or charisma but caudillismo as discourses of power. This mechanic of interpretation disarticulates the discursive practice of forcing discussions of South America in metaphysical terms (progress, the "mission" of the "proletariat", democracy, civilization, etc). In other words, whereas metaphysical thinking conceives of power, hegemony and social signification in terms of binary tensions, Foucault (our main theoretical source) forces defining them as knowledge and power.

See Marke Finlay-Pelinski's excellent contribution to this problematic, "Semiotics or history: From content analysis to contextualized praxis", Semiotica, 40 (1982), 229-266, and also Charles Taylor, "Foucault On Freedom And Truth", Political Theory, 12 (1984), 152-183, Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979) - especially Section Three -, "The Scandal Of Metaphor; Metaphorology and Semiotics", Poetics Today, 4 (1983), 217-257, "Metaphor, Dictionary and Encyclopedia", New Literary History, 15 (1984), 255-271.

²⁷ Ibid., p. XII.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 168

³⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

³¹ See chapters four and five for detained analyses of this problem in both, literary and historical major interpretations. The discursive practice of nineteenth century readings of caudillos was to force talking, thinking or arguing the problematic of social power and signification

(in the West) by constituting any caudillo as center of discussion. The displacement to mass discourses is gradually forced by powerful popular discourses (la poesía gauchesca, for example) which after a century and a half culminate in the proposals by Puig and Soriano.

³²Ibid., p. 191.

³³Ibid., p. 230.

³⁴David Viñas, De los Montoneros a los Anarquistas (Buenos Aires: Carlos Pérez Editor, 1968), p. 28.

³⁵H.S. Ferns, Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 232.

³⁶Ibid., p. 241.

³⁷Joseph Conrad, Nostromo (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1904).

³⁸See, for example, C.T. Watts, ed., Joseph Conrad's Letters to Cunninghame Graham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), Edward Said, Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), Eloise Knapp Hay, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), Roger Tennant, Joseph Conrad (New York: Atheneum, 1981), Zdzislaw Najder, ed., Conrad's Polish Background; Letters To And From Polish Friends (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), and Joseph Conrad, a chronicle (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

³⁹Mark Conroy's "Lost in Azuera: The Fate of Sulaco and Conrad's Nostromo" in Walter Benn Michaels, ed., Glyph 8 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1981) is an interesting study centered on the drainage of meaning by "an external agency" (p. 167). While his article presents an elaborate analysis aiming at how in the novel "the disappearance of the storyteller, along with his audience" is "a symptom of this failure-in-success of European values" (p. 167), we concentrate, from another angle, on Conrad's representation of Hispanic life, particularly the status of its socio-political practices.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 405.

⁴¹Angel Rama, Los Gauchipolíticos Rioplatenses (Buenos Aires: Calicanto, 1976), p. 79.

⁴²Nostromo, p. 168.

⁴³Ibid., p. 168.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 221.

⁴⁵The rich, contradictory life of José Luis Mariátegui may well inform this problematic. We are not suggesting a parallel with Decoud's personality, obviously, but an important number of socio-political and artistic issues unites them in their deconstructive enterprise.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 211.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 245.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 265.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 265.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 353.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 566.

⁵²Seymour Menton, "La novela experimental y la república comprensiva de Hispanoamérica: Estudio analítico y comparativo de Nostromo, Le Dictateur, Tirano Banderas y El Señor Presidente" in Juan Loveluck, ed., La novela hispanoamericana (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1969), p. 231.

⁵³Nostromo, p. 224.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 406.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 97.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 101.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 317.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 560.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 161.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 103.

⁶²Ibid., p. 152.

⁶³Ibid., p. 56.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 415.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 240.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 152.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 334.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 215.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 211.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 244.

⁷²Ibid., p. 275.

⁷³Ibid., p. 461.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 571.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 120.

⁷⁷Ibid., p.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 427.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 42.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 133.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 160.

⁸²Ibid., p. 357.

⁸³Ibid., p. 130.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 347.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 32.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 33.

⁹⁰Furthermore, Conrad takes at face value the readings on Latin America - particularly the mechanics of representation - of some European travellers as Graham. See, for example, Frederick R. Karl, Joseph Conrad. The Three Lives (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), pp. 529-94.

⁹¹As suggested already, it is important to note how the nineteenth century, and a great part of the twentieth, discursively forces binary readings: Europe/America, self/other. If Foucault and Laclau furnish excellent tools to redefine these discussions, similarly a number of other sources helps us devise a model to overcome important metaphysical constraints. See Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), Writing and Difference (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1978), "The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics" in Josué V. Harari, ed., Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language And Materialism; Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1980), Christopher Norris, Deconstruction; Theory & Practice (London: Methven, 1982), Jonathan Culler, Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory; An Introduction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

⁹²Ibid., p. 431.

⁹³Ibid., p. 157.

⁹⁴It is interesting to see how Rodó, Bunge, Ortega (we analyze them in chapter three), as well as intellectuals and social scientists in general, in the first decades of the twentieth century force reading caudillos as Caesarist types. The discursive practice of propitiating liberal-parliamentary models over more specific local formations is materialized with an extensive repertoire of interpretative devices. As for an exotic - but informing - presentation, as late as the mid 1960's, see Ariel Peralta, El Cesarismo en América Latina (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Orbe, 1966).

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 450.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 245.

CHAPTER 3

THE BIOLOGY OF THE MASSES

The antinomy quality/quantity

At the time Nostromo was published simultaneously in London and New York - the novel that redefines, as we have seen, some of the central assumptions of European liberalism - the most prestigious intellectuals of Latin America concentrated their efforts on vindicating the tenets of that liberalism at any cost. Native intellectuals proceeded to read native history with the assumptions and intellectual tools of liberal European thinking. At the turn of the century the influential writings of the Argentine intellectual Carlos O. Bunge summarized what could be regarded as the opinions, assumptions and socially accepted procedures for reading the local in the light of a theory of progress. His Nuestra América dedicates numerous pages to try to explain the caudillo as a local political formation. Contrary to the projects of the critical intellectuals of the party of "material interests", Bunge finds in the "principio práctico del parlamento británico"¹ a solid center against which the local should be interpreted. In this sense history shows that it is only for the intellectuals of the metropolis that parliamentarism and liberal democracy can be suspected of not being able to provide the best answers to the Costaguanas of Latin America. The majority of native intellectuals instead of investigating the archives of the popular culture of their countries

- la poesía gauchesca in Argentina, for example, - seem unable to detach themselves from the lure of what is socially presented as superior. The discourse of Europe is an overriding force that is inscribed in every text of society. At the turn of the century reason is European.

In order to understand caudillos Bunge² needs to resort to the rhetoric of the native as lazy and cruel. The starting point of his analysis is what the first decade of this century officializes as common sense and obvious: "En la pereza colectiva hallo la clave del caudillismo o caciquismo hispanoamericano, curioso fenómeno institucional."³ Once again, a system of differences that presents the idea of progress as European needs to represent the local with the logic that nineteenth century Europe - and the majority of native intellectuals - advanced. An inspection of famous caudillos in the Continent leads him to classify them into different types:

Dentro del tipo genérico del gran cacique caben sus especies: el cacique caballero, como Artigas, Lavalle y Benito Juárez; el cacique rapaz y gran señor, como Guzmán Blanco; el cacique sanguinario como Rozas; el cacique inquisidor, como García Moreno; el cacique progresista, como Porfirio Díaz... Y estos tres últimos ejemplos - Rozas, García Moreno y Porfirio Díaz, - constituyen prototipos que merecen estudio aparte... Otros hay que son tipos intermediarios: semicaballeros, como Francia y Urbina; semiinquisidores como Facundo Quiroga y el fraile Aldao; semisanguinarios, como Melgarejo, Rivera, Mosquera; en fin, la mar... con todos sus tiburones, grandes y chicos.⁴

But in spite of the differences they all share "la ignorancia e imaginación de Oriente",⁵ they coparticipate in the violent blindness of the margins as opposed to the rational non-violence of parliamentary

democracy. Local politics is a grotesque and bloody labyrinth ("el grotesco y sangriento laberinto que se llama la política criolla"⁶) that can best be pierced scientifically with the tools furnished by social psychology. For Bunge the results will bare the imprint of science and the power of the most updated scientific reading of society.

Once again intellectual faculties prove to be white, and preferably Anglo-Saxon. The peak of European expansionism not coincidentally defines reason, knowledge and thinking as centered in the London-Paris axis. Bunge, unlike Conrad, finds no time to seriously speculate on the internal contradictions of a European semantics. A systematic scrutiny of the very concepts that make it possible for him to think about his native country could seriously jeopardize his enterprise. Deception, as in Conrad, might very well gain the terrain. Bunge may have reservations on Europe as center but he univocally takes sides with it when it comes to the hard choice between the West and the Other. A choice, no doubt, because the discourse of European expansionism at the time presents issues in that way. Either Latin American knowledge sides with progress or with the unsystematic and will chaos of the Other, an impossible option given its characteristics. Thus Bunge, as the majority of native intellectuals, although in varying degrees, is effectively interpellated by a discursivity that in order to affirm itself needs to sharpen differences in a more critical way. Independently of his acquiescence or negativity to side with the party of progress, he constitutes himself into the vehicle that further mystifies the alleged irrationality of caudillos and the masses. In order to strengthen his interpretation, he tells us that:

Ante los orientales, exentos de estetismo griego y de caridad cristiana, cuyos nervios saben saborear toda la voluptuosidad del espectáculo del dolor ajeno, cuya imaginación es tan fecunda en descubrir los más agudos y prolongados suplicios, los europeos, en materia de crueldad, son niños inocentes; aún los españoles, con su impavidez morisco-inquisitorial, que todavía revelan en ciertos ajusticiamientos públicos y en las corridas de toros. Pero en las venas de la plebe hispanoamericana la sangre azul de los hidalgos godos corre mezclada a la obscura sangre de los indígenas, parientes lejanos de los indomalayos... De ahí que las muchedumbres criollas hayan podido dar alguna vez a sus desmanes un sello de verdadera "crueldad china."⁷

European cruelty, even in the Iberian version, is no match to the Oriental monstrosity of the gauchos.

Against the popular culture of the second part of the nineteenth century - that called for a discussion of the popular in terms of social preoccupations and the vindication of popular discourses, - Bunge forces speaking on caudillos in terms of cruelty, personalism, laziness or philanthropy. For him the practices of caudillos and the masses cannot be formulated as specific discourses but only as incoherent experiences marked by varying degrees of emotionalism. In 1906 Bunge's writings confirm that knowledge is power, that representation is a key component in the structure of discourse. Popular interpellations have an existence in the discourse of interpretation, in the way they are discussed, against what options and in the light of the constructions that are presented as common sense. In the first decade of the twentieth century any concerned intellectual in South America "has to know" that caudillos cannot possibly signify in the way the European dictionary does. Again, as we have argued, Foucault emerges as a more

articulate voice to aid in understanding the question of social power and the mechanisms of control inherent in any discourse. Nuestra América proves that Foucault is right when he argues that "theories of law... apparatuses or institutions... moral choices"⁸ may very well constitute bodies of inquiry to understand social issues - the caudillo, in this case, - that they not only constitute power operations but also that the limitations of these tools can be broadly overcome by advancing towards the problematic of discourse, representation and the technologies of control. If socio-political phenomena are discussed via the moral or theories of "activity" the result will ensure a product, namely, Latin American inferiority. Similarly, a discussion of popular movements in terms of irrational violence - while bringing to closure the violence of Europe - will guarantee European superiority and will further naturalize discussing societies in terms of those mythologies.

In order to fracture what Bunge sees as extreme personalism in the caudillo, he opposes the neo-positivist concept of "idea", as an entity auspicing the supra-individual and democratic. Caciques - who Bunge identifies with caudillos - "no se constituyen por ideas, sino por personas y por nombres propios."⁹ The leaders of popular interpellations are personalistic and incapable of emerging from inside the projects of democracy. Bunge emphasizes the strategic move by Sarmiento of reducing the subject of caudillismo to an entity divorced from "serious" history. It is a very important move, no doubt, since it makes it possible for social scientists in general to cripple any attempt to investigate social discourses (popular arts, the gaucho as paria, new immigrants in the shanty towns in large cities) in order

to map caudillismo in the nineteenth century. It is the very notion of idea - in its variant of philosophical idealism - that prevents the caudillo, in the concrete argumentation of local intellectuals, from achieving legitimacy. Against the repeated argument of numerous intellectuals contemporary to the phenomenon, it is clear that a philosophy of ideas constitutes a powerful tool for political action. The concrete political experience of South America in the first decades of the twentieth century shows that the project of developing a parliamentary democracy in imitation of European models was a complex operation essentially permeated by a philosophy of ideas, by a reading of socio-political issues in the light of idealistic tenets. Undoubtedly, the tenets of European idealist discourses provided the concrete mechanisms to misrepresent the local.

In the strength, coherence and power of interpellation that liberalism had at the peak of Europe as imperial power (at the turn of the century it achieved the widest realization of the world organized as empire and colonies) it was a native of Uruguay who published one of the most famous and sophisticated programs to neutralize the caudillo. Immersed in the discursive logic of ideals - as understood by the liberal program that was at the time official version of common sense and reason - José E. Rodo's Ariel spelled out in 1900 how a detailed text of an alleged disinterested moral program of development and progress should read.¹⁰ The logic that permeates his reading of Latin America and what should be done in order to overcome the limitations that besiege her, rest firmly on the strength of explicating the world in terms of an ideology of progress:

Todo el que se consagre a propagar y defender, en la América contemporánea, un ideal desinteresado del espíritu, - arte, ciencia, moral, sinceridad religiosa, política de ideas, - debe educar su voluntad en el culto perseverante del porvenir. El pasado perteneció todo entero al brazo que combate; el presente pertenece, casi por completo también, al tosco brazo que nivela y construye; el porvenir - un porvenir tanto mas cercano cuanto más enérgicos sean la voluntad y el pensamiento de los que le ansían - ofrecerá, para el desenvolvimiento de superiores facultades del alma, la estabilidad, el escenario y el ambiente.¹¹

Furthermore, his version of what progress should be like - progress as imitation of British liberalism - is what ultimately becomes of special importance in order to understand not only caudillos but many other aspects of Latin American history. If in this dissertation we emphasize the central importance of trying to elucidate knowledge as power, we do it precisely because texts like Ariel furnish ample evidence to confirm our suspicions. What Rodó is proposing in his enterprise of redefining issues and advancing new alternatives for the cause of a truly democratic Hispanic America ends up, because of its internal logic and assumptions, advancing serious arguments in the opposite direction. His tools of analysis - a philosophy of "ideals" - turns out to be his most serious enemy.

It is not surprising then that Rodó is a central character in the cultural policies of local neo-liberals. Unquestionably, his text not only should be read as a very serious proposition belonging in the program of the local who are trying to put together a program of action for the region in the new century but also as a clear dissection of the power that is official. By mimetizing some of the central tenets of

European thinking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he reads social issues in the light of a logic that categorizes concrete programs of action in terms of disinterested ideals as opposed to interests, of a philosophy of voluntarism as opposed to inertia, of a "bare arm" as opposed to the refinements of intellectual labor. If Bunge in Argentina needs the tools of what he calls a "social psychology", Rodó envisions these oppositions as categories of enquiry. In his program the ideological schism between matter and spirit, the lower and the superior, nature and will or chaos and stability remains intact. The "mejores condiciones de lucha"¹² that he correctly seeks in order to develop a more egalitarian society unfortunately will not become accessible through the roads he envisions.

For democracy to succeed (he means parliamentary democracy after the British model) it is important to clarify the sources and origins of a political platform to produce in the twentieth century a Latin America substantially different from that of the previous century:

... dos impulsos históricos que han comunicado a nuestra civilización sus características esenciales, los principios reguladores de su vida.
 - Del espíritu del cristianismo nace, efectivamente, el sentimiento de igualdad, viciado por cierto ascético menosprecio de la selección espiritual y la cultura. De la herencia de las civilizaciones clásicas, nacen el sentimiento del orden, de la jerarquía y el respeto religioso del genio, viciado por cierto aristocrático desdén de los humildes y los débiles. El porvenir sintetizará ambas sugerencias del pasado, en una fórmula inmortal.¹³

In tune with the idealistic reading of the oppositions that we saw, he needs to isolate the "regulating principles" that should inform any

project to improve present conditions. In his plan of interpreting the local, he resorts to "sentimientos", as well as to the sense of equality, order, or hierarchy. In other words, and this is very important because eventually it will surface in the central ideas of other Hispanic writers, projects of socio-political implications, and historical discourses, have to be read with a logic of ideals in the light of binary oppositions. In this way the spirit, as a central category of philosophical and historical discourse, remains intact. Parliamentary democracy and the spirit: the two central allies to a world economy directed from London. As we will argue in detail in chapter five, Ariel furnishes a solid example to show that if hegemony in the social sciences is to be grasped with a broader understanding in contemporary studies, it will be a grave mistake to try to perpetuate numerous readings explicating dependency by giving priority to the economic (read as economism) or the "cultural" (read as "influences", for example). In order to understand more fully relations of power serious consideration has to be given to what Foucault calls "technologies". Not in the narrow sense of technical knowhow but also, and specially, of discourses to understand and explain. In 1900, as exemplified by Rodó or Bunge, the model that makes up Ariel and Nuestra América advances a technology of explicating the world. The mechanics of dividing reality between spirit and matter or intelligence and bare force, of classifying oppositions and constituting the present on a particular version of the past amount to power operations that explicate the colonial status of Latin America as natural and matter-of-fact.

Ariel never mentions caudillos. Rodó sees no need to discuss them in relation to "las razas pensadoras".¹⁴ Significantly, a book written by a native South American discussing the role, and the history, of the area does not need to explicate the most intrinsic political formation to the area. The emphasis is on the future, no doubt, but the absence is suggestive. It speaks not only of a strong desire to forget the past - the Latin American past - but, most importantly, of a regretful closure. The revolution that freed Uruguay and Argentina from Spain had "a Moreno, a Rivadavia, a Sarmiento"¹⁵ but caudillos are kept out of the discussion. More significantly, the rural or urban masses are not even accorded a passive participation in the history of both countries. Rather, there is an uncomfortable apprehension that there should be such a thing as great numbers of people not properly policed by high culture. His reading tells us that:

Si la aparición y el florecimiento, en la sociedad, de las más elevadas actividades humanas, de las que determinan la alta cultura, requieren como condición indispensable la existencia de una población cuantiosa y densa, es precisamente porque esa importancia cuantitativa de la población, dando lugar a la más compleja división del trabajo, posibilita la formación de fuertes elementos dirigentes que hagan efectivo el dominio de la calidad sobre el numero. - La multitud, la masa anónima, no es nada por sí misma, la multitud será un instrumento de barbarie o de civilización, según carezca o no del coeficiente de una alta dirección moral.¹⁶

Quality will save Latin America. Consistent with binary readings he has to categorize quality as opposed to quantity which, incidentally, is not equivalent for him to a blunt division between classes. Nevertheless, when his idealism is measured in its social projections

quality inevitably becomes an strategic ally of the intellectual and the affluent. José Rodo's exemplary effort to advance a set of personal impressions and possible solutions in relation to the socio-economic situation of his native Latin America becomes the prey of an idealist binarism, of a technology of reason - and we have to emphasize this - re-inforcing European superiority as natural and common sense knowledge.

For him the masses pose a danger if their sense of mediocrity is allowed to rule:

La oposición entre el régimen de la democracia y la alta vida del espíritu es una realidad fatal cuando aquel régimen significa el desconocimiento de las desigualdades legítimas y la sustitución de la fe en el heroísmo - en el sentido de Carlyle - por una concepción mecánica de gobierno. Todo lo que en la civilización es algo más que un elemento de superioridad material y prosperidad económica, constituye un relieve que no tarda en ser allanado cuando la autoridad moral pertenece al espíritu de la medianía... las hordas inevitables de la vulgaridad... Charles Morice las llama entonces "falanges de Prudhommen feroces que tienen por lema la palabra Mediocridad y marchan animadas por el odio de lo extraordinario."¹⁷

The fear of losing the refinements of art as exemplified by centuries of tradition is acted out at this particular moment of history in the form of making the masses suspicious. Mediocrity is presented as the name of the challenge. We should make it clear, however, that Rodo's apprehensions find ample justification at the time he is writing.

However, we differ diametrically with his interpretation. The cruel mechanistic character that reality presents as a result of an already fully established second industrial revolution in Europe and a world governed by a laissez-faire economy inscribe with traces all the

exports of a Europe that exercises now considerable control of the economy and politics in the River Plate area. Rodó, blinded by an idealist conception of parliamentarism, interprets those exports (material or intellectual commodities) and native texts on a binary reading where inevitably the masses pose a challenge. By voicing an interpretation along the tenets of established power, he sees in the thousands of workers and in the anonymous masses of the large urban centers the enemy that jeopardizes the cherished values of civilization. Thus it is important to emphasize the representations that emerge precisely from a situation where reading social phenomena is done on the basis of ideas, a body of inquiry that serves the concrete power interests of neo-liberal power structures. His "nobles y elevados motivos"¹⁸ should be given careful consideration from this angle.

Artigas, the most popular caudillo of the River Plate in the nineteenth century, has no place in Ariel. Furthermore, the masses are being forced into a reading of social phenomena that exploits all the logical possibilities of the antithesis between quality and number. Caudillos do not exist, popular discourses are at best mediocre, the history of Uruguay should be discussed in terms of the guiding principles of Christianity and classical Greece, the nineteenth century in the River Plate is textualized on Rivadavia or Sarmiento. The nineteenth century has no population in Rodó's text; no popular discourses and lots of muscles ("rudo brazo") with little intelligence. The history of Uruguay must be written by excluding important portions of its history.

However, Bunge - who shares the same articulating principles with Rodó in the interpretation of social phenomena - attempts a

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classification that ends up conspiring against its author. The "sharks" of caudillismo - as we saw above - are forced into a taxonomy constituted by categories of analysis like "gentlemen" (Artiagas), "cruel", "great señor" (Guzmán Blance), bloody (Rosas), inquisitorial (García Moreno), progressive (Porfirio Díaz) and the "intermediate types": semigente (Francia), semi-inquisitorial (Facundo), cuasi-bloody (Rivera). In other words, the present and the future of Latin America should be discussed in terms of economic progress and social improvements but not its past. The discourses to understand history should not explore the past in terms of concrete economic formations (local economies and world patterns, popular "rudimentary" economies and centralist efforts of concentration, interprovincial competition, etc.) in relation to socio-political interpellations but with a science of interpretation that categorizes the local in terms of distinction, cruelty or conservatism. Once more, the values of power at the time - inscribed in every discourse of society (clothes, methods of scientific enquiry, manners,) - fulfill the double operation of legitimizing contemporary power discourses while disarticulating the autochthonous past. As in the texts where Sarmiento tried every effort to represent the local as not constituting a system unless represented by the discourses of Europe, Bunge - in a move diametrically opposed to his interests - needs to articulate a taxonomy of a phenomenon that by its weight and presence cannot be ignored. His classifications prepare the ground for what in a few decades will reverse the historical project of misrepresenting caudillismo. His taxonomies are in open contradiction to his determination to represent caudillos as products of Latin America, ultimately

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irrational and undifferentiated. The operation of classification renders typologies and values that eventually will lend themselves to be read from other positions. However, in the first three decades of the twentieth century the majority of Hispanic discourses are centrally permeated by a fear of the masses, and their discourses.

In this sense José Ortega y Gasset, unquestionably the most important philosopher in the Spanish language in the twentieth century, provides additional texts to perpetuate the project of misrepresenting the Hispanic. A comparative reading of his writings in relation to those of numerous Spanish intellectuals of the period renders him as a thinker permeated by a preoccupation to stress the antithesis of quality to number. His abundant and influential writings exploring the domestic problems of Spain - defeated but unwilling to forget the glories of the past - as well as his prime interest in the future of Europe, lead him to postulate a rationale for social analysis that allies him with the ideological formations we have criticized in Rodó and Bunge. Whereas other Spanish writers like Pío Baroja brilliantly, and at moments almost chaotically, deconstruct the discourse of liberal interpellations, Ortega almost blindly tries to cling to a philosophical idealism that cannot but directly serve the socio-political projects of a conservative Spain. Even though he warns his readers that his España Invertebrada amounts to "mansas contemplaciones del hecho nacional, dirigidas por una aspiración puramente teórica y, en consecuencia, inofensiva"¹⁹ the sophisticated argumentations emerging produce a discourse of a very different nature.

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Although the phenomenon of caudillismo in Spain deserves a study of its own due to the differences with the same phenomenon in Latin America, it is very important to understand Ortega and his contemporaries. Not only when viewing them half a century later but contemporary events and analyses establish the priority of their studies on the question of national policies in the Hispanic world. The importance of Spanish writers directly visiting the River Plate area (usually as guest lecturers in much publicized festivities) and their regular contributions to the most prestigious newspapers and journals of the River Plate area, attest to the interrelations and affinities. Ortega lectured in Buenos Aires in 1926.

At a time when Pío Baroja invests a good portion of the last years of his life in the writing of Aviraneta, Ortega undertakes a fruitful analysis of major Spanish issues in the form of regular contributions to newspapers.²⁰ Both projects are informed by the same concerns and can be read as complimentary. However, as Pío Baroja undertakes a major redefining reading of history as understood in idealist terms and an investigation of the caudillos of the Hispanic nineteenth century, Ortega insists on building on some of the central tenets of that idealism. Baroja builds by deconstructing the assumption of a spirit of history, of the masses (whatever their class origin) as followers of enlightened individuals, of legitimation in terms of social discipline and of authority as argued by the discourses of power up to his time. Even though he has been presented as a hopeless and brilliant nihilist, these interpretations should be taken at best with strong reservations. He is the member of the generation of '98 that most clearly accomplishes

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the task of postulating a revision of the most inherent and deep-rooted beliefs of Spain. Only Unamuno reaches the extensive and lucid body of proposals urging a new reading of popular discourses in the way Baroja does. His series of historical novels exploring the Hispanic resistance to a native, inarticulate aristocracy and an imperial France as invader succeed in representing the discourse of popular leaders in the nineteenth century as legitimate and valid practices. After Baroja it is impossible to play down caudillos or to attempt representing them as the irrational counterpart to Hispanic liberalism in the nineteenth century.

Ortega attempts to devise a philosophy and a body of social enquiry with the vocabulary of traditional idealism and with the political aim of vindicating British liberalism as the most honorable solution to all societies. An impossible mission at an impossible time in the hands of a high-caliber intellectual. His strong apprehensions about "fascismo y bolchevismo"²¹ as exteriorized a few years later in La Rebelión de las Masas is already present at the time of producing the articles later anthologized as España Invertebrada. His correct antagonism to the potential Hitlers and Stalins of European politics coupled to the critical body of enquiry that he uses produce readings of society that ultimately accomplish - at least in terms of formulating a theory to understand mass discourses and the question of power - no more than the contradictions of Rodo's in 1900. Precisely Rodó, Bunge and Ortega contribute substantially to the discourses legitimizing, in the Hispanic culture, foreign political models as rational, progressive and naturally superior standards, a technology effective in neutralizing popular

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interpellations and presenting caudillos as violent and ahistorical. The inclusion of portions of their writings in textbooks of all levels of education and the prestige and officialization lent to them by all the institutions and channels of culture at the time, and more recently, should not be read as accessory or peripheral but rather as central to the projects of a liberalism that in practice has never overcome a neo-colonial status. Conversely, caudillos and popular movements have never enjoyed - with the exception of a few elected governments - any of those favors.

España Invertebrada is a key text for discussing social discourses and the question of power. Whether critical interests are centered on the problematic of Foucault's technologies, Laclau's emphasis on articulation and hegemony or on representation as power - Said's Orientalism being a solid representative text in this direction, as we argued in previous chapters, - Ortega provides some of the most elaborate arguments to elucidate the problem in the Hispanic culture of this century. Two temptations may lead us in the wrong direction. First, to see in his writings the last desperate cry of a bourgeois nineteenth century idealism because of their insistence on discussing the social in terms of masses of any social extraction lead by gifted individuals. Second, his affirmation of the discourse of philosophy as independent from and superior to other discourses, exercising a unique influence on society. Although these may be presented as legitimate lines of enquiry, I believe it is more important for our reading to try to clarify what closures Ortega's writings advance. Avoiding the issue of whether he is more or less seduced by bourgeois discourses, or more or less a liberal or a

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Catholic is a healthy move that saves unnecessary discussions and advances the most important issue of the more articulate interpretations that Ortega closes. His writings prevent social issues from being discussed privileging the materiality and specificity of mass discourses while forcing discussions in terms of the moral, the heroic and the spiritual.²² In this way he emerges as an accomplished apologist of reaction. For Ortega power rests on the intellect and self-discipline rather than on discourse, signification, representation and hegemony. The chosen guide because they are models of efficiency and morality. Here is where his need to discuss the social in terms of practices trying to approach ideals - "el militar ejemplar, el industrial perfecto, el obrero modelo"²³ - inevitably ends up sacrificing the number at the hands of quality. The masses (including "las de clase media y superior"²⁴) have the biological configuration, the seal of nature, that makes them unworthy of competing with the standards of their gifted leaders: "porque, negándose la masa a lo que es su biológica misión, esto es, a seguir a los mejores" they will only affirm their opinions which are "inconexas, desacertadas y pueriles".²⁵ The well being of society is in the hands of gifted individuals, of heroic and self-sacrificing leaders and not in the people. They are biologically designed to play second fiddle.

Not surprisingly he needs to affirm a central difference between the emotional and spiritual as superior to the material and concrete. Reversing the opposition established by Spencer, Ortega tells us that

La ética industrial, es decir, el conjunto de sentimientos, normas, estimaciones y principios que rigen, inspiran y nutren la actividad industrial,

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es moral y vitalmente inferior a la ética del guerrero. Governa a la industria el principio de la utilidad, en tanto que los ejércitos nacen del entusiasmo. En la colectividad industrial se asocian los hombres mediante contratos, esto es, compromisos parciales, externos, mecánicos, al paso que en la colectividad guerrera quedan los hombres integralmente solidarizados por el honor y la fidelidad, dos normas sublimes.²⁶

Consistent with the long and cherished values of philosophical idealism, social practices are forced in a discussion separating the ethical, the moral, the vital as associated to the "superior" ideal of the heroic warrior. Likewise the utilitarian is associated with industry - that is, the concrete production of goods - because of the external, mechanical and ultimately insubstantial character of everyday life.

But what appears to amount to no more than a theoretical discussion of more "concrete" issues suddenly emerges in full light revealing the real extent of Ortega's discussions. His famous conception of direct action - la acción directa - and particularism as modus operandi of the masses gain the center of the discussions. In short, because the masses are biologically determined to follow the model which is, by definition, rational, articulate, sober and morally superior, the minute they renounce their mission they can only behave as irrational and illogical. Only "la acción indirecta o parlamentarismo"²⁷ will serve the socio-political needs of society. Parliamentarism, the political organization of the empire that rules over substantial regions of all continents, constitutes the model that should substitute for the incoherent particularism and emotional direct action of, for example, Hispanics.

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British parliamentarism - as exemplified by the practices of liberalism - constitutes the highest form of political organization. Consequently no other forms can be superior to it because other alternatives can only constitute anterior thus regressive forms.

Hay una cronología vital inexorable. El liberalismo es en ella posterior al antiliberalismo, o, lo que es lo mismo, es más vida que éste, como el cañón es más arma que la lanza... una actitud anti-algo parece posterior a este algo, puesto que significa una reacción contra él y supone su previa existencia... El que se declara anti-Pedro no hace, traduciendo su actitud a lenguaje positivo, más que declararse partidario de un mundo donde Pedro no exista. Pero esto es precisamente lo que acontecía al mundo cuando aún no había nacido Pedro. El anti-pedrista, en vez de colocarse después de Pedro, se coloca antes y retrotrae toda la película a la situación pasada.²⁸

The logic with which Ortega attempts to legitimize his reading of antiliberalism should be understood perhaps in the light of his desperate apprehension of the rapid growth of fascism in Germany. However we should note, more than in passing, how the logic of this Ortega not only diminishes his intellectual stature but also how dangerously close it stays to the rhetoric of non-democratic governments in the Hispanic world.

Tirano Banderas and the space of a silence

It is from the inside of a social system constituted by the official along the lines of Rodó, Bunge and Ortega that Tirano Banderas²⁹ emerges. Because the official, the prestigious, and that which signifies in the first three decades of this century in the Hispanic world are, beyond any doubt, constituted by a logic and a semantics of power where caudillos and the masses only exist as negative types.³⁰ The

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discourse of the masses appears as the marginal or the subversive. The tango - undoubtedly the popular manifestation that most extensively problematizes the discourses from below - emerges from the brothels and shanty-towns at the same time that the rich tradition of folklore of the provinces is safely marginalized by culture to working class enclaves. Likewise, the bloody episodes of the "Semana Trágica"³¹ in Argentina constitute instances of social tension that as an epiphenomenon is making its presence from Barcelona to the Southern Cone of Latin America. Liberalism in the neo-colonial version is the solid socio-political system that operates as irrefutable common sense and - as exemplified by the three writers analyzed above - it is the most coherent hegemonical formation. Social and private signification auspice liberal readings of any discourse. With social systems of representation validating the interpretation of social phenomena along the lines of a philosophical idealism, the masses have to be represented as violent, irrational, temperamental or as immature and opportunistic. A similar fate is in store for the organizations or social practices voicing some of their concerns. Strikes are presented by the dictionary of liberalism as attempts to disrupt, the popular as colorful but of little consequence, the nationalist as regressive and obscure in its workings, and the Hispanic as inferior.

Ramón del Valle-Inclán's Tirano Banderas fictionalizes a non-liberal Latin American country.³² Inevitably, any critical reading of it faces the issue of establishing the possible motives why a novel by a Spanish writer should be set in a Latin American country, and what purposes this accomplishes. True, Valle-Inclán had travelled extensively

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through Mexico and Central America at the end of the nineteenth century and the temptation to fictionalize that experience was obvious.³³

However, any reading of the novel makes it clear that the focus of interest is not on the socio-political realities of the former colonies of Spain or on a detained observation of the mechanics of power in the margins of Europe. Neither does the text permeate a deconstructive enterprise that attempts to go beyond the lines already explored by Conrad. Tirano Banderas is a novel written in Spain and preoccupied with Spain. In very much the same fashion as Nostromo imports from the Other a dislocated collection of traces linked by presenting them as a fictional country, Valle-Inclán's novel reproduces some twenty years later a similar move. The Other basically serves the purpose of discussing the local. Banderas attempts to discuss the Hispanic tradition and Hispanic practices in Spain by excluding any discussion of the Hispanic as processed by the Other. The Hispanic culture is a fractured, irrational, non-liberal and emotional text with a natural locale in the Iberian peninsula. The Other, in the best case, will operate as a mute paradigm to confirm the scepticism of Valle Inclán in relation to his culture.

However it is not so much that

Aunque la tragedia de esta nación mixta a veces se sobrepone a la impasibilidad del autor, el lector no puede menos de sentir que Valle-Inclán se aprovecha del tema principalmente para lucir su ingeniosidad. Aun cuando el lector puede apreciar intelectualmente la experimentación del novelista, no logra identificarse con los personajes.³⁴

The very fact of having a European Hispanic reading the Hispanic American in the 1920's in the way Valle-Inclán does, in itself constitutes

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an operation that richly informs any reader not only on problems of positionality, or on "ingeniosidad" as a producer of fiction, but most significantly on the complexity of representation. Discussing fiction in terms of the author "using" a certain theme, or the text as a measure of ingeniousness or of readers' "identification" with the characters constitutes an operation that rather than opening discussions on fiction, puts a closure on other related issues. A critical approach along those lines precludes investigating why a deconstructive enterprise like Tirano Banderas represents Latin America in the way it does. Perhaps, by investigating this line of inquiry we will discover some of the important undercurrents constituting the intellectual experiences of the Generation of '98. Rather than focusing our attention on the novel as an unsuccessful project it is far more interesting to investigate the specificity of that project in the light, for example, of our discussion of Rodó, Bunge and Ortega. In this way Valle-Inclán can be investigated in the rich fertility that informs his métier, in the strategies and moves that he has to enact in order to produce an ironic (and "Esperpentual") reading of the Spain of Primo de Rivera. If he "sacrifices" the Other in order to speak about the self, if a Spanish writer needs to represent the Other as the land of tyrants without investigating the specificities of that culture, if in the projects of a Spaniard a successful novel is to be written by misrepresenting the Other, doesn't this constitute an excellent diagnosis not only of the author but of the multiple discursivities that speak through him?

If the operations that Seymour Menton sees as a reader that "no logra identificarse con los personajes" is investigated what emerges

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is a complex phenomenon. Its constitutive characteristics are: a sustained effort on the part of Valle-Inclán to criticize the forces of status quo (the local government, the Latin American diplomats, the representatives of European powers) as visible power members of a system of signification - their practices define what should be legal, good, acceptable, rational, etc - and an absence of a systematic exploration of the culture and socio-political institutions of the Other. The novel is by forcing the Other not to be. Furthermore, the novel signifies by unveiling the internal mechanics of behavior of only one character, the Barón de Benicarlés. What the novel is directly stating is that Valle-Inclán will survive as novelist for as long as the texts of the Other and of Spain are not investigated beyond exposing the baron as Esperpentual. A novel of a member of the Generation of '98 written in the 1920's will find legitimacy only in so far as the Other is represented as a chaotic undifferentiation. The deconstructive margins that it can reach are to inspect the crevices of the "afeminada elegancia"³⁵ of an aristocrat as symbolic alter ego of a decaying class that no longer is, or cares to be, in control of the political life of a former colony. Tirano Banderas indirectly defines the political leader of a Latin American country as the strategic ally of Sodomistic discourses and the hypocrisy of neo-liberal Latin Americans. The leaders of this country have power because they coparticipate in the discourse of foreign aid as defined by the "crédito" that comes from Spain, the baron as material agent of that operation, and the silence and acquiescence of the foreign diplomats serving commercial interests. The investigation stops at that point.

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What the novel affirms eloquently is the inability in the 1920's of Peninsular fiction to process self and the other (both as a signifying unit) beyond the limits of exploring the "decadence" of a local aristocracy, conveniently adorned by a "colorful" margin. This is fiction that produces versions of popular discourses starting from the resources of Rodó, Bunge and Ortega. It overcomes these ideological statements by filtering its production through an Esperpentual counter-reading but, essentially, it attempts no explorations beyond that point. Power and hegemony are produced in terms of a rhetoric of personalism and emotions. The masses are anonymous non-entities, meaning asserts its presence by the agency of despotic individuals who handle at will the needs of the people. The silences of this novel cannot but invite reflecting how in the twenty years since Nostromo, social texts have affirmed themselves by cornering fiction against two hard choices: "good" fiction on the Other has to explore caudillos, dictadores, the masses and their discourses as counter-discourses to liberalism or else the result will not be satisfactory.

The text does not ignore some of the major socio-political configurations that may help investigate why the Other is circulated as an undifferentiated assortment of non-democratic republics ruled by tiranos. It builds on exposing, in very direct terms, some of those aspects. When the diplomatic representatives of Ecuador and Uruguay are discussing current politics, the latter, says

Sir Jonnes, tan cordial, tan evangélico, sólo persigue una indemnización de veinte millones para la West The Limited Company... Nuestra América sigue siendo, desgraciadamente, una

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Colonia Europea... Pero el gobierno de Santa Fe, en esta ocasión posiblemente no se dejará coaccionar. Sabe que el ideario de los revolucionarios está en pugna con los monopolios de las Compañías. Tirano Banderas no morirá de cornada diplomática. Se unen para sostenerlo los egoísmos del criollaje, dueño de la tierra y las finanzas extranjeras. El Gobierno, llegado el caso, podría negar las indemnizaciones, seguro de que los radicalismos revolucionarios en ningún momento merecerán el apoyo de las cancillerías.³⁶

Furthermore, in the first pages of the novel the inspector has already said that

La Humanidad que invocan las milicias puritanas es un ente de razón, una logomaquia. El laborantismo inglés, para influenciar sobre los negocios de minas y finanzas, comienza introduciendo la Biblia.³⁷

Undoubtely, the reading points in the direction of one of the feasible ways to explore the phenomenon. The Other should be discussed in terms of economic expansionism and in terms of ideology, discourse, strategy and power. Tirano Banderas is correct in stating that social texts need to be discussed with a language that incorporates the economic, the social and the political as pre-condition to understand its specificity.

But it fails to advance beyond that point. And it fails because it is not interested in understanding the internal mechanics of the Other, whether in itself or in relation to Spain and Europe. Or rather, it will be more accurate to say that what the novel is stating is the necessity to discuss the Other in terms of the discourses of self. The Other will be textualized by exposing the incongruities of self as evidenced by the Sodomistic discourse of the aristocracy of Spain or the "selfishness" of certain local power groups in association with Europe. But by doing this it hardly advances beyond the exemplary deconstructive

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enterprise of Nostromo. Two decades before Valle-Inclán, fiction had exposed the discourse of economic domination as exemplified by the Bible in association with liberalism. After the Uruguayan diplomat's confidences one would expect a systematic exploration (without renouncing the Cubist/Expressionist approach that characterizes the novel, for example) of the manifold aspects legitimizing Europe as metropolis, the "pugna" between nationalist radicals and foreign companies - what is the constitution of that antagonism in 1925? - what specific discourses validate the alliance between a tyrant and foreign diplomats or local land-owners and foreign capital, and what is the materiality of the tools the dictator can use in order to ensure unconditional support from his sympathizers. For Valle-Inclán these are cruel props, they do not occupy center stage.

This is what makes the novel central to discussions on representation and caudillismo. As suggested before, the closures it forces speak of a very important cultural operation of which Valle-Inclán is only a part. It is the official discourse of power at the time that asserts in every possibly way the closures here displayed. The discourse of power - liberalism in its "developed" or "underdeveloped" configurations - interpellates by excluding investigating the Other. Again, Rodó, Bunge and Ortega become prime examples to understand this operation. At the time the discourse of power is interpellating the intellectual community by affirming, for example, that it is not important or substantial to clarify what is a tyrant, what is a caudillo, how does one differ from the other, what are the possible discourses of the masses, on what premises are their discourses articulated, etc. The natural

for the intellectuals of the 1920's viewing the Other is to exclude - acted out in different languages - the discourses that would jeopardize the semantics (that is, every form of power) of the developed North.

In turn this forces our reconsidering the real extent of the "muñecos olvidados tras de los juegos"³⁸ that at first sight seem to assert a minor presence in the novel. There is the temptation to read them as part of the author's attempt to represent the local as "personajes titerescos"³⁹ or "una multitud de figurillas grotescas que viven posesas de un miedo constante frente a un dictador caprichoso"⁴⁰ thus assuming that "Valle-Inclán se preocupa más por su destreza en manejar las peculiaridades lingüísticas".⁴¹ An interpretation that excludes the problematic of discourse and representation in relation to social power, as it is here the case with Seymour Menton, can only conclude that "el autor da a entender, que considera este mundo una farsa grotesca en la cual actúa gente de condición desesperadamente inferior".⁴² His interpretation forces discussing the author independently of the social forces that interpellate him, the moves he enacts in order to position himself, literature as a discourse of power or the social inscription of the psychology of writing. Seymour Menton prevents us from investigating Valle-Inclán's closures. From his interpretation we can only conclude that the author of the novel was not successful this time. This reading can only serve a silence on the power of liberal discourse as a hegemonical force transcending individuals. His preoccupation to decide whether Valle-Inclán's language is "hybrid" - "el lenguaje híbrido"⁴³ - or not becomes an operation that may well serve neutralizing the Other rather than auspicing it. Seymour Menton's reading perceives a problem but at the same time does not allow it to

offer itself for inspection. If Valle-Inclán's grotesque is discussed in terms of identification of the reader with the novel, we will not be able to understand Valle-Inclán's presenting himself as a "muñeco olvidado" of a society of which he is a part and against which he launches a confused protest, Tirano Banderas, that is critical because it attempts to deconstruct Spain but at the expense of the Other.

Precisely the language of the novel when viewed from our model is one of its strongest assets together with the exploration of the af-feminate Barón de Benicarlés. The piling up of traces evidenced by simply putting together some characteristics of numerous dialects - thus rendering a uniform, undifferentiated mythical Latin American Spanish - forces neutralizing the local in order to affirm the language of the narrator. The phenomenon may be read as a supreme act of individualism on the part of Valle-Inclán but - as we have shown in the argumentation of this chapter - this constitutes one aspect of a more important fact. Only when the interpellations of a liberal discourse are explored, as in our case, we understand more fully that if dictators, caudillos or the masses are not investigated the answer is not to be found in the problematic of literature as an individual act of creation but rather on the specificities of the production of the social and the individual. The witty resourcefulness of the language of Valle-Inclán ("una íntima y remota cobardía de cómico silbado";⁴⁴ "tecleaba un piano hipocondríaco";⁴⁵ "una vida interior de alambre en espiral"⁴⁶) constitute the natural move to assert the self as distanced from the mass of writers in the Madrid of the twenties: this is the very language with which modernity - and liberalism - interpellate him. The witty in the land

of the self, of Europe, achieves Being by silencing the Other, Latin America. This rich tension, and not one of the poles, must be visualized in order to discuss Tirano Banderas. The old aspiration of literary criticism of inspecting texts in their specificity rather than favoring levels of "achievements" finds a better ally in discourse analysis and knowledge as power rather than in other alternatives advancing the logic of individualism in literary production. Foucault and Laclau's assistance in inspecting the relation of Tirano Banderas to the discursiveness that also permeated Rodó, Bunge and Ortega, proves our point.

NOTES

¹C.O. Bunge, Nuestra América (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1926), p. 241.

²See José Luis Romero, El desarrollo de las ideas en la sociedad argentina del siglo XX (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), A.J. Pérez Amuchástegui, Mentalidades Argentinas (1860-1930) (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1965), Roberto F. Giusti, Momentos Y Aspectos De La Cultura Argentina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Raija, 1954), Jorge Abelardo Ramos, La Bella Epoca; 1904-1922 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Del Mar Dulce, 1970).

³Ibid., p. 249.

⁴Ibid., p. 261.

⁵Ibid., p. 256.

⁶Ibid., p. 235.

⁷Ibid., p. 255.

⁸Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 131.

⁹Nuestra América, p. 245.

¹⁰For different readings of Rodó see Emilio Contell Gasco, José Enrique Rodó: estudio y antología (Madrid: Compañía Bibliográfica Española, 1970), Justo Manuel Aguiar, José Enrique Rodó y Rufino Blanco-Fombossa (Montevideo: Agencia General de Librería y Publicaciones, 1925), Alejandro C. Arias, Ideario de Rodó (Salto: n.p., 1938), Marie Benedetti, Genio y figura de José Enrique Rodó (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1966), Helena Costábile de Amerin, Rodó, pensador y estilista (Washington: Secretaría General: Organización de los Estados Americanos, 1973), Darío C. Guevara, Magisterio de dos colosos: Montalve, Rodó (Quito: Taller Gráfico Minerva, 1963), Víctor Pérez Petit, El espíritu de Rodó y las características de su obra (Montevideo: Comisión Nacional del Centenario, 1930), Emir Rodríguez Monegal, José E. Rodó en el novecientos (Montevideo: Número, 1950), María E. Seré de Berre, José Enrique Rodó: su mensaje (Montevideo: n.p., 1974), Julio Lago, El verdadero Rodó: estudios críticos (Montevideo: Comunidad del Sur, 1973).

¹¹José E. Rodó, Ariel; Liberalismo y Jacobinismo (Montevideo: Colección de Clásicos Uruguayos, 1964), p. 83.

¹²Ibid., p. 84.

¹³Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁹José Ortega y Gasset, España Invertebrada (Madrid: Alianza, 1983), p. 23.

²⁰See, for example, Gonzalo Redondo, Las empresas políticas de José Ortega y Gasset: "El Sol", "Crisol", "Luz" (1917-1934) (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1970), Vicente García Romano, José Ortega y Gasset, publicista (Madrid: Akal, 1976), Harold C. Raley, José Ortega y Gasset: philosopher of European unity (University: University of Alabama Press, 1971).

²¹José Ortega y Gasset, La Rebelión de las Masas in Obras Completas Vol 9 (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1951), p. 206.

²²See Oliver W. Holmes, Human reality and the social world: Ortega's philosophy of history (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), Nelson R. Orringer, Ortega y sus fuentes germánicas (Madrid: Gredos, 1979), Julián Marías Aguilera, Acerca de Ortega (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1971), José Ferrater Mora, Ortega y Gasset: an outline of his philosophy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), José Luis Abellán, Ortega y Gasset en la filosofía española; ensayos de apreciación (Madrid: Editorial Teconos, 1966), León Dujovne, La concepción de la historia en la obra de Ortega y Gasset (Buenos Aires: S. Rueda, 1968), Christian Ceplica, The historical thought of José Ortega y Gasset (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1958).

²³España Invertebrada, p. 90.

²⁴Ibid., p. 78.

²⁵Ibid., p. 79.

²⁶Ibid., p. 35.

²⁷Ibid., p. 61.

²⁸La Rebelión de las Masas, p. 206.

²⁹Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Tirano Banderas in Obras Completas (Madrid: Editorial Plenitud, 1954).

³⁰As already argued in relation to Mariátegui, it is precisely at this time that Latin America starts producing numerous intellectuals arguing specific cultural and political formations of the area through models emanating from other than European-centered values. However, the semantics of the West continues as the hegemonical source of meaning. See, for example, David Wise, "Indigenismo de izquierda y de derecha: dos planteamientos en los años 1920", Revista Iberoamericana, 122 (1983), 159-70.

³¹The first and, particularly, the second decades of this century were characterized, in all Hispanic scenarios, by brutal reprievals of popular demonstrations.

³²See John Falconieri, "Tirano Banderas: su estructura esperpéntica", Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, 4 (1962), 203-206; David Lagmanovich, "La visión de América en Tirano Banderas", Humanitas, 2 (1955), 267-278; Carlos Orlando Nallim, "El estilo de Tirano Banderas", Revista de Educación 7-8 (1960), 452-455; David Bary, "Un personaje de Valle-Inclán. ¿Quién es el barón de Benicarlés?", Insula, 24 (1969), 1-12; Ricardo Gullón, "Técnicas en Tirano Banderas," in Ramón del Valle-Inclán. An Appraisal of His Life and Works, ed. Anthony N. Zahareas (New York: Las Américas, 1968), pp. 723-757; Olga Kattas, "Notas sobre Tirano Banderas", Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, 129 (1969), 179-189.

³³See Manuel Bermejo Marcos, Valle-Inclán. Introducción a su obra (Salamanca: Anaya, 1971), Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1944), José Pérez Fernández, Valle-Inclán (Humanismo, Política Y Justicia) (Alcoy: Editorial Marfil, 1976), José Esteban, Valle-Inclán Visto Por... (Madrid: Espejo, 1973).

³⁴Seymour Menton, "La novela experimental y la república comprensiva de Hispanoamérica: Estudio analítico y comparativo de Nostromo, Le Dictateur, Tirano Banderas y El Señor Presidente" in La novela hispanoamericana Ed. Juan Loveluck (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1969), p. 256.

³⁵Tirano Banderas, p. 803.

³⁶Ibid., p. 816.

³⁷Ibid., p. 709.

³⁸Ibid., p. 775.

³⁹Seymour Menton, p. 254.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 256.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 274.

⁴²Ibid., p. 274.

⁴³Ibid., p. 275.

⁴⁴Tirano Banderas, p. 686.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 716.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 817.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIMITS OF THE POPULIST TERRITORY

From persona to social discourses

The writings of Sarmiento, Conrad or Ortega that we have investigated suggest that the problem of discussing caudillos or, more generally, the socio-political structure and behaviour of Hispanic nations in the last two centuries almost inevitably obliges them to speak of the masses, political leadership, the problematic of progress and the question of meaning. More specifically, they put in evidence (as also do Rodó, Bunge or Valle-Inclán) a vocabulary and a number of assumptions, closures and procedures that emerge from their text auspiced as natural and updated tools of enquiry. In spite of important individual differences of opinion, it is clear that for these writers if the question of the masses and their discourses are to be discussed a number of assumptions are to be taken for granted between writer and his audience. For example, these texts use every strategy to emphasize that the modern world has been moving from pre-modern to modern formations. If the last two centuries of history are to be investigated the question of modernity must be central to these discussions so that clear-cut domains can be established. Writer and audiences rely on the assumption that there are "modern" paradigms to check whether a certain system of practices indeed conforms to that modernity or not. Sarmiento believes that

caudillos of his day are not modern because they propose war with the logic, strategy and logistics of a barbarian epoch rather than the order, discipline and rationality that a European art of war displays. Likewise, in his view the garments of the typical native of Argentina denounce a lack of modernity when judged in relation to the man in the streets in any European city. The poncho does not conform to what is held as a paradigm of modernity, it lacks the semic features¹ present in, for example, the French or British three-piece suit. Europe has entered in the domain of progress, South America evidently has not.

And it is the structure and constitution of this evidence which concerns us most in this dissertation, basically because all argumentations purport to represent that evidence as natural and as common sense. We have seen that this is not the case. In fact, many a good efforts are squandered not only by Sarmiento but Ortega as well in order to naturalize a process which is cultural through and through. The insistence on discussing and interpreting caudillos, masses, the question of social progress or the structure of history along binary tensions has gradually emerged as a set of cultural operations auspiced and determined by supraindividual programs in the West. Following some of Michel Foucault's analyses of discursive formations helped us relocate the status and also the domain of how caudillos have been interpreted. As we have argued, the most effective way to distance ourselves from the vocabulary and rhetoric so far advanced to discuss caudillos and the question of populism is by, first, localizing those formations (for example, through a topography of the "natural" and "common sense" strategies to read caudillos) and, second, redefining

the power of social meaning along the problematic of discourse as power.

Precisely on these grounds it becomes evident that the numerous popular stories circulated in Latin America in the last few decades as a result of a process of social awareness speak of a powerful phenomenon. They circulate in the streets and are obviously intended to satirize European centrality. A standing Peruvian story, by way of example, states that for an observer of the North an Englishman contemplating a river will always be presented as Logos pondering on the meaning of life whereas a "chato" (a lower class Peruvian indian) will never suggest more than somebody calculating how many fish he could catch. Independently of ascertaining the authorship of the story (it may very well have been put into circulation by a European anthropologist doing research in the area...) an invitation to reflect on hegemony and representation clearly gets under way once the story is given due attention. The process of observing and representing the Other should no doubt be theorized in a field of analysis where the problematic of discursivities and the observer are allowed to articulate a sustained voice and where the often conflicting tensions emerging from a critique of the founding subject are heard rather than suppressed.

Caudillos have proved to be an elusive subject for research. The attempts to neutralize them in the nineteenth century representing them as barbaric and masters of terror in turn had to be supplemented by concrete military action. As for the twentieth century the issue has been complicated even further by the fact that Battle, Yrigoyen and Perón rose to power through popular, liberal-democratic elections

and remained in power through the same mechanism. Their political antagonists - often military governments - seldom did. Thus the "perplexing"² pattern dominating politics in Argentina, and to a certain extent Uruguay, has been that popular democratic forms of government have been populist under caudillos and not through a model reproducing the structure of a British parliamentary model. This constitutes the central fact that has denaturalized every effort to advance first Europe and later the political institutions of the North in general as better, common sense alternatives to local models. Here, in a nutshell, lies the central contradiction in relation to which hundreds of politicians or intellectuals - whether native or foreign - have had to articulate a position. Why should the masses follow caudillos instead of embracing what appear to be the more dynamic and democratic formations of liberal democracies? How does the caudillo manage to retain power apart from his charisma and overspending in popular programs? These and countless other questions have led the majority of serious and conscientious liberally-inspired intellectuals either to frustration or deception often concluding that the masses of the area are not mature enough for advanced democratic models. As for Communist Party ideologues, the most recurrent interpretation was to articulate a theory of the caudillo as petit bourgeois buffer. Either the masses are not ready for democracy or they are exploited and deceived by the upper classes through the agency of the caudillo.

The recurrent strategy of discussing caudillos as individual persona in relation to anonymous masses and, particularly, the inability to understand the social practices of the masses clearly speak of a

mechanism of social control not reducible to a few individuals or even to a specific class. As shown in our analysis of selected writings of Rodó, Bunge and Ortega y Gasset what is actually in operation there is a phenomenon that cuts across political sympathies or even ideological inscriptions. To say that these intellectuals are all united by the fact of their strong sympathies for the model of British liberal democracy - thus trying to neutralize nationalist caudillos - is to argue in the right direction but it is not the best way to do it. The strong essentialism of regarding binary oppositions like liberalism/anti-liberalism as central to the discussions on populism inevitably leads to a number of partial and often incorrect analyses. No doubt, one of the most common ones emerging from this antinomy is that, at least in theory, once liberalism and liberal formations are done away with the dependent character of the area will automatically disappear. The regretful derivations of positions of these type in the sixties and seventies bear witness to our reading. Actually, arguing against liberalism in the way numerous historians, in particular, did is an explicit acknowledgement of the inability to stay away from the logic that liberalism itself advanced in order to discuss the problem. For as long as social power is discussed in the area in terms of rhetorical categories like the "masses" and the "leader" it is extremely difficult, virtually impossible in fact, to dispense with the strong metaphysics of personalism and the abstract character of a notion like "the masses". Once a step like this is taken it is impossible to escape discussing social power in terms of sympathy, betrayal, allegiance, endurance and other similar notions.

The discussions on caudillos and populism must move from the persona of the caudillo to social discourses and the problematic of social hegemony. In other words, caudillismo is a phenomenon that has to be discussed from the problematic of power, that is, of social discourses competing for legitimacy. To think of power in the essentialist version of privileging material institutions, classes or individuals is to fail to perceive the atomistic, everchanging, and articulating character of power. Caudillismo is better understood not only as a specific formation in the Latin American world but also as a socio-political organization different from that of the models advanced from the North (either British parliamentary or Soviet-socialist models) once social discourses - dressing, information, authority, accounting, interpretation, analyzing, etc - are investigated as constituting power in relation to which the persona of the caudillo is to be understood. Social power should be analyzed in terms of social discourses in relation to which individuals or groups articulate a position.

Not coincidentally all the readings condemning the caudillo for his abuse of personalism, or those sadly regretting the caudillo's "betrayal"³ to popular movements (Perón in Argentina constitutes a good example) as well as those justifying caudillos for their anti-North American and anti-Soviet stance share a central characteristic: they cannot discuss social, supraindividual phenomena in terms other than the individual caudillo as center of meaning. Battle "overspends", Yrigoyen "moves away from the popular", Perón "supports", "helps" or "betrays" specific issues as if politics and social relations could be explained by - and directly dependent upon - the will of an individual.

The metaphysics of individualism is here in full swing. True, these voices will argue that putting the caudillo at the center of the discussion is a practical and expedient procedure to discuss the complex issue of populism. Since Battle has to be investigated - they may argue - why not have all discourses converge on him as center of power and ultimate voice to approve or deny the implementation of a specific social program, an export policy or a new educational package. After all is not the head of the executive power the highest instance in the hierarchy of power in democratic societies? In the balance of the different seats of power, whether the legislative or the executive, isn't precisely José Battle y Ordóñez the caudillo president that is specifically pointed by the law as the individual power finally vetoing or approving new legislation? Therefore, - these voices may argue - let us discuss caudillos and populism privileging the caudillo as center of meaning and voice of the masses.

This line of argumentation returns us to previous discussions. However, we should emphasize some important notions before analyzing an essay by Jorge Isaacson in the discussion of populism. First, the above objections dispense altogether with the most important aspect of interpretation whether we discuss the social sciences or any of the applied sciences - to maintain the classical distinction. Interpretation is a production of meaning where essentially the unconscious and more tangible pressures of social signification force a position on the part of the observer. Interpretation is a historically-determined discourse, whatever we understand by the term "historically". We may emphasize more the presence of the anonymous and unconscious forces of culture -

as evidently Foucault and Laclau would argue - or the subjectivity of the individual interpreter, a position which nowadays emerges as conservative. In any case, what is more significant at this point of our presentation is to give priority to the fact that discussing caudillos is a historical, and socially conditioned activity where it is incorrect to distinguish between "natural" ways of reading and those associated with a particular moment. Sarmiento's readings of caudillos for example, leave no room for doubt in this sense. What Joseph S. Tulchin has described as the "vaca sagrada syndrome"⁴ in Latin American studies evidently points in the direction of the sociology of interpretation. A number of his reflections on his experience as editor of Latin American Research Review constitute an interesting body of opinions that many of the still numerous voices - particularly those in the Anglo-American world - advocating the centrality of the caudillo would do well to consider at some length. No doubt voicing consensus among a significant number of colleagues he warns that

The point is that many of the available techniques are simply inappropriate for addressing some of the important questions we have about Latin America or handling the kind of data that are available. Are regression equations equally robust in economic studies of developed economies and developing ones? Is factor analysis equally helpful in study elite formation in Los Angeles and Sao Paulo? Psychologists have shown that so-called "standard" personality tests produce wildly divergent results when applied in different cultures... Engagé scholars, by definition, are never the most objective observers. Worse, they tend to focus on issues with which they are emotionally involved, not issues that detached judgement may indicate warrant our attention. As scholars, we must guard against the enshrinement of any orthodoxy, whether it be dependency, capitalism, anti-imperialism, or what have you.⁵

We must point out that we disagree with some of his notions but, precisely because of the space that our disagreement immediately creates, we should state clearly the importance of his opinions in this context.

As for our differences of opinion let us say that it is impossible in the nineteen eighties to still discuss the production of historical or cultural interpretation in some of the terms Tulchin does. As he correctly reflects "Most of us analyze data the way we were trained to do. We rarely stop to question the biases inherent in those methods. Statistical procedures have come into favor in one discipline or another because they suited the nature of the data available and the central questions posed in the discipline".⁶ The old quasi-empirical attitudes officialized as serious inquiry in the Anglo-American academia - where social scientists like Tulchin were trained, particularly up to the middle sixties - are still present in the way he argues the case. To distinguish between engagé scholars and those who are not is a dangerous reduction that we saw already on the part of intellectuals like John Lynch. "Engagement" is a category of inquiry to describe a phenomenon where it is possible to imagine writing as an activity distanced from social preoccupations. It is a notion, a metaphysical notion, that goes hand in hand with the idea of objectivity in observation. Again, no such thing as "objectivity" is possible in the production of discourse. Rather, specific discourses have a certain position in relation to other discourses. Usually those readings upholding notions like "engagement" and objectivity as an ideal towards which the discourse of the sciences aim, rely considerably on a rhetoric of emotions as supposedly grading down the scientific quality of a product. It is

the case with Tulchin. By applying his opinions to our discussion, by devising a corpus to determine the "emotional involvement" of a specific observer - say, the blind denial of caudillos on the part of Bunge or the staunch defense by Rosa - what we actually accomplish is a closure of other more substantial issues. Emotions (whether we want to retain them as categories to describe a phenomenon or not) have nothing to do⁷ with the concrete act of producing discourse. We have seen the structure and logic of Bunge's Nuestra América as part of, and emerging from, a discursiveness that constitutes specific subjects and objects.

Why, then, bring Tulchin to our discussion if we are trying to prove that interpretation is a historically determined discourse where its very constitution and categories of inquiry are devoid of any essential, transhistorical truth? Precisely because Tulchin is partially aware of this in the midst of a metaphysics of rationality, on the one hand, and because his position is representative of a considerable number of colleagues genuinely advocating - in spite of some insuperable contradictions - a healthy turn in Latin American sociocritical studies. Four of his suggestions are correct and are applicable in any discussion of caudillos: (a) the historical character of "techniques" for inquiry, (b) the question of the specificity of the tools of research as emerging from a specific locale, (c) the mythical defense of a position against every evidence pointing against it, and (d) the "biases", that is, the strategies of producing signification. If Tulchin had investigated this last point beyond the metaphysics of presence and rationality, he would have approached the problematic of discursiveness, as our model does. His defense of a search for a distanced objectivity cannot

but remind us of the shortcomings we discussed previously on the problems of the masses as viewed by Ortega y Gasset.

Unquestionably, the role of the masses has dominated the discourse of the social sciences in the twentieth century. The inability to formulate a theory to understand the specificity of the masses in the case of the populist experience of Argentina and Uruguay (we should not forget Vargas in Brasil), or rather, the often contradictory and fractured programs advanced to explain mass movements in the area have equally been a major preoccupation for native as well as foreign observers. The idealism of "humanist" readings like that of Ortega y Gasset ends up subverting its very intention to vindicate the spiritual and material well-being of what is viewed as the masses. By failing to address the central issue of power and its concrete materiality as evidenced in all discourses of society, readings of this type inevitably get muddled up in the logic of what is a mass - and who and how is to lead it. In other words, what appears to be a discussion on the specificity of the masses is in reality a metaphysical reflection on the theory of individual leadership, of the gifted individual that leads the less-gifted masses. The masses are studied in order to produce a body of knowledge to control them, a body disguised under the appearance of a natural reflection on the naturality of the masses being led by what nature destined to govern. It is "el militar ejemplar, el industrial perfecto, el obrero modelo"⁸ of Ortega or those constructed by Rodó and Bunge in the River Plate area. From this preoccupation stems the old inquiry of personalism in the caudillo. Because - as Foucault would suggest - of the discursive presence of the ideology of the gifted

individual at that particular moment, it follows that discussions are to be constituted on the personality of the caudillo leading an undifferentiated mass behind him. It is not coincidental that theories of personalism rely so strongly on the concept of mimesis, in a metaphysical version. The caudillo, the gifted leader, is mimetized by the masses, much in the same fashion as masses of any class origin in Rodó or Ortega follow and try to imitate (for Ortega they must) the model.

An interesting exploration of this problem is to be found in an essay by the Argentine writer José Isaacson entitled "Populismo y cultura dependiente", in El Populismo en la Argentina.⁹ It is indeed a "volumen escrito por hombres de distinta formación, pero unidos y reunidos por una profunda pasión por el país argentino y por las perspectivas y su inserción, a través de un contexto hispanoamericano, en la cultura mundial."¹⁰ As disparate political and social leanings as those of Osvaldo Bayer, Bernardo Canal-Feijóo, José Isaacson, Norberto Rodríguez Bustamante, Juan José Sebreli, and Gregorio Weinberg offer a provocative collection of essays. In 1974 Peronism, the party of the caudillo, has returned to power after two decades of exile by Perón in Central America, first, and later in Spain. Every effort by anti-Peronist political forces had proved unable to prevent the party of the popular caudillo from returning to power. Besides, an endless stream of internal fights in the movimiento, a series of clashes, had irremediably led to the contradiction of achieving power through democratic elections (as had always been the case) only to give way to right/left confrontations. The escalating violence of armed groups competing for hegemony as the official voice of the movimiento soon lead the country to anarchy and

the military coup of 1976. The death of the caudillo in 1974, reinstated as president of the nation for only a year, constitutes the last step that makes a coup inevitable. This is the time when different urban guerrilla movements - Peronist Montoneros¹¹ became the largest organization of this type in the history of Latin America - reached the peak of open confrontation with the armed forces. Mass murders, political trials, kidnappings and abuses of human rights were the order of the day.

José Isaacson's essay - he is also the editor of the collection - must be read precisely in this context and should be granted, as it rightfully deserves, beyond differences of opinion, the merit of inviting intellectuals of different leanings to collaborate in the publication of a book clearly aimed at opening a dialogue of antagonistic voices. It does not escape the attention of any reader investigating the period that collections of this type were less usual than the numerous anthologies stressing common views and political aims.

As in the case of Tulchin, it is the space and structure of our disagreements with Isaacson that most concern our project. The reading of "Populismo y cultura dependiente" from our model clarifies a number of issues that have not been properly addressed. A materialist reading of the mechanics of explicating the problematic of populism - as produced here against an intellectual of the calibre and concerns of Isaacson - will hopefully pave the way for further research in this direction.

A very important passage at the beginning of his essay tells us that

Vivimos una época marcadamente populista. El populismo es un fenómeno universal estrechamente vinculado con la masificación y con el salto tecnológico, y aunque asuma caracteres distintos

o, mejor, distintos rasgos, tanto se manifiesta en los países desarrollados como en los países en vías de desarrollo. Nuestro objetivo fue plantearnos cuáles eran, o cómo eran, las características de la influencia del populismo en los países en vías de desarrollo. Y esto nos llevó a la conclusión que resulta del título de este trabajo: una cultura populista o, si se prefiere, una cultura estimulada por el populismo - centrando ya el problema en los países desarrollados - es una cultura dependiente. Por supuesto que el populismo afirma lo contrario, pero incapaz de formular otra cosa que proyectos vaga y vanamente retóricos, sólo puede contribuir a la elaboración de una cultura subordinada a los países que tradicionalmente han exportado su cultura. Una cultura coherente con la ideología populista será, entonces, una cultura dependiente y tanto más dependiente cuanto más populista.¹²

Evidently the essay advances a clear-cut position against the intellectuals upholding positive readings of the phenomenon of populism.

The structure of his reading of the problem of dependency - unquestionably the center of the discussions on the problem in the seventies, in the area - reverses a number of accepted interpretations at the time. The attack is frontal and without hesitation: a populist culture is a dependent culture. The more populist a culture is, the more dependent it will be on the traditional centers of culture export. This state of dependency is closely related to the "universal phenomenon" of massification and technology. By analyzing the local configurations of a dependent state - Argentina in the seventies - Isaacson tells us that the process inevitably took him to the centers of world production to discover that the phenomenon of populism is rampant in those areas. Consequently, they have been exporting to less developed countries like Argentina the negative cultural commodities of populism. The defenders of populist cultures - Isaacson argues - may try to explain the situation

in different terms but their projects will not transcend the boundaries of rhetoric. We are a society dependent on a center that is populist, consequently we cannot but be populist. Argentina must be freed from a state of dependency but not along the lines that populist readings suggest because the effort will not produce positive results. On the contrary, populist efforts will only exacerbate the situation.

Knowing that populist culture at the time is synonymous with Peronism, the movement led by a caudillo, we readily ask ourselves - as a response to a clear strategy on the part of the author - what is populism? How is it possible that the practices of a culture, populist culture, that bases its legitimacy on its fight against a dependent state is precisely the sole agent of dependency? In spite of its failures, isn't Peronism the most consistent political movement, the most visible populist movement, advocating emancipation from the centers of world production? Is not populism a step in the direction of the gradual consolidation of a culture presenting the national and the regional in a more democratic vein? Are the practices of caudillismo actually anti-nationalist by failing to realize that the structure and materiality of its countervoice in reality operates as a direct agent of dependency?

We must explore the rest of the essay before answering these questions (and the ideological constitution of the questions themselves). Isaacson's equation of populism with dependency is one of his strongest arguments and must be explained in order to understand the semantics of the author's argumentation. The answer is to be found as the critique moves into explicating its own vocabulary. For Isaacson a clear separation must be established between the "people" and the concept of

"mass". The first is the positive term of an opposition where the negative term is the mass. The mass is 'el pueblo condicionado, "trabajado" para eliminar los perfiles de los individuos que lo integran'.¹³ When the people are deprived of individuality and of the positive differences marking persons as individuals, they are turned into a "mass". A good example, in fact the most refined one, is to be found in the area of the world where his study, as Isaacson tells us, took him: the center of world production. It is in the North where the avalanche of the populist has demolished the remaining traces of individuality. There, the people have been reduced to a mass. The most effective agent in the transformation has been the "sociedad de consumo",¹⁴ consumer society. Consumption has become an aim in itself so that "no todos consumen ni, mucho menos, consumen lo necesario."¹⁵ Consequently, technologically-advanced countries are also exporting their own populist commodity, through traditional channels but most notably through the industry of mass taste: "la voz del pueblo, lamentablemente confundido en masa, no es la expresión de un pensamiento propio sino, de lo que persistente y consuetudinariamente le es inculcado por los mass media."¹⁶ Only now do we gain a clear understanding of populism as explicated by Isaacson. Mass production has turned the people - to a great degree through mass media - into an anonymous mass. The periphery of the world has in turn reproduced the malaise of the center.

In Latin America as in the developed North we discover that "el lenguaje de la masa es el lenguaje que le fue inculcado por los mecanismos del sistema y es, además, el lenguaje mediante el cual los mecanismos del sistema la teledirigen."¹⁷ As in Ortega, we are reminded that "la

dinámica social en esta hora de la historia del hombre tiende en convertir en masa todas las capas sociales, incluyendo las que se consideran élites. La uniformidad y la uniformación las distinguen, o sea, se distinguen en lo que se parecen."¹⁸ Mass consumption has turned the people into masses which are manipulated at will. The results, as Isaacson reads them, are evident and clearly deplorable: "el populismo gana popularidad, si se nos permite la reiteración, al nivelar hacia abajo proclamando una aparente guerra a las élites."¹⁹ Furthermore, a populist culture should not be confused with a popular culture. Populism "es la negación de la cultura. Y no porque tienda a una cultura popular. Por el contrario: toda cultura es popular."²⁰ For the author, the problem with the practices of populism is not only that culture is reduced to a almost undifferentiated and pedestrian status, the culture of the undifferentiated mass, but also, that because of its external and puerile character, populism emphasizes decorative and non-essential aspects ("aspectos decorativos y no esenciales")²¹. It forces discussing the national in terms which are inappropriate, with a logic that forces the segmentation of humanity, an incorrect move that leads to absurdities like considering that only "los griegos podrían utilizar el teorema de Pitágoras y Beethoven sólo podría ser escuchado en Alemania."²²

Isaacson points out what he regards as the central weakness of a populist culture and advances a number of suggestions on how the issue should be reversed. First, the major shortcomings are consumerism, the lowering of cultural standards, social manipulation, paternalism ("El populismo en el ámbito cultural parte... de una actitud paternalista pronta a disolverse en la masa y aun a identificarse con ella, para su

mejor manipulación")²³, barbarism and the unavoidable irrationality implicit in the negative spontaneity of the mass: "el irracionalismo, el repentismo, el intuicionismo, por encima del pensamiento especulativo y del razonamiento científico, son permanentemente exaltados en un contexto populista."²⁴

The only solid and long-term policy that can reverse this situation, which characterizes both the developed and the underdeveloped world, is equal access to education, "estableciendo planes de estudio y obligatoriedad - real y no retórica, lo que exige la solución de los impedimentos económicos - de determinados ciclos escolares".²⁵ In this way José Isaacson becomes a representative voice for an important sector of opinion in Argentina as well as in the rest of Latin America. His essay obviously chosen to exemplify a more comprehensive and widespread current of interpretation of the phenomenon of populism, systematically investigates the problem in order to localize the sources as well as the projections of the conflict. Populism is the realm of paternalism, manipulation and the lack of differences, contrary to the popular where individual realization and collective well-being are possible.

Isaacson finds it impossible to get rid of the old myths dominating the interpretations on caudillos and popular movements. In order to discuss the phenomenon he has to privilege the discourse of manipulation and the rhetoric of paternalism. However, we should point out that his essay is in no way advocating a blind conservative understanding of social relations, or, more specifically, an irrational denial of Peronism. His rejection of the practices of populist governments and its relation, as he understands it, to mass consumption stems from a number of pre-

occupations that must be stated before fully understanding the limits of his position. He correctly advances his "Populismo y cultura dependiente" as a careful attack against what he views as a number of social discourses that cannot but "nivelar hacia abajo", populism as a levelling down of cultural refinement and scientific commitment. He openly advocates a society where consumption must be the result of "necesidades reales"²⁶ (our underlining) in a carefully prepared move to point out the indissoluble relation between the production of social commodities and well-being. The mechanisms, that is, the discourses and articulations of mass consumption, have turned people into masses, into well-disciplined consumers. Massification has been operating at the juncture of those social mechanisms degrading culture and differences.

Furthermore, his reading advocates understanding these processes in the context of a discussion that favors being as production, that is, men as people or masses as a result of their practices and of the ways how those practices define the question of social praxis: all persons "son en el encuentro, y de cada encuentro no solo es la confirmación del ser sino el-modo-de-ser-del-ser."²⁷ His critique goes a step further, as a consequence, to directly highlight the mechanisms of the system ("mecanismos del sistema")²⁸. Argentines - the point of departure of his essay - as well as Latin Americans will only achieve Being, they will produce themselves as better individuals when substantial changes in these four major areas are carried out.

It is impossible not to give serious consideration to the pre-occupations that have moved Isaacson to write his critique of populist practices. Unfortunately, his project proves incapable of exposing and

critically disarticulating the power of mass consumption or of understanding popular interpellations. His moralism, correctly informed by the dynamic materiality of viewing being as production or power as control, frustrates any move to rid his model of the strong metaphysical presupposition that constitute it. His critique falls to pieces the very minute it is tested against a different understanding of social power. If power is understood in the terms he proposes - manipulation, irrationality, standardization - his moralism stays intact. However, when these notions are investigated we discover the old binary divisions between manipulator/manipulated, true knowledge/false knowledge, intelligent individuals/non-intelligent masses, a better past/undifferentiated present, active center/passive periphery, etc. The most important notions of his critique continue being the individual as producer of meaning over social relations, reason over confusion, the moral over the concrete materiality of each practice. Actually, we end up discovering a strong metaphysical project under the robe of being as production. For Isaacson control is still exercised by mechanisms at the service of an amoral minority, the selected few who oppress a passive majority through mass media and consumption, and charisma-whether in the form of charm or vulgar violence.

Isaacson constitutes a good example of the numerous social scientists and intellectuals who (still in 1974) endeavor to analyze social issues on the basis of a metaphysics of reason and intelligence. His insistence on judging social practices against a paradigm auspicing abstract proposals like the real need to educate everybody, or an alleged society where individuals can affirm themselves over the massifying discourse

of consumption society, rests value to his reading. What is the concrete materiality of educating the public at large? What discourses, what value systems, what specific interdictions are to be discarded or defended? What is the materiality of power - individuals, institutions, discourses, relations, formations - and how do they relate to the State? What criteria is to be chosen in order to establish what makes a group a "mass" or a group of individuals? If "pensamiento especulativo" or "razonamiento científico" are the antithesis of irrationalism or direct action, what are the concrete power relations that need to be changed in order to avoid further dangers?

Clearly his reading of populism has no answers for these issues. An irrevocable corollary from testing readings of caudillo movements like those of Isaacson's against our model is that they build their coherence on two central closures; one; the notion of power as hegemonic articulation of social discourses; two, the notion of interpellation. When the rigid essentialism of studying social relations along the lines suggested by Tulchin, as we saw above, or Isaacson gives way to a formalization of social practices as discourses, first, and then if discourses are analyzed in relation to the problematic of interpellation (the case of Peronism, for example), a broader understanding of social relations is gained.

If Isaacson understands the specificity of caudillismo in the way he does it is precisely because he still cannot but view the world in terms of selected individuals over anonymous masses. If he gave the discourses of the "masses" (from ways of channeling protests or instrumenting value systems to defining supraindividual unconscious

practices) the same status as any other discourse, he would save himself the troubles of dividing the world into masses and the people or any of the other categories. Consequently, it is impossible to find grounds for defense of his major move in the reading of caudillismo in Argentina in the early 1970's: populism is a system of massification imported from the center. He has to explain, in what constitutes a recurrent temptation in metaphysical readings, a problem through a binarism that is central to its own legitimacy: Argentina as passive imitator of the model. Thus the history of the local is once more explained through the omnipresence of the foreign, social discourses become significant only when they travel to the North to be inspected, even if for negative purposes. In this way a double operation is enacted: by forcing caudillismo into a binary logic the reading will produce a rhetoric of personalism and the irrationality of the masses; a binary approach neutralizes any attempt to expose the discursiveness of the phenomenon. In 1974 an ontology read through some of the principles of dependency theory guarantee continuing processing power as a metaphysical discourse.

Alternative proposals: Puig and Soriano

It is not the case with a substantial part of the fiction produced in the area in the same period. The discourse of literature investigates meaning and produces versions of social issues along more dynamic and elastic lines. Even though at first sight the presence of the problematic of dependence - in particular that area investigating the "structural formations"²⁹ in society ("configurations" of provincial economies as dependent from the relations auspiced by central, stronger enclaves,

for example,) - seems to polarize the majority of discussions around the encompassing subjects of the "national culture" or the "dependence or liberation"³⁰ antynomy, fiction produces discussions on the popular and caudillos which investigate at length signification and social discourses as practices. The narrow boundaries of dependency theory are amply exceeded by Manuel Puig and Osvaldo Soriano, for example, two important writers whom we have to bring to our discussion given the relevance of their literary projects, both in their native Argentina or in Latin America and the West in general.

Manuel Puig's El beso de la mujer araña³¹ is in many ways his most interesting novel. A systematic exploration of the relationship between two prisoners in a State penitentiary in the Argentina of 1974, the novel aims at putting two antagonical voices in conflict. Molina is a homosexual serving a term in prison for corruption of minors, and Valentín a member of a guerrilla group, a political prisoner. Whereas Molina is a lower-middle class porteño obsessed with the scandal of his trial, which may cost at any time the fragile health of his mother, Valentín is a former student of architecture who joined an urban guerrilla group. From the frictions and occasional sympathies of the characters, a text is built that investigates a number of issues that in the hands of a critic expounding the tools of an Isaacson's would be ignored or, most probably, misrepresented. If El beso de la mujer araña is read along the tenets of a theory of personalism, of manipulation or dependency unquestionably a lot can be gained from it since the novel itself carefully builds situations to exploit precisely the social projections of such understandings. However, the novel goes beyond this. It constitutes

the kind of text that by exploring the socio-historical implications of an Argentina taking the political fight for an understanding of populism to the extremes, in its own internal tensions opens up fields of discussion overflowing the boundaries of any binarism. A homosexual and a guerrillero, the discourse of homosexuality and radicalism do away with the metaphysics of social inquiry as presented by the rhetorics of manipulation or dependency.

The novel is an exploration of populism not only because it purports to inspect numerous practices belonging in the world of the caudillo-Peronism and populist Argentina - but also because it exposes some of the central contradictions and limitations of Peronism at the time and attempts to build different, and more accurate, readings of the phenomenon. When an understanding of the private lives of each of the characters is gained - when the paradigms of political action interpellating the characters gradually unfold - the reader is confronted with the real boundaries of the social projects at the time advanced by a populist movement. Not coincidentally Puig insists on an inspection of the codes of action of a guerrilla member like Valentín. A scene from the second chapter illustrates this in very explicit terms:

Bueno, todo me lo aguanto... porque hay una planificación. Está lo importante, que es la revolución social, y lo secundario, que son los placeres de los sentidos. Mientras dure la lucha, que durará tal vez toda mi vida, no me conviene cultivar los placeres de los sentidos, ¿te das cuenta?, porque son, de verdad, secundarios para mí. El gran placer es otro, el de saber que estoy al servicio de lo más noble, que es... bueno... todas mis ideas... el marxismo, si querés que te defina todo con una palabra. Y ese placer lo puedo sentir en cualquier parte, acá mismo en esta celda, y hasta en la tortura. Y ésa es mi fuerza.³²

How does a guerrilla member become meaningful in a social project?

In this case, as a prisoner, by emphasizing a discourse of discipline ("no me lo tengo que olvidar"³³) articulated on a rigid system of exclusions: "no estoy solo",³⁴ "rigor para discutir",³⁵ "tengo que cumplir el plan de lectura",³⁶ "quien no actúa políticamente es porque tiene un falso concepto de la responsabilidad",³⁷ "Un preso político no debe caer a la enfermería nunca".³⁸

However, that discourse of action begins to crack because of its own vulnerability. The discourse of incarceration operates as the counterdiscourse that makes his convictions and practices lose meaning: "me da rabia ser mártir, no soy un buen mártir. Es que estoy pidiendo justicia, mirá que absurdo lo que te voy a decir, estoy pidiendo que haya una justicia, que intervenga la providencia... porque yo no merezco podirme en esta celda."³⁹ What is that discourse of incarceration? It is interesting to point out that the novel systematically avoids discussing the issue in the metaphysical terms that society (that is, the discourses of legitimacy at the time) forced. The novel is not trying to build a moralistic account - the guerrilla as irrational and undemocratic, - or forcing the logic of manipulation - how the caudillo in his immense connivings managed to use university students - or a reading from an extreme radicalism - how the guerrilla members of a petit bourgeois provenance at one point, under the pressure of police action, gave way. The text is primarily constructed on the fruition of discourses rather than discussing power in empiricoessentialist terms. Valentín doesn't crack because the director of the penitentiary is a master of psychological demolition, or because Molina - as eventually

we discover - is spying for the authorities in exchange for his freedom. Neither does it privilege the anonymous call from the office of the president when pressing the director of the penitentiary, or the devices used to weaken Valentín so that he will confess.

El beso de la mujer araña affirms with full eloquence that such a thing as "the discourse of encarceration" as a set of immutable concepts does not exist. Social power, repression, control, discipline, cannot be exclusively discussed in terms of essentialist concepts like jail = non-freedom or no-jail = freedom or on the other hand, hegemony as the social classes that use certain state apparatuses in order to suppress a passive people. Valentín cracks because of the interrelationship between a large assortment of individuals (from himself to Molina, the director of the penitentiary, Molina's mother figure, the presence of Marta in his memory) in relation to paradigms of meaning (the practices that aim at defining what is "fair" for the director of the jail, "love" for Molina's mother, "justice" for a guerrilla code, etc) in specific contexts (a jail in greater Buenos Aires, the country redefining the discourses of populism, the caudillo inserted in a number of issues, the area under growing pressure from the North, etc) inscribed in a set of discourses ("good" and "bad" tradition, liberation theology, numerous members of the armed forces killed or kidnapped). If the case is not looked at along those lines - which is what the novel propitiates - fiction should continue expounding some of the central tenets of European realism or some forms of socialist realism: individuals controlling social events, a metaphysical understanding of social oppression, an erasure of "minor discourses", etc. How does one account otherwise

for the space where so many different inputs meet in order to produce a specific result? If Molina's mother's affection had had different configurations probably the whole series would have had entirely different characteristics, not to mention Molina's personality, the discourse of political action, the inscription of homosexuality in that society, etc. If we resist an analysis of a series - a fictional event in this case - in terms of discursiveness we cannot but end up in the metaphysics of determining primary and secondary characters, verosimilitude, main and accessory plots, and acquiesce to a prevailing social model auspiced by numerous intellectual communities: the rhetoric of deploring the dictatorship of caudillos, the authoritarianism of military regimes, the exploitation of the common man at the hands of the military, the conjunctural diplomacy of the Catholic church or, for the purpose, the Communist block.

"Oppression", "encarcelation", "betrayal", "love", "anarchy" or any other entries in the dictionary of social meaning are defined by specific practices where no apriori piece of information constitutes an immutable tranhistorical center in relation to which all data is hierarchically placed. Meaning is social, historical, and conjunctural through and through. A jail may be an inferno for Valentín and at the same time a heaven for Molina. Likewise, the burocratic clerk in the presidential office routinely calling the director of the jail pressing for information may feel happy to be relieved of a duty, whereas the burden starts for his interlocutor. Completely unaware of the projections of her love for her son, Molina's mother is indirectly responsible for a course of events. Are we to formalize these series with a rhetoric

of "love", "coincidences", "reversals" or "fate"? Evidently the operation serves the purpose of furnishing a natural explanation to a metaphysical logic.

An antithetical program to this is to be found in the fiction of Manuel Puig. It discusses the world of caudillismo in terms of discourses as power. Particularly, and as he shows in several of his novels previous to El beso de la mujer araña, the novels affirm the arbitrary constitution of discourse: arbitrary in the sense of discourses lacking any essential or fixed meaning.⁴⁰ Old time classic movies and corny boleros, socially presented as popular culture of a different and inferior artistic quality to "serious" cinema or music, are used in the novel as central categories of meaning. The long and tedious days of imprisonment are softened by Molina telling his jail mate about movies of the thirties and forties. Why are they central to this novel apart from furnishing a clever device to keep the action going? First and foremost because these pieces of popular, mass entertainment constitute the vehicle in the text that makes possible discussing caudillismo. Rather than putting "el pensamiento especulativo" - as Isaacson would perhaps suggest - in a position of privilege, it is the codes of high culture that are reversed to favor what it officializes as corny and low brow. The radical move of turning upside down the official is not implemented here to produce a realist or a quasi-sentimental, let alone an iconoclastic, reading of social phenomena. It is inscribed in Puig's notion of discourse along materialist lines. Molina and his jail mate are not forced into a process of revelation by discussing the opera of Antonioni or Bergman but by

entertaining and fantasizing about the hidden romance in the nineteen forties, between a smashing blonde and his lover in a luxurious apartment facing Central Park. She sometimes turns into a panther...

Caudillismo not only can but should be discussed through movies of this type. Is this a gesture towards vindicating forms of popular culture? Certainly, but the projections are more far reaching. The novel is a conscious and systematic attempt to neutralize the rigid configurations of official, as well as orthodox populist versions, of what caudillismo is, how social practices are constituted and how they should be discussed. Puig is not interested in totalization, or in advancing a system of practices as more "realist" options. He opens the closeness of official paradigms and, purposefully, he avoids closure. Molina is killed by a guerrilla group after being successful in negotiating a release, and Valentín is cruelly tortured but no closure is here enacted in the form of moral reflection or political message stressing either the failure or the Messianic success of the movimiento of the caudillo. It ends on the same note that structures all the text: by investigating and exploiting the multiplicity of experience, the serial and inconclusive character of social practices, the arbitrary components of signification, and discourse as power.

It is precisely in this light that the extensive and recurrent footnotes explicating some of the most famous theses on homosexuality in the history of psychological thought must be read. Well over twenty pages of typed footnotes explicating different views on homosexuals and their behaviour are scattered through the novel. Interestingly, Puig doesn't bring these texts to his novel as parallel texts to propitiate

an understanding of Molina, a homosexual and a collaborator of the prison authorities. These texts are not primarily in the novel to explain Molina's behavior as an individual. Rather the authority of numerous social scientists is introduced in order to provide solid evidence as to the necessity to discuss populist Argentina with new texts. It is a genuine political move based on the attempt to both bring to the center of discussions the controversial problematic of homosexuality as field of inquiry of a much complex discourse, and to force discussing populism and caudillismo, indirectly, through the discourse of sexuality. The novel doesn't build on forcing the issue beyond the expressed attitude of the narrator to include it in the text. It doesn't want to prove that Molina is a betrayer because of his homosexuality, that the metaphor of his problematic should directly operate as a warning or a cry of sympathy. Puig inscribes the issue in a more comprehensive frame. In the critical space of populism it is possible to propose changes governed by Puig's criteria: first, to welcome Theodore Roszak's proposal⁴¹ to redefine our understanding of the discursiveness of "womanhood" and "manhood" as concrete discourses of power, and second, to avoid the naive reductionism of viewing a univocal "paralelismo entre las luchas de liberación de clases y las de liberación sexual."⁴² In other words, in the space of populism power can be discussed along different lines from those enacted either by non-democratic governments, or by the standards of materialist thinking as evidenced in "casi todos los partidos comunistas del mundo", victims of the rhetoric of "degeneración burguesa."⁴³

It is important to recover from Puig's novel its systematic effort to redefine the understanding of populism away from the quicksands of metaphysics and essentialism. His insistence on the notion of reality as discursiveness and hegemony opens innumerable closures traditionally forced on populism. El beso de la mujer araña, consequently, builds a good part of its strength on exploring the psychology of the two characters, the articulate and conflicting tensions between their secret projects, their desperations, mutual raptures of affection and need (they engage in homosexual intercourse partly as cheatful capture, and partly as fractured attempt at genuine affection) as part of a deceptive and pessimistic reading of human relations. Discourse as power, the world of populist Argentina as in need to redefine its concrete instances of power beyond an essentialist or a moralist optic.

And in the same way as Valentín and Molina constitute two characters that defy conservative readings of society, in Osvaldo Soriano's Cuarteles de invierno⁴⁴ the two central characters represent a counter-reading of authoritarianism. A tango singer and a boxer meet in a small town, themselves metropolitan imports brought to the local festivities organized by the army. A popular tango concert and a match between this heavy-weight from Buenos Aires and the local champ, a lieutenant stationed in the area and thus regarded as the man representing the town, constitute the highlights that the army and their local man, a lawyer, have organized for the general public. The more refined sectors will be entertained by the chamber music orchestra of the "regimiento cinco de caballería aerotransportada."⁴⁵ Although the incidents in the novel constitute instances of more relevance than simple plot markers, this

is a text where, as in Puig, other preoccupations become of more significance. It is not difficult to anticipate almost from the beginning that the tango singer's antipathy for the army and the boxer's efforts to defeat a younger and healthier opponent will meet with a disastrous end. Soriano's bitter pessimism and explicit opposition to the military regime ruling Argentina at the time of the first publication of the novel (1982), marks the text from the first pages.

One of the central concerns of this novel is to investigate the semantics of social meaning, and to force redefining meaning as power. Manuel Puig in his novel forced inspecting and proposing new understandings of the entries "womanhood" and "manhood". His text was constructed on the analogy of meaning as a jail. In a dialogue between the two characters in their jail, Valentín asked Molina "A ver... contestame, ¿qué es la hombría para vos?",⁴⁶ to which recurrent explorations returned in the rest of the novel. The text forced asking what is the concrete materiality of the discourses of womanhood and manhood, rather than closing the issue by appealing to the moral strategies displayed by the conservative atmosphere of Valentín's upbringing. Puig found in Theodore Roszak's writings a good program for his reading of the problem: "Allí expresa Roszak que la mujer más necesitada, y desesperadamente, de liberación, es la "mujer" que cada hombre lleva encerrada en los calabozos de su propia psiquis. Roszsk señala que sería ésa y no otra la siguiente forma de represión que es preciso eliminar, y lo mismo en lo que respecta al hombre maniatado que hay dentro de toda mujer."⁴⁷ (our underlining) Here was one of the strongest issues in his novel: the analogy between the jail of signification, the jail in the outskirts

of Buenos Aires, the jail of social practices as mechanisms of control.

It is now Soriano that embarks on a similar enterprise coparticipating in what could appropriately be described as a discursive sequence in the fiction of the River Plate in the seventies. Not only by forcing a redefinition of social meaning along the lines of accepted meaning ("woman", "jail", "popular", etc) by the presence of different discourses (homosexuality) but by positioning the importance of popular discourses in a direct relation to Perón, Peronism and the practices of caudillismo. In Cuarteles de invierno Soriano takes every precaution to get one message across in very direct terms: Peronism, as a mass movement, constitutes the antithesis of the practices of authoritarianism.

The novel builds on exploring on a number of questions that constantly make their presence felt. What is the relation between the discourses of authoritarian power and the discourses of populism as instrumented by Peronism? What are some of the internal contradictions of Peronism? What has happened to the programs of social meaning auspiced by the power formations inside the movimiento? How to discuss popular discourses, popular culture and the discourse of authoritarianism? Rather than accepting that issues are "obvious" in the novel, I think it is more important to explore the answers that the novel provides, answers which certainly go beyond the point of incriminating a military government for their non-democratic standards of political action. It is true that the novel is written "with guts", in the sense of presenting a plot and lines of argumentation in a way sympathetic to the radical left in the Peronist movement but it is important to remember that this is a work written in exile by a former journalist who had become the

director of the cultural section of the most popular and conflicting newspaper in Buenos Aires at the time of the populist revival of the seventies.⁴⁸ Part of the style - particularly, its effective pessimism and deception - should also be read in the light of Soriano's public recognition and admiration for Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and Nathanael West. In Soriano's Triste, Solitario y Final (1974), Chandler exercises an articulate presence as direct source and acknowledged paradigm for writing.

For Soriano the movement of the caudillo constitutes the antinomial paradigm to authoritarianism. When Galván, the tango singer, is suspected of pro-Peronist sympathies and is interrogated by captain Suárez, Galván notices that in the office "estaban colgados los retratos de todos los milicos habidos de San Martín para acá, menos Perón."⁴⁹ The caudillo is expelled from the discourse of militarism by the military themselves. Likewise, the frustrated local tango singer - an old time admirer of Galván - who is introduced to him by Rocha, can only articulate his failure to make it into professional tango in the golden days of the forties by sadly recalling that "en ese tiempo para hacer carrera había que ser peronista."⁵⁰ Soriano quickly moves to mark fields of separation inside the movimiento itself; a very definite statement is made to mark off the conservative, pro-right old boys from the antagonists. The history of the movement is periodized by establishing clear antagonical divisions between the conservative, pro-personalistic, hierarchical line and the new socialist, anti-personalist line. The local man of the army, the lawyer who has organized the festivities turns out to be a former defender of political prisoners, not only a sympathizer of the

populist movement but the proud beholder of a personal letter written to him by the caudillo, honoring his commitment to the cause.

Yo me jugué en aquel momento. Tengo una carta de Perón que me felicita, sí señor. Ahora es otra cosa. Yo nunca fui peronista, pero el viejo era sabio. Si le hubieran hecho caso no habría pasado lo que pasó. Pero no, se creían más peronistas que Perón y ahí tiene... ¡La revolución! - sonrió, paternal -. Se creían que era soplar y hacer botella... Claro, entonces vino esta gente y puso orden... Y ni hablar de los otros - insistió -, los bolches de opereta que atacaban cuarteles con pibes recién destetados. De éstos no quedó ni uno.⁵¹

Although Soriano presents the case in terms of antagonical sets of discourses - military/civilian, undemocratic/democratic, old boys/new forces, violence/non-violence, executors/victims - a space to explore other issues is not erased. It is true, at least in our view, that the oppositions constantly forced in the text seriously threaten an understanding of social relations and meaning along post-structuralist lines. However, other characteristics of the text force these oppositions beyond the realm of what in the language of criticism would be regarded as structuralist. In very much the same as Puig's readings of psychoanalytic texts are surpassed by other tensions in his novel, Soriano's discussions of the dynamic of social meaning along clear-cut binary oppositions exceeds structuralist understandings by other devices in Cuarteles de Invierno.

This is evident when different strategies - to define what discussing populist practices should be like - emerge from the text. The linguistic registers that narrator and characters alike have are a good case in point: "¡Andá a gritar a la cancha, jetón!",⁵² "estaba demasiado preocupado por la mano, que se había puesto grande como una guitarra",⁵³

"sonrió, canchero, sobrador, como asomando el as de espanda",⁵⁴ "el croto tenía una oreja y la solapa sucios de sangre. No era una cara para encontrar al despertarse",⁵⁵ "abrió la puerta de la sala en el momento en que un violín se elevaba en busca del paraíso",⁵⁶ "se había sacado los zapatos y no era más alto que una escoba",⁵⁷ "los vi salir, escuché la guitarra y la voz de Romerito unos segundos más y luego el estruendo de algo que se estrella contra el suelo",⁵⁸ "el punto tenía una espalda justa para servir un banquete",⁵⁹ "escuché a mi espalda un estruendo de pasos, como si King Kong se hubiera escapado otra vez",⁶⁰ "me tendió un brazo largo y grueso como una manguera de incendios",⁶¹ "el grandote se enderezó y cayó a la lona, rígido como una puerta".⁶²

Rather than bringing popular registers to a "learned" discussion of the phenomenon, Soriano tries to force the opposite. The registers of working-class shouts in soccer matches, of comic news strips, of popular bars and truco playing, ready-made sentences from mass police stories or taxis-drivers' jargon constitute the locus of discussion. His novel forces the inspection of the popular and of the discourses of caudillismo with the logic, the rhetoric and the language which have been allocated - by, precisely, anti-caudillos discourses - as if they were of "popular" and "mass" extraction.

Cuarteles de invierno propitiates a double operation. First, discussing the social materiality (opinions, reactions, attitudes, mass media, etc) of what has been presented as personalism, manipulation and authoritarianism with a critical body emerging from popular discourses. By discussing caudillismo with the language of the popular evidently the rhetoric of caudillismo as manipulation is seriously discredited.

Second, the novel neutralizes the social understanding of popular culture as non-creative texts forced to ensure the manipulation of the masses. The widespread understanding of mass media exclusively as manipulation - in sectors of the right and the left - is here neutralized. As in Puig, no text has a value per se, it does not have any essential and immutable character. Comic strips may very well have been used to conform public opinion - which indeed was the case - but this is only a part of the phenomenon, the one Isaacson, for example, needs to privilege so that the theory of social manipulation can make sense. Soriano, on the contrary, is saying that the same comics eventually can become texts to liberate, texts to considerably alter the aims of the power operations that in the first place materialized them. Texts have a value not only in the context they are used - a perfect Structuralist operation - but, as in this novel, as part of supraindividual discursive sequences, of other discourses competing for hegemony. Here is the post-structuralist side of his understanding of discourse as power.

Puig and Soriano offer versions of the field and boundaries of what Isaacson calls "the limits of the populist territory" ("los límites del territorio populista")⁶³ with understandings that, in our view, favor discussions of populism along more comprehensive and accurate versions of the problematic of social phenomena. Not coincidentally at the time when fiction of this type is being produced, theories in the social sciences trying to account for the phenomenon of populism and caudillismo formulate strategies of approximation and logics of reasoning along very similar lines. Laclau, for one, is at this time advocating reading social phenomena precisely from the problematic

of discourses competing for social hegemony where subjects are constructed by supraindividual relations.

Undoubtely, his writings materialize the fruitful encounter between lines of research like his and those provided by the presence of Foucault in Europe, first, and the United States later. In spite of important differences marking a distance from Laclau's marxism and Foucault's materialism, the problematic of discourse and hegemony provides ample grounds for similar lines of analysis in both writers. What had already been theorized in Discipline and Punish as:

In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.⁶⁴

finds a correlation in an interview to Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in 1981:

Discourse is a concept which has been used very much recently, and its uses have diverged enormously. By discourse I understand an ensemble whose terms are related in a meaningful way. In a casual relation of the physical-natural type, we have a relationship among events which is meaningless. But in social life any event has a meaning. When we kick a ball in a football game the meaning of this act differs completely from kicking the same ball elsewhere. Even if the physical act is the same, it enters into two different discursive sequences dominated by different systems of rules... This is compatible with a discursive conception of social antagonisms...⁶⁵

The fictional program offered by El beso de la mujer araña and Cuarteles de invierno, as we have seen, clearly advances poetics and models of inquiry into social events on the basis of similar understandings

as those of Foucault and Laclau. There is, naturally, a wide range of differences that make each program specific in its internal coherence. Also, noticeable contrasts emerge in a comparison between Laclau's commitment to include Foucault into a marxist program, Foucault's materialism at a marked distance from European marxism, Soriano's gutsy and combative understanding of his role as intellectual and, finally, Puig's central reformulation of popular culture as the proper field to discuss the semantics of social meaning. However, a common space of preoccupations and proposals allows for the constitution of a model of analysis that proves our critique against caudillismo as personalism and despotism.

The insistence of post-structuralist readings of social phenomena on the problematic of discourse and on the formations of power/knowledge find full justification when texts as those of Isaacson's are explored in order to inspect the topography of the moralism there expounded. What emerges is a set of elements constituting a power operation that in a very articulate manner has produced a reading of populism that cannot but emerge as negative. By (a) renouncing to inspect caudillismo in the form of populism - as a set of popular discourses posing a challenge to hegemonical relations, by (b) presenting populism through a model of mimesis of the center of production, and by (c) exploiting the logical possibilities of metaphysical divisions as the people/the mass, readings as those cannot leave room for doubt that "power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge."⁶⁶ Metaphysical categories cannot but produce a natural representation of caudillos as persona and chaos.

A correct investigation into any "romanticismo ñoño"⁶⁷ and the discourses of the "extremistas y corruptos"⁶⁸ that Puig and Soriano advance, render an exhaustive program of reading where not only the increasing number of intellectuals re-reading the phenomenon of caudillismo is given further authority but also a more materialist and, consequently, a more articulate version of the dynamics of signification is provided. Sarmiento's misreading of the Western dictionary, Conrad's conscious exploitations of tensions in the most cherished entries of the dictionary of an imperial North, Valle-Inclán's closures, and Soriano's and Puig's strategies constitute a reach corpus where to investigate hegemony. As we have seen, the more the phenomenon is approached with materialist eyes the better caudillos are understood. The discursive program of the West presenting the discourse of popular interpellations as irrational, negative or less realistic than those of the party of "progress", falls prey to insurmountable contradictions.

NOTES

¹This should be read in a Foucaultian light, that is, an interpretation that profits by reading the discourses of fashion as power operations. Although in the United States research along these lines has not been so successful as in Europe or Latin America, it is important to stress the necessity to inscribe what are now "classical" readings of the semiology of fashion in a program of interpretation that favors the dispersion and atomization of power (fashion, manners, attitudes, reading habits, etc). The writings of Pierre Bourdieu constitute a good case in point. See his La distinction: critique sociale du jugement (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979), Ce que parler veut dire: l'économie des échanges linguistiques (Paris: Fayard, 1982), and "The Field of Cultural Production, Or: The Economic World Reversed," Poetics, 12 (1983), 311-356.

²The logic of presenting caudillo politics as an inferior alternative to the models of parliamentarism or Soviet socialism has had the strength of rendering the popular majority as perplexing in its political choices. From this optic the North appears as natural and, consequently, the South as unnatural.

³The radicalized sectors of the left, in particular, regarded Perón's expulsion of Montonero guerrilla groups from his movement as a betrayal to the youth and the socialist who had been fighting for the return of the caudillo from exile.

⁴Joseph S. Tulchin, "Emerging Patterns of Research In the Study of Latin America", Latin American Research Review, 18 (1983), 85-94.

⁵Ibid., p. 90.

⁶Ibid., p. 90.

⁷One could correctly argue, however, that if emotions are read-dressed to a critical space as part of a psychology or an ethnography of the act of writing we would then have access to other areas of Bunge or Rosas which the social sciences have still to address in these specific cases. Not only do we agree with this but also join in the speculation of how significant such findings should be to the field of Latin American studies.

⁸José Ortega y Gasset, España Invertebrada (Madrid: Alianza, 1983), p. 90.

⁹José Isaacson, "Populismo y cultura dependiente" in El Populismo en la Argentina Ed. José Isaacson (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1974), pp. 95-120.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, back cover notes.

¹¹Richard Gillespie's Soldiers of Peron. Argentina's Montoneros (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982) constitutes the best available source on the issue. His book is an extensive and well-articulated reading of urban guerrilla activities in the area.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 103.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 118.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 118.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 100.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 104

²⁸Ibid., p. 109.

²⁹For further information see, among others, Joseph L. Love, "Raul Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange", Latin American Research Review, 15 (1980), 45-72. The article contains an extensive, updated bibliography on the problematic of dependency theory. We have found very useful for our research Tulio Halperín-Donghi, "'Dependency Theory' And Latin American Historiography", Latin American Research Review, 17 (1982), 115-130, and also his "Nueva narrativa y ciencias sociales hispanoamericanas en la década del sesenta", Hispanamérica, 27 (1980), 3-18. See also Hernán Vidal, "Narrativa de mitificación satírica: equivalencias socio-literarias", Hispanamérica, anejo 1 (1975), 57-72, and "Teoría de la Dependencia y Crítica Literaria", Ideologies & Literature, 13 (1980), 116-122, Richard R. Fagen, "Studying Latin American Politics: Some Implications of a Dependencia Approach", Latin American Research Review, 12 (1977), 3-26, D.C.M. Platt, "Dependency in Nineteenth-Century Latin America", Latin American Research Review, 15 (1980), 113-129; Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, 'D.C.M. Platt: The Anatomy of "Autonomy"', Latin American Research Review, 15 (1980), 131-146; D.C.M. Platt, 'The Anatomy of "Autonomy" (Whatever That May Mean): A Reply', Latin American Research Review, 15 (1980), 147-149. Given the polemical character of the above articles, not only an in-depth analysis of issues involved is gained but also light is shed on a significant number of topics outside the domain of dependencia.

³⁰We need only to be reminded of the acute problems involved when reading, for example, Héctor J. Campora, La revolución peronista (Buenos Aires: Sendero, 1973), D.C. Hodges, Argentina 1943-1976 (New Mexico: New Mexico University Press, 1976), Félix Luna, De Perón a Lanusse (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1972), Rodolfo Puiggrós, Las izquierdas y el problema nacional (Buenos Aires: J. Alvarez, 1965).

³¹Manuel Puig, El beso de la mujer araña (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1976). See Alicia Borinsky, "Castración y Lujos: La Escritura de Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana, 99 (1975), 29-46, Roberto Echavarren, "El Beso de la Mujer Araña y las Metáforas del Sujeto," Revista Iberoamericana, 102-103 (1978), 65-76, David William Foster, rev. of El Beso de la Mujer Araña, Latin American Literary Review, 14 (1979), 73-74, Raúl Bueno Chávez, "Sobre la enunciación narrativa: de la teoría a la crítica y viceversa (a propósito de la novelística de M. Puig), Hispanamérica, 32 (1982), 35-48, Jorgelina Corbatta, "Encuentros con Manuel Puig", Revista Iberoamericana, 123-124 (1983), 591-620, Alicia G. Andreu, "El folletín: de Galdós a Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana, 123-124 (1983), 541-546, Jorge Panesi, "Manuel Puig: Las Relaciones Peligrosas", Revista Iberoamericana 125 (1983), 903-918.

³²Ibid., p. 33.

³³Ibid., p. 48.

³⁴Ibid., p. 48.

³⁵Ibid., p. 70.

³⁶Ibid., p. 101.

³⁷Ibid., p. 108.

³⁸Ibid., p. 117.

³⁹Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁰Whereas Valle-Inclán's use of the discourse of homosexuality serves the purpose of excluding the Other - as argued in chapter 3 - here we have precisely the opposite.

⁴¹Even though Puig doesn't resort to Lacanian readings of the problematic of homosexuality, his sources allow him, anyway, to formulate a dynamic and discursive understanding of the problem. His sympathies to "frentes de liberación homosexual" (page 211), his defense of Freudian notions and his elaborate argumentations of social issues along the lines of discourse as power constitute a reading program that greatly surpasses some of his sources. He still reads the problem with the concepts of psychology as processed by Marcuse or Anneli Taube. However, his "post-structuralist" understanding of the production of social meaning forces his reading of certain psychological terms beyond the constraints imposed by the understandings to which his text grants authority.

⁴²Ibid., p. 200.

⁴³Ibid., p. 200.

⁴⁴Osvaldo Soriano, Cuarteles de invierno (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1982).

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 141.

⁴⁶Puig., p. 70.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 200.

⁴⁸Osvaldo Soriano, after several years as reporter, became the director of the "Sección Cultural" of the newspaper La Opinión. A major force in the cultural life of Buenos Aires in the first part of the

seventies, this newspaper - owned by the now famous Jacobo Timmerman - became the forum of local as well as international collaborators of a progressive political leaning. His first novel, Triste, Solitario y Final appeared in Buenos Aires in 1973. Since then he has also published No habrá más penas ni olvido (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1980) and Cuarteles de invierno. Hispamérica has published in the United States his short story "Donde Geneviève y el Flaco Martínez perdieron sus ilusiones", 30 (1981), 107-112.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 57.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 32.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 68.

⁵²Ibid., p. 34.

⁵³Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 66.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 102.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 139.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 184.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 34.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 10.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 11.

⁶²Ibid., p. 171.

⁶³Isaacson, p. 120.

⁶⁴Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage, 1979) p. 28.

⁶⁵David Plotke, "Recasting Marxism: Hegemony and New Political Movements. Interview with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe", Socialist Review, 12 (1982), 91-113.

⁶⁶Foucault, p. 66.

⁶⁷Puig, p. 137.

⁶⁸Soriano, p. 58.

CHAPTER 5

CAUDILLO HISTORIANS AND THE PROBLEM OF POWER/KNOWLEDGE

Some Anglo-American voices

Of the numerous studies on Foucault available in English, Larry Shiner's "Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge"¹ constitutes an excellent introduction to what is still perceived as controversial writings of the French thinker. It is written by a native speaker of English and obviously intended for an audience of that language. Consequently, the article does not take for granted a number of issues which culturally belong to a non Anglo-American audience. Most directly it builds on explaining the impossibility of producing any type of knowledge divorced from political implications, a notion still nowadays made difficult for students of the Anglo-American world. Given a number of substantially different socio-political configurations, European or Latin American readers - like myself - are "taught" by everyday life that knowledge, as a rational body of inquiry uncontaminated by power relations, is hardly a fact of life. University professors have been expelled from their jobs by students' "popular trials", brilliant intellectuals have emigrated for generations on charges of activism or sympathies for Soviet communism to be welcome by universities in the United States and Europe, political "connections" have been indispensable in order to secure a teaching job. This does not mean, of course, that non-Americans have culturally understood

power in the terms Foucault argues them. The old myth of Latin Americans as "fully aware" of the political dimension of life as opposed to the "naive" understanding of the same phenomenon by Americans is still popular. Regrettably, it has had bad uses rather than propitiating a more accurate approach to the problem. Beyond any doubt, what is badly in need, for both Americans and non-Americans in general, is to gain an understanding of power-knowledge along the problematic of discourse, articulation and social meaning. Our previous four chapters in this dissertation leave little room for doubt in that sense.

Two passages of Larry Shiner's article deserve our consideration given the issues we have been discussing and priorities we have established on the problematic of representation. Speaking of the overall intentions of Foucault, when judged in perspective, he says that

His [Foucault's] analysis is a political critique of the liberal-humanist separation of power and knowledge and at the same time it is a critique of the Marxist view of power as economic exploitation and class domination. In other words, Foucault is not looking for a "method" which will be superior to other methods in objectivity and comprehensiveness but is forging tools of analysis which take their starting point in the political-intellectual conflicts of the present. His method is an anti-method in the sense that it seeks to free us from the illusion that an apolitical method is possible.²

Later in his article he expounds Foucault's notion of power:

Thus if one side of Foucault's genealogy can be read as a critique of the idealizing and transcendentalist tendencies of the traditional history of ideas, the other side can be read as a critique of the tendency of traditional political theory to conceive of power as a commodity possessed by some who exercise it at the expense of others - even if it is with their consent. The

liberal or juridical view of power treats it as a right one possesses and can therefore give up to the sovereign state in a contractual exchange. Marxists, on the other hand, by focusing on production and class conflict see power as located in a political-economic apparatus of oppression. A third theory of power, stemming from Hegel and Freud, sees it as repression of the individual, nature or instinct for the sake of some higher reality. All three views, Foucault points out, regard power as limitation, prohibition, repression. The liberal and Marxist views also agree with each other in viewing power as concentrated in major political and economic institutions from which it extends its sway downward to the group and the individual. Foucault's experience of practical struggles "in the fine meshes of the web of power" along with his historical studies have led him to an opposite view of power. He sees power not merely as prohibitive but as productive; not as exclusively political or economic but as dispersed in a multitude of forms from the most finely tuned disciplines for bodily movements to the broadest rules for the formation of true statements. Above all, Foucault rejects the liberal tradition's separation of power and knowledge and the Marxist distinction between science and ideology on the grounds that both imply there can ultimately be a knowledge untainted by relations of power.³

We will dispense with some equivocal generalizations in the presentation - particularly those in relation to Marxism⁴ - since both passages provide arguments of relevance to our project. The emphasis on the search for a characterization of truth and the atomization of power are two concepts which are essential to a discussion of Facundo, Rosas or Perón. Are we to privilege in our discussions of nineteenth century caudillos a corpus based on the idea of progress, and a rhetoric of the development of technologies in the twentieth century for Battle and Yrigoyen? How is Facundo to be discussed if we are to avoid concepts like progress, the innocence of the people, the "elementary"

development of provincial economies, social progress as present in new technologies like vapor, the railway, or the telegraph? How is a discussion of Rosas's power to be undertaken if not in terms of the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy? Are Perón's failures to create a strong national industry to be treated only with rhetorics developed by high capitalism (gross national product, inflation, social mobility, government spending, investment of the private sector, etc)? To sum up, how is it possible to investigate, interpret and produce judgements on caudillos if not with the tools developed by the core of the social sciences in the last century and a half? If we try to vindicate some of the genuine merits denied to some caudillos we may end up in confusion or, even worse, we risk the scorn of colleagues in the field. The real world, the day-to-day business of teaching courses on caudillos, writing on Latin American fiction or socio-politics tells us that, whether we like it or not, caudillos - like any other phenomena - need be discussed in relation to the expansion of the economy, social well-being and democracy. After all, caudillos themselves articulated their policies, once in power, in accordance with those criteria. Perón based his power on emphasizing gains in the salary of the working class descamisado, on the rise of popular programs in public housing and services, and on the substitution of imports by national products. Is the rhetoric of progress or personalism wrong when it goes against caudillos but right when it is used to vindicate them?

As we have seen in previous chapters, questions - to follow Foucault - are not spontaneous or neutral. They emerge, frequently unconsciously, from a set of assumptions and closures. They belong in

certain understandings and can clearly be inscribed in specific topographies of knowledge. They produce possible answers (it is impossible to imagine any rhetorician surviving politically if not well aware of this principle), they create bodies of production, they ensure - by their very constitution and boundaries - that certain products will arise. Questions emerge from certain paradigms and aim at reinforcing other paradigms, other specific forms of knowledge that exclude counter-productive interpellations. Sarmiento poses the question of the similarity between orientals and gauchos because an affirmative answer emerges from the body of knowledge that he has created. In the same fashion, he insists on the rhetoric of how "cruel" natives are, or on how Guizot's readings of history cannot be more accurate than the writings of the French Revolution. Has the public seen any more condemnable public figure than Rosas? Are there records of worse forms of terror than those auspiced by his authoritarianism? Can civilized societies accept such public figures? Evidently he poses those questions only when he has made sure that the answers will be only what he is trying to elicit from a "objective" reader. Should he investigate other issues while creating a field to discuss his caudillo, he would be unable to formulate those questions.

Sarmiento, and many other historians, will insist forever on the possibility of a neutral observer ascertaining whether Rosas was or was not a despot. Fortunately, the social sciences have long produced more convincing and realistic criteria to evaluate that and other problems. No doubt "it is crucial to determine not whether these historians found what they claimed, but to understand why their historical-theoretical

circumstances necessitated that they found these facts and patterns."⁵ Only when a full grasp of the projects of the West in the nineteenth century is gained, can we begin to question the ways historians have investigated the problem of caudillismo. We saw how the discourse of progress interpellated social scientists and intellectuals like Rodó or Bunge in the River Plate area, or José Ortega y Gasset in Spain. The products of observation and research had to be the problematic of the masses as opposed to the people, the need to discipline production and social groups, the need to produce in different fields - and in contemporaneous settings - either deconstructive versions of British parliamentarism, or, conversely, models advocating the alleged freedom of choice and superiority of that and other political models over caudillos practices. Historically, there have been different versions of common sense, spontaneous "impressions" or "realistic" acceptances of "inevitable" facts. Nostromo, in this sense, provided evidence in the realm of fiction as much as España invertebrada did in the field of social inquiry.

In the last century and a half what is of central importance is not to attack or defend the materiality of progress as represented by the railway or private ventures. It would be not only irresponsible but utterly foolish to try to condemn the emergence of previously unavailable technologies in the world. The point is not to condemn penicillin but to clarify the concrete materiality of its inscription in a society. If it is used to prove the inferiority or less developed character of pre-Colombian medicine, to give an example, this is a power operation that cannot be disguised as common sense. Serious

historical scholarship can hardly afford a silence on the topic. Actually, this example doesn't overdramatize what is reality has frequently been taking place ever since interpretations on caudillos began to emerge. The discursive force of understandings like technologies equal progress, equal development, equal the need of Europe and the North to civilize the barbaric South, has interpellated all practices from the days of pre-Independence. A blindfold test of any Spanish speaking newspaper will hardly fail to locate the presence of the discursiveness. In fact the design of any newspaper, particularly those of high circulation, contributes directly to re-present issues along the "objective" and "modern" layout presented by the North. Let alone the syntax and semantics of the different columns.

If in the English-speaking world a book like The Prison-House of Language⁶ made an important impact in its day, it is safe to assume that in relation to the phenomenon of caudillismo sooner or later "the prison-house of interpretation" will have to reach the production line of any serious publisher. Indirectly it has materialized in the abundant bibliography either in translation from original European and Third World writers or in the important bulk of critical thinking in the United States. Actually, it is impossible to think of writing this dissertation if not emerging precisely from that ambiance. However, if the presence and critical developments of the writings of Foucault in this country are still awaiting a full-length study profiting from a distance which up to now was not possible, much more should be said about projects like ours.

That "prison-house of interpretation" enveloping caudillos will have to conduct an exhaustive inspection of that terrain of proliferation of discourses which we traditionally designate as the "economy". The majority of historians studying caudillos exhibit - at times defiantly, as in D.C.M. Platt⁷ - an understanding of the economy equal development or underdevelopment, production equal rise or fall of heads of sheep per hectarea or number of tons of salted meat, progress equal clean or fraudulent elections. This constitutes a group of historians where no visible effort is made to process "the economy" in other terms than those defined by the practices of liberalism in the last two centuries. Laclau's readings of the economy as "the terrain of a political struggle" that is "governed not by a single logic but by the hegemonic articulation of a complex of social relations"⁸ (our underlining), is an understanding which evidently does not inform their interpretations. If Rosas is to be studied or, more in particular, the economy is to be studied what we actually get is a particular construction of what "the economy" is. What specific input constitutes that area of enquiry called the economy? What data is to be excluded on grounds of irrelevance or of belonging to another body of enquiry? What internal logic builds the text of the "economy"?

Let us select a few passages from J.C. Brown's A Socio-Economic History of Argentina 1776-1860⁹ (first edition 1979):

- (1) (in relation to Buenos Aires in the period covered by his study)

The city also became the center of a cattle processing industry that prepared pastoral products for export. Once sold on the hoof in huge stockyards outside the city, cattle

were slaughtered with a minimum of waste in centralized factories. Increased efficiency and rationalization - actually without new technology - marked the development of the entire processing and merchandising system.

Expansion of the export commerce, in turn, provoked development of the domestic market of Buenos Aires - the final-demand linkage of staple exports... A stable economy with widespread linkage also provided much social opportunity.¹⁰

- (2) I propose to examine the entire market-production complex, not only through time, but also across oceans and national boundaries. I deal with political questions only cursorily. Social and economic growth in this time and place did not completely transcend politics and international tensions, but the economic plans of Bernardino Rivadavia and Juan Manuel de Rosas had little effect on how the region actually developed. The linkage between industrial demand and the raw materials producer more satisfactorily explains the timing, direction, and change in the socioeconomic history of Argentina in the era of traditional technology.¹¹
- (3) Native Argentines, however, did retain their dominance of agricultural and pastoral production. Rapid expansion following the Indian campaign of 1879 produced surpluses in Argentina's balance of trade. Natives turned their profits back into the land and introduced livestock and plows to yet more virgin territory. Yet rising prices and wholesale speculation quickly put land out of reach of most rural residents. Wheat farming was accomplished on large ranches rather than exclusively on small farms. The resulting incidence of tenant farming seems to have dampened opportunity in some parts of the pampa, and the arrival of foreign laborers marginalized many native-born workers in the countryside. Social opportunity seemed to be shifting to the cities.¹²
- (4) Production for export after 1860 continued to diversify and broaden the region's commercial and production infrastructure, a pattern of

growth that had begun in the colonial period... Existing trends in population growth, settlement of virgin territories, and expansion of the domestic market quickened. New technology, even though controlled by foreigners, extended economic activity to the Interior and broadened Argentina's exports. It proved the catalyst for continuing growth and ultimately for industrialization... Having experienced industrial revolution and state intervention, the Argentines long since have lost their economic innocence.¹³

It is practically impossible to find more accurate examples to prove our point. Anybody doubting that power also consists in producing systems of thought which oblige others to think themselves through it, rather than through more specific options, will do well to read Brown in the light of our model.

A socio-economic program of interpretation is built by Brown, in 1979, along the metaphysical tenets of history travelling from an original innocence towards more developed forms. One cannot but wonder when reading texts like this - or, for the purpose, Lynch's Rosas - how fascinating it would be to investigate the concrete materiality of these historians preventing themselves (and being prevented) from informing their scientific endeavors along the tenets of epistemologies more in tune with the twentieth century. Before engaging themselves in the pains and labors of writing three or four hundred pages - we cannot but applaud the enterprise, - haven't they gone through years of questioning and re-questioning the validity of their tools of analysis and the constitution of their assumptions in relation to contemporary preoccupations? If some fear the quicksands of "reaction", of "marxism" or any other version of materialism (Foucaultian, as in our case) on grounds of being "engage", aren't they precisely pointing out the fact

they want to ignore? That is, if in our century the only way to avoid being trapped in any "dogmatism", any "mechanicism" or the "ivory tower" of materialist discourses is to continue expounding as scientific truth the conventions of nineteenth century liberalism (with a quota of twentieth century statistics, informatics, industrial psychology and stochastic models), don't they constitute themselves into the best available examples proving the opposite of their search for an alleged objective rationality? Clearly, their positions would be unattainable were they subjected to a full inspection along the lines of our archeological reading.

But it is our model precisely that allows us, after the above questions are posed, to try to explain the phenomenon along discursive lines. What countless conscientious historians like Brown or Lynch prove is what we discussed in relation to Tulchin. The discourse of progress is officialized by modernity as the rational, empirical, and scientific way to read caudillos. Ever since the practices of caudillos began to be textualized, two main currents of interpretation have produced themselves as natural, scientific readings of the problem. One, emphasizing the centrality of the individual over the masses (as it is the case with Brown) and the other gradually, and at moments with hesitancy, reversing that line and trying different readings in order to assert the presence of the masses.

We will investigate the latter after we return to Brown's writings and those upholding similar views. A Socio-Economic History of Argentina 1776-1860 is a prime example of the text that constitutes its readers on a number of assumptions that, if disarticulated, would seriously

question any of the arguments exposed. Are we to claim that Brown's extensive and particularized statistics are inaccurate or irrelevant? Quite the opposite. Our point of contention is, obviously, how are those data used, in what contexts, and in order to legitimize what specific systems of belief. What is it that Brown's study is expounding as truth? How does a social scientist like him speak of the social? What constitutes an economic history? Above all, what systems of truth, thus power, does the study produce?

Brown's text proposes to discuss that period of history in a space created by the tensions of opposites like innocence and maturity, underdevelopment, traditional and modern technologies, compression and expansion, losses and surpluses of trade, virgin and labored soil, stagnation and growth, sameness and diversification, etc. In other words, these constitute the references that guide an inquiry in order to define what "efficiency" and "rationalization" are. Since "cattle were slaughtered with a minimum of waste in centralized factories" the system achieved efficiency and rationality. In turn, social opportunities emerged... Here is a discourse upholding particular versions of "reason" and "efficiency" as the supreme goals of a certain historical process, versions which, incidentally, are those of the dictionary of social signification produced by the axis London-Paris in the nineteenth century. Brown's study gives further support to the understanding that the aim of history is to reconstitute the specificities of a period in its evolution toward the Anglo-Saxon ideals of efficiency and rationality.

Furthermore, his text tells us that a more accurate study of the case can be achieved by overcoming the local boundaries and exploring issues "across oceans and national boundaries". But actually this move on the part of Brown is done only to bring further evidence to a history that needs to document the transition from the pastoral to the industrial, from the realm of innocence and the organic to the loss of innocence and the rule of the intellect. What is it that Brown needs to inspect abroad and bring to his discussion on Argentina? His answer is "the linkage between industrial demand and the raw materials producer". In other words, he abstracts from the general set of social discourses only those measuring tons of a specific good, amounts of money and the trends of the international market. Again, we cannot in principle but agree with his move. The problem arises from its closures.

For historical texts like Brown's the space of a discussion and the input to analyze a problem can be investigated dispensing with social issues which are, in this case, dealt with "cursorily". Two questions readily emerge: first, what is his understanding of the domain of the "political" and, second, what structure of scientific inquiry is therefore being expounded. In this way we discover that an investigation of that period of history in Argentina is produced by defining the political only as that construction where political science has been active. Brown perhaps would argue that certain areas of sociology and some of the preoccupations of social anthropology should also be included. In other words, "history", a socio-economic history, relegates to the realm of the "political" the concrete investigation of the discourses of caudillismo. The phenomenon of caudillismo need only be

touched upon "cursorily" if a socio-economic history of Argentina is written. What counts for Brown is his reading of industrial demand and material production.

So it does for us as well. The difference lies in the fact that we find it impossible to abstract from the discussion the presence of caudillismo activities, and to privilege the status of other social discourses. We find it impossible not to investigate the problematic of social hegemony if a socio-economic history is to be written. What texts like Brown's prove is that forcing the kind of data isolated from other discourses in the way he does amounts to an operation that ensures discussing socio-economic issues without destabilizing the centrality of the discourse of progress. We may be talking nineteenth century Argentina but let us explain it and analyze it - that is let us create Argentina of the period - with the system of signification of the political North. Let London (Washington or Moscow perhaps would be more suitable contemporary alternatives) provide the tools to determine who and what Rosas, Argentina and the history of hegemony in the area are. Let us represent facts as presented by the rational wisdom of the democratic, whether parliamentary or Soviet-socialist, North.

If our stress is on what we call the "systems of signification" we do it precisely because this is an area where the apparant rational, apolitical wisdom of the North cannot possibly present itself in that light. The moment the sources of authority - as we have argued previously in relation to some works of fiction - are questioned, or subjected to an archaeological inspection, and the discourses of representation are carefully interpellated, we begin to understand Foucault

in a better light. Perhaps, we should be more precise and particularize what we generically regard as Foucault. Suffice it to say for the purposes of this discussion that his name summarizes long-established traditions offering alternative versions of the constitution and social inscription of knowledge. We need only be reminded of what has been presented as the irrational, underdeveloped, or unprogressive discourses of the masses.

If Sarmiento perceptively pointed at a system of differences where the discourse of European talking, dressing, thinking, joking, love-making (presumably?), or any other activity, emerges as superior to native alternatives we cannot but inspect the constitution of that superiority. It is no use to argue that Sarmiento no longer speaks for the political forces that he consciously and willingly defended. We are not interested in disentangling Sarmiento from more recent versions of liberal thinking, simply because our attack is not launched against "liberalism". What we have been trying to clarify is the constitution and characteristic of some historical periods in the light of social hegemony which, in our view, is what ultimately counts. Only by advancing the problematic of hegemony can we dispense with the metaphysics of progress, the linearity of history, or the numerous constructions around social "freedom".

More accurate discussions on caudillos have been prevented precisely by reading the phenomenon from that perspective. By discussing progress, varying degrees of freedom or the discourses of rationality, first, the London-Paris camp and, more recently, contemporary superpowers have often managed to legitimize presenting themselves as superior to other

cultures. Hegemony has been possible from those centers of power because certain definitions of what knowledge should be has been officialized in successive periods of history as intellectually, morally or economically superior. If still nowadays caudillos are presented as "neo", "pre" or "cuasi" democratic types or, on the opposing camp, as "better" alternatives to other political leaders, this is possible because of a certain definition of, for example, what history is and what values should inform its lines of inquiry.

H.S. Ferns can say a lot of what he says (frequently commendable) also because of his mythological understanding of "good offices", as we saw in chapter one. Similarly, Brown or Lynch construct their readings on numerous understandings which lose their strength the minute they are read from a genealogical perspective. It is also the case with the English historian D.C.M. Platt. In his polemic with Stanley and Barbara Stein on the problematic of the validity of dependency, as a body of inquiry to study Latin American societies, he tells us that

Dos Santos has developed an imaginative structure of big capital from abroad, from the "hegemonic centers", invested specifically in the production of raw materials and foodstuffs for consumption in the foreign metropolis. What he says may have some relevance to banana plantations in Central America, or to copper mines in Chile or Peru. But it was far more common for the development of Latin American exports to move in natural progression from the gradual replacement of imports to the complete satisfaction of the domestic market, and then, finally, to the disposal of the surplus (if any) by export. It is simple common sense. A development by natural stages must be more plausible than a forced development to suit metropolitan needs when the unplanned, highly competitive, almost anarchic operations of nineteenth-century entrepreneurs and investors are sufficiently understood.¹⁴

He then adds that

It seems likely, then, that Latin American economies in the nineteenth century were shaped by domestic circumstances rather than by the planned requirements of a distant metropolis. We know that Argentina in time developed into a great primary producer for world markets; the temptation is to conclude that Argentine development was deliberately planned by a generation of foreign capitalists at work in River Plate House (in the City of London). But it might be argued, with more reason, that in normal circumstances production for export was a secondary development of production primarily intended for Latin America's domestic market. The main incentive for the initial development of countries like Argentina... was the supply of the home market, and it was on this home market that the whole structure of railways, of public utilities, and of city modernization was built.¹⁵

We must agree with Platt that "dependency theory has always emphasized the dominant influence of the international economy, so that the significance of the domestic market is often overlooked".¹⁶ However he arrives at this conclusion from premises and understandings that cannot escape the traps of binarism and a metaphysics of history.

Apart from explaining a period of history privileging the notion of "development" - we need not return to this issue - Platt strengthens his reading on what he sees as "natural" stages of development. In his view, the discourse of history advances naturally from the elementary to the complex. The "economy" - isolated from the "social" - explains Argentina in the nineteenth century. Appealing to the old ideological construct of "common sense", he sees no need to investigate it in order to ascertain the constitution of that common sense, how it is materialized or what paradigmatic values it upholds. His insistence on blaming dependistas for playing down the importance of the local market is

clearly correct although there is a fundamental difference between his reading and our perception. Not only does he sectoralize bodies of inquiry giving them an air of common sense rather than explicating its cultural character - the economy, the market, the structure... of city modernization, - but also he forces reading nineteenth century capitalist ventures as "unplanned" and "almost anarchic". Furthermore, by building in that direction he attempts to do away completely with any reading linking the relations between foreign and native capitalists. Thus he officializes any discussion of hegemony (the "hegemonic centers" of dependency readings) as defunct. In his view, only Central America and Chile would constitute good cases for dependistas. The rest of Latin America developed along "natural" lines.

What his article is saying is let us discuss hegemonical relations, or power relations in general, not as dependistas do it but rather as "facts"¹⁷ and not "theory". If power relations are discussed along the lines of hegemony - although dependistas do it incorrectly - that is merely theory. Facts tell us that, for example, "Spanish America, during the first half of the century of political independence, stood outside the currents of world trade and finance"¹⁸ or that it subsequently developed itself through natural expansion. Platt's presentation, as any discourse of interpretation, is built on a number of understandings which are central to any process of analysis. In his case, as in any of the other quotes we have been commenting upon, a central point of contention evidently appears around a historian's handling of notions like "power" or "hegemony". A considerable number of Anglo-American historians take refuge in a loose territory that they define as "facts"

and subsequently attempt to define power and hegemony in relation to them. Later they present this construct as common sense, empirical evidence. It is the case with Platt. As he states in the second quote, above, with a few partial exemptions we can safely assume that local economies were shaped by domestic facts, and only by domestic facts. In other words the "facts" that prove that Latin America was not directly dependent on the discourses of power of the West are - be it economic, social, political or any other - that exports decreased as a result of the problems arising from Rosas, and Britain and France.

Note, incidentally, how Platt very skillfully manages to define the economy as tons of exports, so that in this way he can subsequently define international hegemonical relations along essentialist terms. On the other side of the Atlantic (he exemplifies with River Plate House in London) there were no "planned requirements" because, otherwise, had there been any that would have shown, for example, in the increases in exports or in an "expansion" of the local economy in those areas directly owned or controlled by foreign capital. Hegemony, for Platt, must be defined in terms of production of goods, and interpellation as rational planning.

But he ignores other "facts", and analyzes the world with the eyes of his grandfather. Surely, somebody could argue that the empirical neo-positivist stance that he displays provides him with the grounds and tools to continue investigating history along understandings that have been overcome, a fact that does not concern him. This is precisely our point. It is no use, in fact it is not our intention, to assume an ironic posture or to attempt to play down the importance

of his readings. Rather, what our models clearly show is that in numerous intellectual circles in Great Britain as well as in the United States readings on caudillismo are produced along empirical lines that, first, have been amply overcome and, second, guarantee perpetuating metaphysical versions of caudillismo. In other words, this kind of empiricism has guaranteed a specific product - Latin irrationality, personalism, etc - that put in evidence clear power operations. Because caudillos are of the likes represented in Facundo, Artigas, or Perón, the North has found additional justifications to implement subsequent strategies and policies.

Are we then reversing Platt's interpretation and saying that, indeed, River Plate House planned every move of the economy of Argentina?¹⁹ Obviously, we are not. Then, is in the North where we can clearly detect the headquarters of misreadings or in liberal-conservative enclaves at home? Again, we are not. Were we to adopt those postures along orthodox lines we would be foolishly repeating the mistakes of past interpretations. That the first one emerges as a serious counter-reading to gross misinterpretations of past historical events in the 1930's or the second in certain areas of nationalist interpretations can be explained, among other things, in the light of their contemporary problems. Scalabrini Ortiz or Puiggrós must be read in the light of their historical moment and hegemonical questions.²⁰ However, in 1985 we cannot adopt unconditionally their postures.

If Platt read Facundo or Nostramo along the problematic of discourse and hegemony he would not problematize his differences with the Steins (some of his points are worth serious consideration) in the

terms he does. In fact, Sarmiento provides him with serious arguments and, particularly, with the mechanics of understanding central notions in the problematic of hegemony. Using an example, let us say that if Peter thinks of himself, his family, his achievements, his enemies or his fantasies in the terms forced by Paul it comes as no surprise that Paul exercises a hegemonical power over Peter which can hardly be exaggerated. Whether Peter has ever seen Paul face to face, has sold anything to Paul or even knows of Paul's existence is of little consequence. Peter constitutes himself and his world through Paul's system. This proves a very important question: hegemony cannot be discussed in substantialist terms. Hegemony can be argued in more reliable terms when the traces of substantialism (direct contact between the parts involved), essentialism ("democratic freedom"), economism (Platt's notions, for example) are done away with. When hegemony is discussed in terms of discourses and articulation a better understanding of social phenomena is gained. In our example, what really counts is that Peter produces discourses - himself, his ideas, etc - through the hegemonical power of Paul's discourses.

When the phenomenon of caudillismo in Argentina in that period is analyzed through this optic a totally different understanding is gained. Buenos Aires constitutes itself at the time through the hegemonical presence of the discourses of the West. It produces itself as the city of Buenos Aires precisely because it speaks, it dresses, it acts, it favors or denies specific systems of practices through the hegemonical paradigms of the West. Furthermore, this is not a social process that can be explained - as many dependistas incorrectly theorized

- through the primacy of individuals and a number of institutions.²¹

Foucault is correct to point out, and explore at length, that the phenomenon should be analyzed through the problematic of discursive formations and of power-knowledge. Rather than emphasizing the presence of "structures" as dependistas did - local economy in relation to economic formations in England at the time, for example - it is important to remove the constitutive subject as center of meaning and privilege other signifying discourses. Rosas or the upper classes at the time rather than specifically determining or forcing certain systems of signification, are spoken through them. The discourses of "good" or "bad" tone are at the time as much supraindividual as they transcend the limits of individual or group consciousness. The same should be rightly argued for the discourses of accounting, architecture, progress, dressing, religious piety or informality. The paradigms of the North, at the time, should be explored in the atomistic dispersion of pockets of signification (from the "right" clothes to the "right" way of addressing the caudillo) since it is in the particular where the best knowledge of the hegemonical competition for social presence is seen. What needs to be clarified is how practices are appropriated into specific discourses (speech, legislation, property, medicine, commerce) and how this can help us understand hegemony beyond metaphysical and dependency interpretations.

But we must insist that our dissertation is not an exercise in fault-finding focused with particular emphasis on conservative or nationalist readings. More ambitiously, perhaps, it has been a project bent on relocating the status of discussing caudillos, shifting the

discussion from metaphysical to more materialist grounds. Our prime objectives are, first, to detect the discursive (that is supraindividual and supraconscious) character of producing caudillos and, second, the interplay of social discourses to explain hegemony. What is "scientific", "rational", "common sense", is what really interests us. It does because, as has already been seen in numerous examples, such categories of inquiry are cultural rather than natural constructs and, consequently, they constitute power operations which eventually are articulated, or not, into other discourses of power.

The local camp

Four historians have provided us with good material to prove our points of contention. At first sight, a potential reader might argue that our efforts scarcely argue in relation to native intellectuals of a clear leaning toward the left. After all, substantial findings of our dissertation have emerged so far from a critique of native intellectuals that are clearly identified with liberal or conservative understandings on the role of caudillos in the "proceso nacional". Let us go, then, to Rodolfo Puiggrós, a major voice in the community of native historians who, among other achievements, has produced an abundant bibliography on different topics of interest in the history of Argentina. A former member of the Argentine Communist Party, he defected to the Peronist ground - the movement of the caudillo - in what constitutes a significant example (much quoted because of the implications). The Communist Party of Argentina, for Puiggrós, is unable to understand the political aspirations of the majority of the population because of its

dependence on Moscow and its strict hierarchical organization. It has not understood the most relevant aspects of national history, it is blinded by problems that emerge from other settings, it simply doesn't understand the specificity of populism. In a few words, these are the criticisms that Puiggrós, from the privileged position of a former insider, launched against the party, and in favor of the Peronist movement.

It is interesting to analyze the representation of his former party, and the mechanics of his critique. In 1967, in his Las Izquierdas y el Problema Nacional, he argues that Manuel Ugarte already in the 1910 had a better understanding of social problems than Juan B. Justo because

No concebía al socialismo como un internacionalismo abstracto que desestimara la opresión imperialista, ni como una copia de modelos extranjeros, sino como el desarrollo del nacionalismo popular, y así demostraba su extraordinaria superioridad sobre Justo y sus discípulos y herederos... Ugarte resultaba ser un socialista convencido de que para desarrollar al socialismo había que expulsar a los imperialistas y desarrollar las particularidades nacionales de nuestros países, a la inversa de Justo que cerraba los ojos al dominio imperialista y al problema nacional y... caía en el sueño quijotezco de esperar de la internacionalización del capitalismo la evolución hacia el socialismo internacionalizado.²²

It is worth emphasizing the categories and structures with which Puiggrós, in 1967, still discusses a historical phenomenon. Clearly, the center of his argumentation gravitates around the question of how it is possible to give primacy to what he sees as the national. He concludes that the only possible way to neutralize any project against "lo nacional" is by expulping from the country all the formations of

international power, be it capitalist or Soviet communist. He shares a direct dislike for capitalist formations with his former comrades but his condemnation now extends to the Soviet block as well, which he presents also as imperialist. Unquestionably, the place of relevance in Argentina historiography that he has gained - independently of his ideas - bears direct relationship to his critique of the policies and interpretations advanced by the Communist party of Argentina:

Los de nuestro país, igual que sus correligionarios del resto de América Latina, despojaron a los Soviets de su origen ruso y de sus contradicciones internas y los convirtieron en prototipos insuperables, únicos y universales del socialismo, acordando a sus dirigentes una infabilidad y dispensándoles una obediencia más estricta que las otorgadas por los católicos al Papa... Y cuando aparecieron los trozkistas se reprodujeron entre ellos y los stalinistas la disputa interna soviética, que la clase obrera argentina contempló como una pelea de habitantes de la Luna.²³

His criticism of the Communist party eventually leads him to the party of the caudillo since he views it as the only practical solution which enjoys the support of the majority of the electorate. However, we must point at the elements that allow him to present caudillismo politics as a better alternative. If the road to socialism, to some form of national socialism, can only be transited with the party of general Perón, how does he argue the case? Through a set of binary oppositions, he presents socialism as a "superior" form of social organization ("un orden social superior al capitalismo"²⁴). He also blames some of the first communists for falsifying marxism ("los falsificadores del marxismo"²⁵), thus their inability to capture the political favor of the masses. In his defense of Manuel Ugarte, the great social figure of

the beginning of our century, he finds no reservations in supporting him for advocating that "La infancia turbulenta y bulliciosa no es quizás, después de todo, más que un síntoma prometedor, porque los pueblos, como los estudiantes indisciplinados, son precisamente los que más altas posiciones conquistan en el porvenir."²⁶ For Puiggrós, Ugarte is basically correct to present the history of Argentina in terms of a transit from a turbulent though positive childhood into a more stable maturity. Ugarte was the man in Argentina who stood closer to "la espontaneidad de las masas"²⁷ unlike the Justo's followers. The working class of Argentina in the first decades of the century were better understood, in their "spontaneity" by the exemplary man he is defending.

Is Puiggrós's inability to present the case in other than binary oppositions of this type a clear indication of his misreading some central notions of Argentine history? Does he fail to perceive the limitations of the mechanics with which he is explicating the issue? Is he wrong in his understanding of international models as "imperialist"? Again, we will do well to remember that questions emerge from specific logics to explain the world, that they aim at possible products. Perhaps a reliable way to understand Puiggrós's valuable contribution to Argentine culture is to map, as above, the tensions that build his text and, secondly, to try to understand the characteristics of the issues under discussion in the historical moment when he is writing. Evidently he is undermining very seriously some of his central arguments by working on antinomies like superior/inferior, false/truth, infancy/maturity, spontaneity/plannification, popular nationalism/international imperialism, etc. Like many of his predecessors the very tools of his

analysis turn out to conspire against his best intentions. Arguing a defense of the people in general, elaborating on the premise of democratic freedom or presenting as incorrect those power enclaves that advocate foreign political experiences as valid for national conflicts, in principle cannot but make us suspect he is arguing in the right direction. However, his understanding of the problem is argued almost on identical understandings of the conservative or liberal intellectuals whom he clearly antagonizes. Caudillismo - or the broader issue of social vindications in general - turns out to be investigated by analysts of very different ideological and political leanings with the same assumptions and mechanics. Whether conservatives, liberals or leftists these historians can only argue social issues along the rhetorical power of binary oppositions such as these.

The operation inevitably leads Puiggrós to a number of impressionistic judgements that would not otherwise make themselves present. His good will towards fellow Argentines, for example, takes him to represent the response of Peronism towards "cabecitas negras"²⁸ starting from a premise which can hardly be granted a scientific status: "Quizá la Argentina sea, por el origen inmigratorio de gran parte de sus habitantes, el país del mundo con menos prejuicios de raza y de nacionalidad. Su nacionalismo se forma con la confluencia de gentes de diversas ascendencias que marchan hacia un destino común."²⁹ In any case, what concerns us most here is to point out, as clearly as possible, the indissolvable interrelationship between the mechanics of presentation of an issue and the insertion in society of that interpretation as a tool of power. In the case of Puiggrós, as in any other

other that occupies our attention, what emerges is a contradiction which cannot properly be addressed by privileging the individual as center in the mechanics of the production of meaning. There are other equally important forces at work of which Puiggrós is not conscious but which from our model we can formalize through the problematic of discursive formations. His case leaves no room for doubt as to what is in 1967 the most "scientific", "natural", or "common sense" approach for a historian emerging from the left to study populism. The metaphysics of binarisms of this type interpellate "serious" historians of the left as much as they constitute "serious" conservative readings as those of Lynch or Platt. It is that discursive formation - leaning towards the left or the right - which ensures producing the caudillo ultimately as an alternative not totally convincing.

Why does a historian from the left have to argue mass discourses through the rhetoric of "spontaneity"? Isn't he aware of the disadvantages of identifying the masses with the spontaneous - thus the unpredictable, the unplanned - which inevitably invites presenting the minorities, or any discourse antagonizing the "masses", as its absolute opposite? Why does he risk arguing his case through this rhetoric if we can see it is so interconnected with the rhetoric of personalism and manipulation? Perhaps Puiggrós doesn't see it in this light? Evidently, that is the case. Still our model exposes the high price that is to be paid when the popular is analyzed as "spontaneous". The paradigm constituted by the spontaneous, the good-hearted, the art of manipulation, the irrational as colorful, and many similar items prove Foucault's understanding of signification and its inscription in

the problematic of power. That in 1967 the archival resources implemented to understand the problematic of populism and caudillismo - from any part of the spectrum of possible interpretations - inevitably leads to present the problem in terms of spontaneity is a significant fact which deserves a broader and deeper treatment than it has been granted so far.

Even a reading from the extreme left, which in the early 1970's enjoyed wide and enthusiastic reception, confirms our findings. Milcíades Peña's writings on Argentine history deserve a more lengthy treatment than the one we can afford here. Nevertheless, our lines of discussion will profit by examining his conclusions on the first two terms of general Perón as constitutional president:

[en septiembre de 1955] la Argentina seguía siendo un país atrasado y semicolonial, dominado por una burguesía terrateniente e industrial trustificada entre sí y con el capital financiero internacional, con la trascendental variante de que la vieja metrópoli británica había disminuido su participación y Norteamérica aumentado la suya. Y, a diferencia de lo que ocurría en 1943, el país estaba iniciando un nuevo ciclo de endeudamiento masivo al capital financiero internacional.

Sindicalización masiva e integral del proletariado fabril y de los trabajadores asalariados en general. Democratización de las relaciones obrero-patronales en los sitios de trabajo y en las tratativas ante el Estado. Treinta y tres por ciento de aumento en la participación de los asalariados en el ingreso nacional. A eso se redujo toda la "revolución peronista".³⁰

In order to reach this ironic conclusion on the complex phenomenon of Peronism he has explored what he perceives as "un aparato semi-totalitario de captación y de represión",³¹ a "propaganda totalitaria" that "todo lo envuelve y estrangula".³² The caudillo, Perón, "acentúa

y refuerza la estatización del movimiento obrero y la transformación de la burocracia sindical en un estrato relativamente privilegiado de funcionarios estatales."³³ For Peña "el afeminado general don Juan Domingo Perón no era el tipo de caudillo capaz de ponerse al frente de sus hombres e imantarlos con el ejemplo de su coraje personal."³⁴ Consequently in analyzing Perón's refusal to give weapons to his followers in order to fight the military uprising of 1955, Peña concludes "no fue la matanza lo que Perón trató de evitar, sino el derrumbe burgués que podría haber acarreado el armamento del proletariado. La cobardía personal del líder estuvo perfectamente acorde con las necesidades del orden social del cual era servidor."³⁵

After Milcíades Peña's death the temptation to do away with his writings on grounds of "petardismo"³⁶ or lack of serious historical standards dominated the view of the majority of readings. But the exception to this rule deserves our attention. That the caudillo is treated from the rhetoric of "femininity", that is, of weakness as a result of his unwillingness to arm his people against the military and oligarchic forces in 1955, as opposed to other codes that Peña would see more appropriate should in no way allow for an ironic gesture on our part. His, like Platt's, Fern's, or anybody else's reading of the phenomenon, must be treated for what it is: a piece of discourse with a concrete constitution and a social inscription. How to account, otherwise, for the prominence that his writings had in the early 1970's? Are we going to fall into the trap of paternalizing "non-serious" or "engage" writings. We have proved already the serious limitations and the ideological inscription of such moves. At the height of power of

the People's Revolutionary Army³⁷ (ERP), roughly between 1972 and 1976, Peña's readings of caudillismo politics in Argentina exercised a presence in not only extreme left enclaves but the Peronist left as well that could be best represented as paradigmatic. Precisely, the paradigm of extreme left thinking and political action found in his writings amounts to a set of coherent proposals that was not infrequently of major importance. Rather than condemning his writings on grounds of misinterpretation, it is far more profitable to investigate its constitution and the uses to which they were put. Not coincidentally, trotskyist readings of caudillos share so much in common with authoritative, conservative critiques.

His Masas, Caudillos y Elites could be written because it builds on the antinomy between totalitarianism and democracy, the State as repressive or liberating (that is, according to who controls it), social manipulation as propaganda versus a free and democratic circulation of information, or manipulated workers' unions by a personalist caudillo versus the dictatorship of the proletariat. In other words, presenting a caudillo as non-democratic and ultimately as the political ally of oligarchic forces is argued on a logic that wants to present social phenomena as either concurring in exploitation or profiting from freedom. Social discourses are to be investigated through a metaphysical optic that cannot disentangle itself from the problematic of manipulation or the mechanistic and often naive view of the State as either repressive or liberating. Power, social hegemony, the fight for signification, for knowledge, is processed by Peña in terms which can lead only to the conclusion he reaches. It is not so much that he freezes

the overall importance of the day-to-day aspects of articulating a hegemonical presence - as exemplified by ten years of difficult and contradictory political fights - but that his tools of analysis do not create a space where he can afford to inspect in a less mechanistic way the constitution of discourses. He has to privilege in his study of "la dependencia argentina" a number of axiomatic categories that exclude studying the complexity of the discourses of signification, reducing them to a collection of traces that play a secondary role. In his writings the people continue being passive exploitees, the bourgeois manipulate and eventually use a Bonapartist leader in order to continue in power, the State either controls or frees, social attitudes are exclusively conditioned by propaganda, etc. The alienated majority continues being passive victims of conniving minorities.

Peña actually finds full inscription in the conservative mechanics of presenting social prosperity - in all its paradigmatic inscriptions - as only feasible in a social order where meaning is possible only when it restitutes diachrony and persona. Not surprisingly, then, his readings share so much with the rhetorics expounded by conservatives in their interpretations of populism and the specificity of caudillos in the southern cone of Latin America. Because the caudillo is constituted as center of discussion of a far wider phenomenon can those readings profit from the representations that for well over a century have inexorably portrayed caudillos as non-democratic. As demonstrated by the study of socio-political phenomena in the nineteenth century or by, for example, the most relevant voting processes in this century, the majority of the population chooses caudillos as visible political leaders.

Faced with these "contradictions", conservatives choose to develop the various bodies that analyze the majorities as alienated masses, and Peña chooses to present the masses as essentially the majorities under the rule of manipulation. Either the masses are not prepared for democracy or they are manipulated: this is the discursive structure of the scientific paradigms that have made it possible to read social discourses in the twentieth century.

At this point it is possible to confirm a number of conclusions that have systematically emerged in our discussion. We have insisted that, contrary to what may appear as obvious, the majority of interpretations on caudillos have not in fact analyzed caudillos but rather caudillos have been the excuse to expound views on other matters. Readings on caudillos have been instrumental in arguing on the necessity to discipline and control. The central problem of the twentieth century, the large urban masses, has found numerous ways to gain a presence in the discourses of interpretations under different disguises. "What to do with the masses"? Here is the preoccupation, the central issue, the true object of investigation. The operation has been conducted also by apparently studying a particular caudillo. The "mistake" (or the "good turn") of numerous intellectuals and observers has been to develop a body of discussion (undoubtedly informed by the fascinating individual personalities of some of them) around a particular caudillo thus granting a secondary participation to the supraindividual, the true object of study.

The merit of displacing the center of the discussion from the individual to the supraindividual is to be found in the interpretations

gradually emerging from what is currently described as nationalist and progressive readings. The move is present in these analysts when they gradually find that only by disarticulating the semantics, and offering alternative versions, of the central notions of anti-caudillos readings, can the more relevant issue of the social in general emerge. Although it is incorrect to say that the "nationalists" reverse the trend, in opposition to another group of intellectuals which one would collectively address as "non-nationalist". To discuss the issue in terms of what specific intellectuals favour "the national" as opposed to those who do not, can only cripple our investigation. The emergence of the problematic of social hegemony in its complexity is, in our view, what must guide preliminary explorations of the issue. What discourses, at specific historical moments, and with what constitution problematize social hegemony? How can any specific caudillo be inscribed in that broader and more significant problematic, rather than the other way round?

In the nineteen sixties, forcing the relevance of the role of the masses in order to investigate social hegemony is already perceptible and preparing the ground for the transformations operated, for example, by Foucault and Laclau. However, the problematic of dependence as formulated by several Latin American intellectuals will enter the discussion, first, as an accessory tool and, later, will move to the center of argumentations. From that environment there emerge a number of approaches that we have indirectly criticized in the first part of this chapter. Los caudillos³⁸ (1966) by Félix Luna and Facundo y la Montonera³⁹ (1968) by Rodolfo Ortega Peña and Eduardo Luis Duhalde constitute two good examples of antagonical readings of caudillos that

illustrate the currents in historical interpretation expounding, one, the caudillo as center of discussion and non-democratic and, the other, the caudillo inscribed in a broader frame of discussion, from a dependista perspective. There are serious problems with both which pertain directly to our study.

For one thing, Luna reads Facundo in relation to the original Facundo written by Sarmiento. He objects to some of Sarmiento's errors and misreadings but on the whole he sides with the interpretation produced by the text: 'El sanjuanino plagó su "Facundo" de errores, inexactitudes, infundios y mentiras pero acertó en lo sustancial al revelar la naturaleza impar del personaje y lo demoníaco e infernal de su índole secreta: aquélla que hacía mover a Quiroga en un plano de magia y brujería, como si los poderes abisales fueran los que le dieran poder y fortuna."⁴⁰ One of the serious limitations of approaches like Luna's resides in discussing a caudillo in terms of a critical apparatus that does not attempt to, first, define Sarmiento's use of demonism to talk about Facundo, and second, Luna's own use of similar categories. Although Luna is frequently criticized by more articulate intellectuals on grounds of being not completely reliable or more "scientific", we have to say that these criticisms are incorrect. The real grounds for criticizing Luna emerge from his blatant use of a rhetoric of demonism, fascination and seduction which does not offer for inspection an explication of these terms. There is nothing intrinsically inappropriate in discussing a caudillo - even in 1966 - with a critical body that produces judgements on categories like "demoníaco",⁴¹ "satánico",⁴² "fantásticas"⁴³ or any similar notion. True, academic circles in the

West do not follow those lines at the time but this fact, by itself, doesn't amount to a denial of Luna. If a social history of Argentina (as Brown's) is written on the bare data of an "economic" character - with the closures and constitution that we analyzed above, - a caudillo might in principle be criticized with a machinery as the one proposed by Luna. Regretfully, he doesn't inform us on the characteristics and domain of his critical body.

This silence is more than significant. Were Luna to develop a critical body of the type our model demands from his, would his book survive the operation? Clearly not. Evidently, Luna uses Sarmiento's logic of analysis because it is the only critical body which can give coherence to his readings of caudillos as lacking "pensamientos orgánicos".⁴⁴ Contrary to the temptation of rejecting Luna's book because it does not achieve high standards of analysis, we must point at its importance if only for how clearly it shows the limitations and contradictions of reading a caudillo along his version of a rhetoric of personalism. Los Caudillos constitute an elaborate example of the limits of any critical body that produces judgements, first, dispensing with making its own position clear and, second, granting authority to received opinions without inspecting the constitution and field of validity of them. In 1966 the only way to produce caudillos as lacking a "estructura", that is, as the great sentimental and personalist leaders of an Argentina that will soon enter the realm of "progress" is with the critical body displayed by Luna. This is a very important fact that should not be obscured by critiques presenting the author as not conforming to ideals of historical research.

Also starting from Sarmiento's original reading of *Facundo*, Ortega Peña's *Facundo y la Montonera* attempts to relocate the focus of inquiry around the problem of the masses, the interior, and political fights in Argentina at the time of its national organization. Apart from constituting an exhaustive exercise in inspecting the issue from an orthodox dependista approach, the text is a commendable source also because the edition is complemented by an exhaustive anthology of contemporary documents which are usually unavailable even in libraries with considerable Latin American collections. But the narrow constraints of a dependency theory reading emerge in full eloquence, particularly in the chapter dealing with the historiography of the caudillo. Peña and Duhalde produce an interesting critique of the central lines of criticism on caudillos by David Peña, Frigerio, Alberdi, Paz, Carlos de Alvear, Palcos, Levene, Rosa, Scalabrini Ortiz and others. They not only disarticulate those interpretations that want to see a caudillo as a non-democratic type but also force the discussion in the direction of vindicating the discourses of the masses in the interior of the country. *Facundo y la Montonera*, following the revisionista readings of Rosa's very closely advocates reading caudillos along a theory of power - "el poder real" - that

en la Argentina del siglo XIX significaba sólo dos posibilidades: o ligarse a las potencias europeas, para servir a sus proyectos de expansión colonialista o convertirse en caudillo de masas para detener aquel proyecto e imponer una salida verdaderamente nacional... El caudillo recibe dirección de las masas. Las masas se mueven espontáneamente - aunque esa espontaneidad no es ciega, y recibe dirección de la propia necesidad de las masas.⁴⁵

José María Rosa provides the authors with a definition of what a caudillo is and the "mecanismo real de poder" which speaks of the phenomenon: "Caudillo se llama entre nosotros al conductor de los grandes movimientos populares, al hombre que guía una multitud porque siente como ella."⁴⁶ Again, the authors correctly criticize colleagues like De Paoli when they theorize the relation between the masses and caudillos on grounds of instincts. No such thing is applicable, it is incorrect - they argue - to say, as De Paoli states, that gauchos were "federales por instinto".⁴⁷ What must be investigated are the "ne-
cesidades"⁴⁸ rather than any substantialism expounding instinctual needs. However, they are not totally correct when they argue four central points of their study: (a) by reversing Sarmiento's reading of Facundo, a clear interpretation emerges, (b) by analyzing social competition for hegemony on the antagonism between Rivadavia and Quiroga, as clear-cut opposing poles of interest, social problems at the time emerge in more detail, (c) that the "masses" - meaning lower class gauchos - "eran los protagonistas de la historia de la resistencia,"⁴⁹ (d) that, as suggested by Rosa, "la torpe mentalidad entreguista y fraudulente de Rivadavia y su círculo" should be explicated on the grounds of a "voluntad de coloniaje".⁵⁰ The masses resist this selected minority that is delivering the country to foreign interests.

Ortega Peña y Duhalde evidently cannot escape the binary logic of their dependency approach. In fact, more than attacking their critiques on grounds of partiality, a more profitable approach is to try to overcome that binarism, first, and to relocate the problem of hegemony along different lines. Their dependista approach cannot do

better than reverse Sarmiento, rather than displace him from the center of the discussion. The attempt to present a "materialist" version of Sarmiento's metaphysical understandings is not the best recipe for the problem. And it is not because the operation leaves Sarmiento still at the center. It is illusory to imagine that the complexity of mass discourses for hegemony can be elucidated by a reductionism that produces Sarmiento (or an individual caudillo) as exemplary synthesis. In fact the operation cannot but end up in a naive stance that totally ignores the problematic of signification. From this perspective there is only but one way to argue the numerous representations of social discourses: sets of opposites have to be put into contention in order to produce the phenomenon along alleged dialectical lines. How do we argue the presence of all the discourses that interpellate social signification at the time? What is to be done with the grammars of social prestige, the grammars of "serious" political, economical, social thinking? We can control them, following Peña and Duhalde, only if we force them into binary oppositions or if we force class reductionisms.

Similarly, dependency approaches like this one have to explicate a number of important issues along the lines of a theory of emotions: the caudillo "feels" like the masses, anti-caudillo politicians do not. How can any critical account of the phenomenon control categories of interpretation like this one? It is impossible. What is the semantics of "feeling like the masses"? Peña and Duhalde suggest several entries for it, most notably siding against their enemies, defending some discourses which can be used as banners of liberation (they correctly point out at the use of religion), fighting for the national over the

supranational. They are on the right track but because a caudillo still constitutes the central reference in order to discuss a wider phenomenon, they cannot rid themselves of the logic of emotionalism and personalism, even if they attempt to produce positive readings of them. This is also what leads them to formulate a theory of "entreguismo". They have to explain hegemonical interpellations - "good" tone, "modern" things, "progress", etc - through a grammar of "voluntades". Some people have a "will" for the foreign, others critically resist it in spite of adversities. Rivadavia consciously arrives at the conclusion that the best way to negotiate personal, class and national interests is to deliver the country to British mining ventures. Facundo, who feels like the masses, consciously and willingly decides to avoid the line. For Peña and Duhalde power still can be explained solely as residing in selected individuals who put their skills to good or bad uses.

As further evidence to support their reading, they argue that Facundo is also engaged in his caudillo activities because of his personal investments in the Famatina mines which the central government wants to give to the British. It is a good point in their presentation - often brushed aside - but it is loaded with undue importance. Evidently, their move aims at emphasizing the material, so to say, rather than any loose spiritual or heroic character to Facundo's mission. It is Facundo's interests which are at stake too. Peña and Duhalde thus bring to the history of discussions on caudillos a solid argument (they present Urquiza as the antithetical caudillo who eventually "sells" himself to the opposing camp) which, however, is important in a presentation structured with a logic privileging emotions, the personal

and the binarism of the national or the foreign. In spite of our marked differences with Platt, we have to say that his reading of dependency can comfortably neutralize some of the central arguments in Facundo y la Montonera. The important conclusion is, therefore, that a materialism argued in the terms of Peña and Duhalde is not effective to counteract the interpellations of a theory of power/knowledge as emerging from Platt. Our model, by redefining the role of social signification, far exceeds both proposals.

The act of shifting the centers of attention from the figure of the caudillo to the most important question of hegemony, as discussed in the problematic of power/knowledge, finds ample justification when tested against a representative - although not exhaustive - number of readings of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it dispenses with an orthodox alignment of interpreters in a paradigm of left-center-right sympathies. At least, it puts in suspension that approach in order to privilege analyzing the problem from a different perspective. Our model doesn't have to fight - unsuccessfully as it is inevitably the case - against the limits of persona, reason, consciousness or democracy. The exhaustive enterprise of exploring the crevices of a grammar of emotions can only lead - as we have seen - either to attack or defend the persona of the caudillo, when actually the problem far exceeds that domain. Even though the "masses" are constantly named in those interpretations, the tools of explaining them ensure that social formations will continue being problematized in metaphysical terms. Categories like the "masses", or the "people" or the "leader" and his "clients"⁵¹ constitute power operations that ensure that the centrality of a system

of signification is not really questioned. Thus the scientific way to look at the problem continues being that emerging from the semantics of the North.

What are the sources of authority that inform any reading? What is the positionality displayed by the interpreter? What strategies present each interpretation as common sense and/or scientifically more reliable? What is the economy the closures force? As argued repeatedly in our discussion, these are the questions that inevitably force discussing caudillos in a very different light. For as long as any caudillo is discussed by a subject positioned in the semantic paradigms of the North, it will make little difference to argue in "favor" or "against" social formations, power relations or long due vindications. For as long as Facundo or Perón are judged in relation to a system of interpretation that doesn't investigate and exploit the contradictions of the ideology of "progress", "freedom", "equality" or any cultural construction, caudillos of South America will continue being presented as poor alternatives. Perhaps no one better than Foucault can inform this discussion when he argues in favor of the presence of discursive practices. The above discussions hopefully constitute a solid first step in the direction of ridding caudillismo readings of the metaphysical presence that they so far have exteriorized.

NOTES

¹Larry Shiner, "Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge", History and Theory, 21 (1982), 382-98.

²Ibid., p. 386.

³Ibid., p. 389.

⁴Larry Shiner's presentation of marxism seems to emphasize the issues Marxist critics were discussing before Althusser. The difficult task of placing Foucault in relation to mainstream Marxist theory is tackled here on understandings of ideology, social discourses and the question of hegemony as discussed before the important redefinitions of the late sixties. This shortcoming reminds us very much of the reading of the same problem by Alan Sheridan in his Michel Foucault the Will to Truth (London: Tavistock Publications, 1980).

⁵Michel S. Roth, 'Foucault's "History of the Present",' History and Theory, 20 (1981), 32-46.

⁶Frederick Jameson, The Prison-House of Language (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

⁷See, for example, his "Dependency in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: An Historian Objects," Latin American Research Review, 15 (1980), 113-129.

⁸David Plotke, "Recasting Marxism: Hegemony and New Political Movements. Interview with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe," Socialist Review, 12 (1982), p. 96.

⁹J.C. Brown, A Socio-Economic History of Argentina, 1776-1860. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

¹²Ibid., p. 228.

¹³Ibid., p. 233-4.

¹⁴Platt, p. 122.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁷D.C.M. Platt, 'The Anatomy of "Autonomy" (Whatever That May Mean): A Reply', Latin American Research Review, 15 (1980), 147-149.

¹⁸"Dependency in Nineteenth-Century Latin America", p. 119.

¹⁹However, specific studies will have to redefine the inscription, in any discussion of the issue, of practices that will become frequent several decades later. For example, lists of potential candidates for high government jobs in Argentina will be checked for preferences by power enclaves in London.

²⁰An important piece of research in the future will have to formulate optional hypotheses to investigate how to deal with the problem of historians' responses to a phenomenon in a particular moment of history.

²¹Evidently our above example on "Peter and Paul" should dramatize how the two of them are conditioned by supraindividual signifying systems.

²²Rodolfo Puiggrós, Las Izquierdas y el Problema Nacional (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez S.A., 1967), p. 82-3.

²³Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴Ibid., p. 78.

²⁵Ibid., p. 80.

²⁶Ibid., p. 80.

²⁷Ibid., p. 83.

²⁸Pejorative name given by non-Populist sympathizers to low class migrants from the interior to Buenos Aires, during Perón's presidencies.

²⁹Puiggrós, p. 111.

³⁰Milcíades Peña, Masas, caudillos y Elites (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ficha, n.d.), p. 31.

³¹Ibid., p. 101.

³²Ibid., p. 102.

³³Ibid., p. 103.

³⁴Ibid., p. 128.

³⁵Ibid., p. 128.

³⁶His Trotskyist readings of Argentine history, precisely because of their misconceptions, invite systematic analysis.

³⁷See, for example, Richard Gillespie, Soldiers of Perón (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) or D.C. Hodges, Argentina 1943-1976 (New Mexico: New Mexico University Press, 1976).

³⁸Félix Luna, Los Caudillos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez S.A., 1966).

³⁹Rodolfo Ortega Peña and Eduardo Luis Duhalde, Facundo y la Montonera (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1968).

⁴⁰Luna, p. 125.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 126.

⁴²Ibid., p. 126.

⁴³Ibid., p. 129.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 188.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 189.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 202.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 202.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 199.

⁵¹The widespread use of interpretations of social issues through a theory of political "clients" tends to force a logic that builds on persona, presence and reason. Under the apparent disguise of common sense it reconstitutes charisma and a grammar of emotions as central to explaining hegemony.

CONCLUSION

Our inspection of some of the most important literary and historical texts produced on caudillos in the last century and a half gradually confirmed our initial hypothesis. Foucault's writings on power/knowledge furnished excellent tools to investigate our corpus of analysis from angles other than the ones used by other studies of the phenomenon. Actually, we saw that when those critiques are investigated in their internal constitutions, when the elements that constitute them and the logics that put them in operation are carefully inspected, a substantial body of information emerges that would otherwise remain silenced. That contemporary texts on caudillos are argued practically on the same grounds and with identical rhetorics forced our concluding that other critical tools are to be brought to a discussion of Rosas, for example, so that a number of unpreviously mapped issues can be properly formulated. We concluded that without problematizing caudillos through the problematic of social discourses and their struggle for hegemony, it is impossible to overcome the closures imposed by numerous metaphysical interpretations on caudillos. Although Conrad, for example, may be presented as a serious critic of the practices of democratic parliamentarism in the colonies or Bunge as a willing apologist of that order of things, our critical enterprise must obviously overcome the frontiers imposed by these readings. It is the silences imposed by them which are of more significance. Of particular interest to our project was,

the problematic of signification.

Meaning is power. Producing versions of what is a caudillo or a "mass" and why constitute power. Bodies of knowledge constitute power. These axioms in turn produced solid evidence to attest to their veracity. That Sarmiento's Facundo is a major text auspicing European values as superior did not necessitate of our model to be exposed as a clear power operation. It is precisely Sarmiento himself who tells us that his text aims at producing Europe as the positive counterpart to caudillos. Furthermore, exposing Sarmiento's reasons to defend his reading can very well dispense with our critique. His version of what is civilized or barbarous can be attacked, as it has repeatedly been the case, not only from positions close to the left (Abelardo Ramos or Milcíades Peña,) but also from center-right nationalist stances. Our text would be almost meaningless (or it would simply amount to repeating current arguments) if it didn't have the strength to argue different problems or if it didn't offer convincing arguments to redefine the enterprise of reading caudillos. Even dependency theory - with all its limitations - can offer solid arguments to explain why the hegemony of the North as meaning has been defended as salutary. The imperial missions of the North produced "superstructural" commodities to legitimize itself not only to the margins but also at the domestic level. As argued in chapter five, Peña and Duhalde offer strong and coherent dependista readings of this type that can and should inform any serious study of the history of caudillos.

Our model, however, aimed at a different objective. By analyzing the mechanics of presentation of caudillos and the production of

categories of analysis in different individual writers in fiction or history, what emerges is a number of assumptions and procedures that are common to voices that apparently look antagonical. A reservoir of metaphysical constructs suddenly comes to the surface and it turns out to be one of the major forces behind different interpretations. Abelardo Ramos and Félix Luna apparently constituted diametrically opposing voices in their presentation of caudillos. However, their texts are built on the metaphysics of origin, on the assumption and construction of a time in Argentine history when gauchos lived in an uncorrupted environment, in a state of violent but pure innocence that was later destroyed by the presence of white man and British-centered mercantilism. And because this assumption is granted a special place in the mechanics of interpretation, these voices later construct a text along binary notions that reproduce the antagonism between origin/present, innocence/corruption or freedom/dependence.

It is at this point that our model began to gain presence and strength. It did because it can map clearly the constitution of apparently dissimilar presentations to the point of some of their common sources. The idea of presenting binary oppositions as the logical and more scientific tool of analysis is what we discovered to constitute a central procedure of inquiry. Binary texts were essential to explaining and producing caudillos as unworthy alternatives to Europe, first, and the North in general more recently. The uses were numerous and gave rise to a proliferation of discourses arguing caudillos in different directions (some willingly trying to present them as other than barbarian) but ultimately amounting to critical operations that ensured

caudillos as non-democratic products of Hispanic America. Again, because reality was explored in a field that categorizes its input into binary oppositions, inevitably the negative lot was to be filled with the discourse of the caudillo.

This is what explains our preoccupation with the problematic of signification. When we asked, precisely, what system of signification is applied in order to determine what constitutes the positive paradigm of the oppositions forced, the sources of authority were exposed in full light. Authority in interpretation, thus in classification and the formulation of value rested on the semantics of the North. This is a pattern that permeates centrally not only Facundo, Nostromo or Tirano Banderas but also a substantial number of historical readings. Sarmiento, Rodó, Bunge, and Ortega y Gasset gave us unmistakable proofs. The practices of liberal or, later, Soviet-socialist democracies, the discourse of social prestige, the methods of empirical sciences constitute the center that determines what is positive or negative. Furthermore, the very fact of narrowing data to binary oppositions gradually emerged as a power operation, an operation disguised as common sense.

A metaphysical binarism not only dispensed with the necessity to have to formulate models of interpretation that incorporate the specificity of the local but were historically advanced for that very purpose. This binarism not only explains but also grants authority to a number of rhetorics that present a caudillo as non-democratic. Theories of personalism, of charisma or suggestion emerged in different scenarios and in antagonical voices. That as different intellectuals as Sarmiento and Ortega Peña or Alexander - stretching over a century of research

on caudillos and in different countries - almost "instinctively" produced binary readings as common sense versions of how to interpret caudillos took us to the problematic of discursive formations in a more open way. It forced our defining how to study the problem of the production of meaning with a model incorporating the preoccupations of materialist thinking in the last decades. We concluded that it is no longer possible to investigate authority in terms of individuals as center of production. To explain hegemony and power (whether in the discourse of dressing, exercising authority or doing historical research) we had to give priority to notions like discourse, the paradigm, interpellation and articulation.

Two central preoccupations - what determines value and how - informed our project because they force redefining not only classical categories of inquiry in metaphysical projects but also in numerous understandings of Marxist interpretations. In the former we found an urgent necessity to expose the metaphysics of origin, presence and the founding subject (historians like John Lynch or H.S. Ferns) and in classical Marxist thought we had to point at the critical deficiencies of numerous versions permeated by various degrees of classicism and economism. Both lines of enquiry were shown to be permeated by central metaphysical assumptions presenting hegemony, power or signification in strong essentialist terms. They proved incapable to stay at a safe distance from the lure of the discursiveness that "naturally" discovers the caudillo to be violent, personalistic, bourgeois or populist in a pejorative fashion. The people were forced into classifications that produced taxonomies of "masses" and "individuals". In this way, and

in contemporary periods, Ortega and ideologues of the Argentine Communist Party - through apparently irreconcilable views - produced the people at large as passive spectators in the production of meaning or value. The majorities were, essentially, passive subjects.

At that point an archaeology of reading caudillos produced a dramatic turnover. We were able to formulate paradigms of supraindividual forces of signification. We could clarify what would be presented by all discourses of culture as common sense argumentations on any caudillo. Only by arguing social signification as supraindividual and essentially dispersed could we seriously present paradigms as forces through/in-relation-to which a particular fiction writer or historian produces himself. We found that an exemplary reformulator of the semantics of the Empire (Conrad) proved our point by acquiescing to the "common sense" knowledge that leaders in the Hispanic world conform to the stereotype of the "cruel" Rosas. We isolated an important number of paradigmatic elements: the popular as spontaneous, often irrational, lured by manipulation, the victims or blind followers of masters of seduction. Representation as a strategy of control and social discipline was seen here in full swing.

This put in evidence a double operation pertaining to a program of cultural production specific of the discursive formations of the West. Namely, a social production of meaning leading to control and discipline of the "masses", on the one hand, and an overall program of auspicing a metaphysics of the "individual". Precisely on these grounds we insisted all along the text of the dissertation that the numerous and conflicting readings on caudillos, either by native or Anglo-American

intellectuals, may very well be read as programs that on the surface seem to problematize the caudillo as Other but, at a deeper level, what they actually produce is a text that builds on the metaphysics of the individual as a mechanism of social discipline.

The West in the last hundred and fifty years ensured controlling caudillos by forcing discussing them in terms of a binarism that by its very constitution inevitably had to render popular leaders as lacking the moral or rational stature of the civilized world. The discourse of the West officialized and appropriated the scientific tools to read caudillos. Thus, Rosas or Facundo Quiroga could but emerge as "inexplicable monsters". Similarly, three of the most important popular leaders in the twentieth century in South America - Battle, Irigoyen and Perón - could only be produced by the social sciences as the best local alternatives but as poor, secondary options in relation to the alleged superior standards of the North. In this way the rhetoric of personalism effectively displaced discussing the phenomenon with alternative options. As argued, for as long as caudillos are discussed with bodies of interpretation favoring binary sets like the individual/the masses, democracy/populism, reason/force, objectivity/spontaneity, the West will comfortably control caudillos.

Similarly, it was essential to explore some of the logical crevices of the problematic of Self and the Other as a tool for socio-criticism. Looking in retrospect, we may conclude that perhaps the best way to locate the sphere of influence of that problematic is to inscribe its binarism in our model, that is, to allow the friction of binary oppositions (Old World/New World, reason/the barbarous, intelligence/

clumsiness) to operate as another text, - given the high circulation it still enjoys - informing the encompassing problematic of social meaning. The binary must be allowed to have a gravitation but we must avoid putting a closure right after. Our discoveries in the previous chapters prove that a very fruitful exercise in cultural criticism consists in, first, allowing the oppositions presented by numerous sources to produce their versions of any issue so that the constituent elements of that logic emerge in action (the step-by-step constitution of Sarmiento's theory of representation as a tool of power, Ortega's understanding of the biological mission of the masses, Isaacson's mimetic model to explain Argentina's dependence from Europe, etc), and second, to relocate them in the light of our model. We should add that evidently that problematic comprises other aspects and future projects of scientific interest which obviously exceed the limits of our text.¹ We must emphasize, however, that the discursive practice of formulating discussions as exposed above (a cultural project where the ideas of Structuralists or Post-Structuralists constitute only a part) inevitably forces looking for more suitable criteria to periodize interpretations of caudillos.

In the light of our model it is impossible to grant central authority to accepted periodizations that uphold divisions² like nationalists/antinationalists, conservative/liberal, moderate left/radical left, native/foreigner, etc. Likewise, the accepted practices of demarcating differences between positivists of a more or less naturalist bending or of grading various degrees of political sympathy or enmity for specific caudillos on the part of an interpreter, not only loses its

operational value but also puts in evidence its various uses in intellectual circles (and, certainly, in everyday discussions). It is not difficult to conclude that one of the central projects of the social sciences in the last century has been to problematize its epistemological differences in terms of antagonical schools rather than along the findings exposed by an archaeology of knowledge. Many of the differences that are still held as central to periodizing historical readings suddenly are relativized and subsequently relocated to a secondary plane in the light of our readings. A good example is furnished by Sarmiento's understanding of the "spirit of history" (after Guizot) and Bunge's social psychology, half a century later. We saw a similar phenomenon permeating Rodó and Ortega. An important number of discursive formations cuts across their differences - particularly as processed by each individual intellectual - to expose fundamentally cultural, supraindividual paradigmatic values. In spite of their differences (and in some cases because of them) what they produce as common sense or as science amounts to similar cultural operations that speak through them.

This is why Conrad's uncritical readings of some of the socio-political formations of Costaguana and his acceptance of the stereotypes of the Hispanic as unmodern constitute a prime example to explain the overall presence of discursive formations. If accepted periodizations of historical readings of the phenomenon cannot resist the interpellation of our model, we must also point to the fact that arguing the margins of history and fiction in some of the ways it has been done can not possibly cope with some of our conclusions. The fact that history is often produced by culture as primarily concerned with "facts" and

literature with "fiction" should not deceive us into prescribing the phenomenon as atypical of professional ranks. Not only D.C.M. Platt's rhetorical adherence to "facts" or H.S. Ferns's questionable sense of common sense but also numerous understandings of dependista approaches end up but reinforcing a demarcation between history and fiction that has directly served the interests of rhetorics of persona. Ariel, Nuestra América, Nostramo and Tirano Banderas can be produced as the type of texts they are because of their solid understanding that the North is an intelligent skeptic and the South a colorful and violent locale, that British parliamentarism is the least harmful solution to human woes or that knowledge can be best produced by the workings of binary tensions. Cuarteles de invierno, El beso de la mujer araña, dependista and post-dependista texts³ reformulate not only the nature of textuality but the logics and limits of (re)production by decentering the subject of knowledge, exposing the materiality of a metaphysics of origin and propitiating a reformulation of the tools of enquiry by privileging social meaning.

In the light of this information we tentatively advanced a few preliminary conclusions on the viability of archaeology as an appropriate body of knowledge in our model to redefine reading caudillos in the Southern Cone. By advancing a reading of social issues along the important notions of discourse and signification, what gains the center of discussions is not the eschatology of progress or the rhetoric of internationalism (two of the most important programs of the political North) but the constitution of hegemony - as argued in our model - in its multiplicity of practices. At that point an important number of the

political practices of caudillismo can be granted an appropriate voice, relocating diametrically the semantics and the projects of signification and authority that produced caudillos as center of signification to understand meaning and hegemony.

NOTES

¹Although social scientists like Tulio Halperín Donghi have produced preliminary analyses on programs expounding binary constructs, we are far from having, at our disposal full-length studies of the problem. See, for example, his "Nueva narrativa y ciencias sociales hispanoamericanas en la década del sesenta", Hispanamérica, 9, No 27 (1980), 3-18, and "'Dependency Theory' And Latin American Historiography," Latin American Research Review, 17 (1982), 115-130.

²The various discourses that build on antinomies of this type (journalism, political documents, etc) are awaiting preliminary inspections in order to locate not only their ideological constructions but also their different uses.

³Social texts in general, that is, ranging from the relation between power groups in populist experiences (frequently forced to the logic of the "leader" and the "masses") to the numerous discourses of the technologies of media.

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