The Baroque Algorithm (Atlantic Literature and the Critique of Language). Translated by Crystal Chemris

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These reflections take as their starting point the following question: Why, in order to write poetry in Spanish is it necessary to begin by expelling Spanish from poetic language? Researching and exploring such a question, only in appearance paradoxical or ironic, I hope to sustain here a hypothesis, namely, that there is an Atlantic poetic tradition that does not resign itself to representation configured by natural language, but rather makes its expulsion the poetic act *par excellence*.

I think that we can safely assume, without sounding any alarms, that we in the Hispanic world not only contend with twenty national literatures, on one level; and on another level a Latin American literature, a Spanish literature, and various peninsular literatures in other languages; but on another plane, we must also contend with their transatlantic interactivity, where communication, on the one hand, and textuality, on the other, alternate with and succeed each another. One space creates the other and that one yet another, inclusively and compartmentally. Thus, the critical assumptions according to its critical capacity in the present. That plural language (which mediates between original languages, peninsular and American) is the foundation under construction of the transatlantic culture in which we have been formed. This is a language made contemporaneous by literature, by the genealogy of a conversation that can only be taken as a current event. It is written in the present, in the uncertain border of language itself; but it is read in the future, projecting spaces beyond. If literature is a staging of crisis of the present time, its appeals have to do with futurity, a word that
finally has entered the dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy. Every writer who renovates poetic space in Spanish and every crossroads decided in favor of poetry are radical wagers to recommence the debates of a well-established dialogue.

I will say something about these turning points, moments of rupture, where veracity is the emotional material of the discourse which poetry unleashes, whose process of construction raises the *habitus* of critique in transit. To dwell, Heidegger recalled, is to inhabit but at the same time to construct that dwelling place. It is not a question, however, of being but of passing through. Nor is it one of origin but of process. I believe that poetry has that function or that vocation: to make place. It begins, for that very reason, by verifying the horizon of its verbal certainty.

From the tradition each new writer picks up the thread from an author upon him; he does not invent precursors, he unfurls an open process, he invents his readers. Our great poets have been those of most inventiveness. Thus, our tradition is not, in Spanish, a museum or archive; and it is only a dwelling place because it is always under construction. It is a matter of one space within another, of an enclosed figure that is conceived out of another which includes it. In a first framing, for example, we Peruvians have been given the task of being not only readers but also practitioners of Vallejo, such that our notion of poetry is that of a demand superior to our abilities.

With Vallejo, inevitably we have to return to language (he questions the grammaticality of a badly articulated world); to contemporary speech (he introduces expressive variation, immediate and abrupt); and to the space of reinscription (he fractures sacred protocols); and in so doing, the reader reorganizes the distance which lies between the functions of natural language and language forged by poetry. Thus one is led to conclude that with Vallejo natural language is not only put into crisis but even cancelled as a common idiom. It is discounted both as map of the world and as communicative system by a form of writing which is produced, most surely, in the emotive matter of language which is the poem. It is worth remembering that in the Andean mentality, a space (“cancha”) postulates another space, which it includes (“cancha-cancha”), alternate and complementary, unfolded as its conceptualization. High and low, within and without, serial and differential, this model—explored and postulated by the Quechua-Spanish of the work of José María Arguedas—ties together, unties and redistributes functions and significations whose articulatory process is a dialogic figure.

A little while ago in Madrid someone said, speaking of a political figure, that he was “Galician in the worst sense of the word ‘Galician.’” This pessimistic declaration drew my attention, not to the Galicians, who
invented a good part of the intimacy of modern Spanish, but to the common parlance, which subdivides Spain stereotypically and converts the other into a caricature. It is a declaration that evinces an anti-modern typology, probably characteristic of the eighteenth century. The writer Javier Marías, a propos of this much-debated phrase, recalled in his column from the weekly culture section “El Semanal” of the newspaper *El País*, that in Spain it is said that the Catalans are thrifty, the Andalusians, relaxed, the Castilians categorical, etc., and concluded that all of this is a demonstration of Spanish humor.

I thought, for my part, that the attribution of worldly wisdom to popular culture dates back to the tradition of folk sayings (the *refranero* or book of refrains), but also to misunderstanding; the proverbs of Sancho, in their ironic Cervantine version, prove, rather, that at times what passes for popular worldliness can be a stereotype; and even worse, prejudice, whose license is a kind of “black hole” of language. This use of commonplace produces profuse, tautological and reified speech, which ceases to belong to thought and reveals itself as ideological ossification. In each one of our countries this servility of language has only grown. Even when the first signs of modernization improved communicative technology, educational access and civil rights, language would reveal their less quantifiable but no less eloquent cost, that of regression regarding the place of the other. The yellow press, television gossip shows, call-in radio programs, and the growing violence of the communicative space of the internet all demonstrate this. The lack of regulation and responsibility in the ideology of the market, ironically, intensified the violence of recycled authority and poor distribution of information.

Nor does the solution reside in imposing upon the *Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy* the elimination of the insulting definition for “Galician.” In the online edition, that dictionary assigns only one derogatory definition: “5. Adj. C. Rica. Stupid (lacking in understanding or reason).” The entry advises that it has been “amended.” And now a note explains that this dictionary does not endorse the discriminatory sense of some terms, but rather limits itself to recording certain uses. I am afraid that Spanish dictionaries will end up being those of a language that we will recognize but that we will not speak. Or that foreigners speak. Julio Cortázar, who was extraordinarily sensitive to the connotations of speech, said that the dictionary was a “cemetery” where each dead noun bore its definition as a tombstone. This is not a problem of dictionaries per se, of course, but of the ideological baggage that they reveal. Perhaps the best would be one that included everything, and not just inside the coarse celebratory tome of grotesque humor of Camilo José Cela. In that ideological dictionary, we establish: “Free man: Citizen who exercises his rights”; “Free woman: Loose.”

Spanish is probably the language with the strongest charge of authoritarian
tradition, with the greatest weight of conservative ideology, and with the greatest incidence of the ideological plagues of sexism, racism and xenophobia. In usage, we are exempt from giving a source for verification: validation has the self for its center of authority (Because I say so,” announces a fist on the table). Underlying this production is the notion that identity is constructed against and at the expense of the other, and not necessarily in dialogue. Apparently, it has been demonstrated that languages are more complex (hermetic) in their area of origin and more synthetic (communicative) the more they expand. Spanish formed as a magnificent sum of peninsular regionalisms (patronymics and toponymy reveal fascinating derivations and traces), where Galician, Basque and Catalan leave their marks; and, soon, Arabic, Hebrew, their mutual derivatives, and right after, the unsettling American repertory, whose unfolding will be the material which inspires the baroque. What was ultramarine always refuted the ultramontane in this language of Spanish, so historic that only in literature is it fully our own.

It is fitting at this point to propose that this authoritarian lineage could be understood based on the fact that Spanish is one of the few languages which did not pass through the Reformation. Rather, it rationalized the Counterreformation: it justified the expulsion of the Arabs and the Jews, and quite probably was victim of its own modern birth in violence. The recently discovered Trial of Columbus shows this to be so: violence occupies subjectivity and devours the colonial subject and his enterprise. It is a language that has lived almost all its life under absolutist empires and a religion cast as purveyor of good conscience. Spanish was rather impermeable, in spite of some illustrious and tragic cases, and it refused the modernization of the eighteenth century. Outside of brief liberal or republican moments, it suffered the extraordinary arbitrariness of its dictatorships. Between the democratizing republic and authoritarianism, it preferred the latter. One should remember that the last thirty years is the longest period of civil and self-critical liberty through which Spain, and therefore the Spanish language, has lived. For that reason, the metaphor of a regional typology of identity practiced as sport corresponds, rather, to bad humor and to a use of a language that has not known self-criticism.

Let us remember that almost all the great Spanish writers have suffered jail or exile for their use of Spanish. St. John of the Cross and Fray Luis de León were imprisoned for having translated passages of the Bible or for maintaining that the Bible, after all written by God, could profit from an improved translation in the vulgate. In the proceedings of the trial of Fray Luis de León, his accuser (a colleague from Salamanca) calls him “the Hebrew Fray Luis de León.” The history of translation and translators is a sensitive chapter of the chastened modernity of the Spanish language. The ordinances that regulate the work of the translators in the New World reveal
suspicion about its function, and the most internal problem of a system of validation that lacked other sources of verification beyond authority, faith and censorship. The great Mexican translator of the conquest, Doña Marina, “La Malinche,” instead of being consecrated by history as a heroine of the modern was discarded as a traitor. From the nineteenth century onward her name designates servility to the foreign. And “the children of La Malinche,” in the famous essay of Octavio Paz, are not the new bilingual subjects (mediators of the future) but the children of a rape (condemned by their origins).

How then to write out of an antimodern tradition and a legacy of authoritarian prohibition? Only by writing better, folding language over itself, exploring the materiality of signs, encoding in hyperbole contradictory terms. But before this, it is necessary to abandon the diction and prosody established by protocol. The writer will have to reconstruct the territory of language as an imaginary space greater than literal language and less affirming than the discourse of authority.

Garcilaso de la Vega moved to Italian. Góngora rooted himself in Latin. Cervantes, for his part, sought his own idiom in the genre of the novel as the first relativist space of the dominant language. Garcilaso inscribes himself in the great tradition that formalizes Humanism —Petrarchism—, which made the classics contemporary, drank of Dante and Cavalcanti, assumed Neoplatonism and forged the dolce stil nuovo. With Garcilaso we have the extraordinary example of the first international Spanish, no longer regional but open to the world, capable of renovating radically Castillian poetry.

Out of poetry, but also out of criticism, Petrarch had invented philology as the art of restoring the literary memory of language. Today we call his model of reading “critical nostalgia”: in restoring manuscripts of classical antiquity, which in the Middle Ages had been discarded as pagan— the classical texts were used as padding material for the binding of books—, he rescued memory against the arbitrariness of history for the Humanist mind. He established the rhetoric of Quintilian, a Hispano-Roman, forerunner of the paradigm of mixture, of Spanish won over by Humanism. Of Quintilian’s papers, Petrarch says that they were “mutilated and torn” (“discerptus et lacer”). His labor is to reconstruct memory not as foundational text nor as fetishistic object but as a source for the future. And gathering and establishing the classical texts becomes more urgent in a tragic and mercantile era that he detested. Curiously, Petrarch writes letters to classical authors and traders and frauds. This is the other Humanist act which literature installs against authoritarian barbarity: conversation, which his friend Bocaccio converts into a storytelling device. The writer is one who convokes the voices of time in a dialogue that is constitutive of the community of letters. Garcilaso, in that scene, converses with Petrarch; and Boscán in turn will
continue the conversation of his ill-fated friend, commenting on his words as if he had been ceded his turn to speak. Inca Garcilaso, for his part, will take up again that conversation to dialogue with León Hebreo and with the letters of Petrarch; and Rubén Darío will do the same again, returning the opportunity to speak to Garcilaso. Alfonso Reyes then shows us that literature is a conversation within another conversation; and Borges, that one never stops conversing with Cervantes.

Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, who chose his name to honor his relative, the prince of poets, and not only his father, had in his library several books of Petrarch. Elsewhere I have treated the importance of that filiation, in reference to the central philological scene of his Commentarios reales (Royal Commentaries). There he relates that a prominent friar of the Cathedral of Sevilla has recovered, from the fire of Cádiz caused by the English invasion, the manuscripts of the Peruvian historian, Father Valera. He received, he tells us, the papers “mutilated and torn,” exactly like Petrarch. Evidently, he re-appropriates this principle of the value of texts saved from the jaws of history, from its barbarous violence, to construct memory, his Book, which in this case will be a model of mestizaje. Inca Garcilaso proposes, in addition, to give an example: the seeds of Spain grow in abundance in the Indies, he tells us, because the Indies is extraordinarily fertile thanks to the earth, which receives these seeds and produces delicious and giant fruits. He relates that he has seen a radish that several men could not reach their arms around, and that he tasted of that radish. This model of nature, not finished as thought by Medieval religion, but in the process of becoming, is made better thanks to mixture. Because mixture will be the space of modernity that America introduces into Spanish. Not orthodoxy, not monologue, not authoritarianism, but tolerance, openness and the newness of a principle of articulations, which is capable of re-spatializing the world with language. This paradigm of mixture is transformed into a cultural model, because mixture will be also a product of the system of exchange and the construction of the public sphere. Mestizaje is not only ethnic but also, above all, cultural. It is a system of information which articulates a new reading of the past in order to contradict the violent present and postulate a future more democratic, as we would say today, more open and inclusive. For that reason as well Cervantes tried, twice, to go to the Indies, because he understood that in America Spanish would be free of the prohibition and censorship of Spain. If world means limpid, New World signified the language of the new as a new limpidity.

Góngora, we know, turns to Latin in order to forge the syntax we celebrate today as baroque. The Baroque appears precisely as a new phenomenon of perception: an alternative to the geometric perspective, the circular figuration of the Baroque no longer privileges the rationality of the subject
which controls the field of the gaze, but rather gives rise to the materiality of immanence, the incorporating gaze, which is part of the world forming itself in the senses. It is the exuberance of the New World that exceeds the field of the gaze and privileges the function of direct knowledge and experience. But the Baroque would not exist without the gold, silver, birds, chocolate, pineapple, tobacco, roots and fruits that leave their traces in the space of representation and in the syntax of their incorporations. When Columbus, in his *Diary*, says that he has seen on an island in the Caribbean a lush, leafy tree which he calls the palm, he recurs to an oxymoron to describe it: he tells us that it was a “beautiful deformity”; words are useless for him to describe this tree that overflows the field of his vision; its branches and leaves cannot be controlled by perspective. It is, he tells us, beautifully horrible. Here we witness the first seed of the Baroque.

This amplification of the gaze produces a representation of the world as delightful matter. The possessing subject, whose consciousness passes through the knowledge of seeing and tasting, emerges in the chroniclers, above all in those who traveled the length of the Caribbean. Time and again they testify: “I ate pineapple,” “I tasted of this fruit.” Oviedo made fun of Peter Martyr, who had never been in the Indies and who had never eaten pineapple. The scholar asked for pineapples to be brought back to him but they all arrived spoiled. The pineapple was the emblem of the Baroque, the play of Nature as Baroque artifice. On the other hand, Phillip II, who held a quiet curiosity about this fruit, received a pineapple, placed it on the table, contemplated it, and decided not to taste it. Thanks to religion, he did not need to know, experientially, anything new, and he must have feared it was a product of the devil.

Góngora returns from Latin with a new syntax. It is no longer an accumulative and expansive syntax, but a syncretic one, where words themselves acquire a sort of tension, sensoriness, exoticism and materiality that they had not had. It is probable that Góngora would not have forged that new syntax without the alternate space of the Indies. If Latin permitted him the terse concentration of poetic material, the Indies interpolates between the old names new objects. Góngora cites the Indies various times in his poems; but as Alfonso Reyes observed, beyond precise references: in his poetry, the New World looks out in the sensoriness of exoticism.

He who refers most to the Indies and who was most alert to its news is Cervantes, the writer of the Golden Age who puts his idiom to the test from the new critical spaces of the language. The novel permits him to interpolate alternate places, and theatre permits him to shuffle different times (Mexico and Seville) as simultaneous spaces. He had read the *Royal Commentaries* of Inca Garcilaso, whose scenes he seems to gloss in the *Persiles*. But, above all, his experience as a captive, of other peoples and tongues, and even his
very social condition, and _converso_ origins, must have made him conceive of the space of the Indies more as alternate than alien. Not only because he twice tried to move to America, but also because he knew that mixture was the most creative metaphor, for being the most modern, of an Erasmian way of thinking, as critical as it was relativist.

In _Don Quijote_, one of the most fascinating characters is Ricote, a Moor who returns to Spain disguised and says he has traveled the world. Don Quijote asks him what place he has felt the best in, and Ricote says Germany. This is one of Cervantes’s best ironies. Don Quijote asks him why, and Ricote answers that there one can hold whatever opinion one wishes and nobody cares. Ironically, the interpolated spaces are placed against Spanish prohibitions. Moreover, the name Ricote is that of a Murcian town whose land was fertile thanks to the work of the Arabs. In all other respects, the _Quijote_ is always another _Quijote_, as was diligently demonstrated by Pierre Menard. And among those readings, that of Carlos Fuentes, the narrator of greatest Cervantine inventiveness among writers with an Atlantic vocation, returns us to the beginning: to read the Quixotic project of changing language in order to change the world.

Cervantes could not have ignored the question of the Spanish language. In the second part Don Quijote arrives in Barcelona and is going to meet his mother, the printing press. Cervantes tells us that on the door it reads: “Here books are printed.” The irony doesn’t escape us: “here” is pointless, they aren’t printed anywhere else; “are printed” is equally excessive, because they aren’t drawn or copied, they are printed; and “books” is also excessive because they are precisely the matter at hand. Irony reaches a certain redundant and periphrastic tendency of the Spanish language. Is there any other name for this place? “Printshop,” naturally. But Cervantes does not use it, deliberately, in order to illustrate his ironic critique of language. It has been repeated that Sancho represents folk sayings and their popular wisdom, but we have to recognize that often he also represents redundance and the literal. Perhaps the sententious saturation of common sense, which is a comedy of speech in Sancho, might also be a subtle critique of the use and abuse of profusion and periphrasis in a language that ends up losing its referents in circumlocution. When Don Quijote is condemned, after a defeat, to return to his village, he knows that there cannot be a worse punishment than that, to return to his hometown, to return to La Mancha, whose name is said better in its forgetting. La Mancha comes from the Arab word for a “dry place,” and the dry is the literal: repetition, that claustrophobia of language. The heaviness of literal language is rooted in the fact that it only endorses and confirms the evident, because it is incapable of imagining its transformation. Crude and elemental referentiality does not work to construct the dwelling place of a language capable of reinhabiting the world.
For that reason, when Don Quijote and Sancho return, very melancholic, to their village, the master says to his squire: “And what if we were to become shepherds?” That is, what if we were to change books and put ourselves in a pastoral novel? They would continue in the discourse opened by the story and they would not have to return to La Mancha. Another Cervantine ironic refutation from a language without horizon.

No less important for this reading of the Quijote is that, in spite of its humble genre, it comes directly from the Humanist world, from the critical tradition of Petrarch. Only that it being a comedy of letters, Cervantes must situate the novel in the marketplace, where he buys a manuscript, out of love for mutilated and torn papers, which is in Arabic and which he must have translated. If indeed the novel makes this transfer ironic and properly novelesque, it has a purpose that is fundamental to the Humanist: to teach reading, to demonstrate that language read increases our humanity, and humanizes also the ever-contrary space made by “the prose of the world.” For that reason, I believe that the hero of the novel is Sancho Panza, the illiterate man. The novel must teach Sancho to read, through a teacher so crazy that he has assumed the imaginary world to be literal. And, at the end of the novel, we see that Sancho has learned to read. He demonstrates this eloquently in the episode of the island, when as ostensible governor he reads each case he judges as if it were a matter of parsing an Italian novel. He reveals himself to be a good analytical reader: he judges, decides and he does not make a mistake. Sancho has learned to read, and Don Quijote praises his wisdom. For that reason when they are returning to their village, this possibility of continuing the discourse, albeit in a pastoral novel, is a projection of another alternate and salvational space, since the literal, as we know, represents that which is dead.

But, returning to poetry, we should consider the case of Rubén Darío, whose work, being modernista, not only occurs in a language parallel to that of the general idiom, but also is the art of the permanent substitution of one language for another. It is, in fact, the first poetic language that liberates Spanish from its naturalist tradition.

Darío, not without scandal, abandoned Spanish and moved over to French. But this was not a question of mere “Gallicism”; rather, he went to French Symbolist poetry to recover his music, and return, then, to Spanish and practice all the forms of its metric tradition, from the Middle Ages until its soulless present. Not only was he the greatest poet of the language but the poet who used the most forms of Spanish prosody. Darío, naturally, returned to Garcilaso. Garcilaso had discovered the sonorous nature of the Spanish language, which as some poets have said is the closest to Latin. Spanish has a vocalic, absorbing and resonant sound, which Darío explored
better than anyone. Exiled on an island in the Danube, Garcilaso had written: “Danube, divine river.” Rubén Darío wrote: “Youth, divine treasure,” which is exactly the same vocative formula, but above all, is the same celebration of the sonorous quality of Spanish, in both verses of subtle symmetrical vocalic play, reverberating in the one: “Danubio, río, divino,” meditative in the other: “Juventud, divino tesoro.”

Borges, we know, went over to English, and returned in a better mood, succinct and laconic. The fact is that without English he would not have been the same. He found in English, we might say, an eloquent concision of the phrase capable of implication and ironic nuance; rather like an aesthetic of the fragment and of wit. A kind of minimalism avant la lettre, which permitted him to make intelligence and emotion form part of the same expression. Decisively Cervantine, his story, “Pierre Menard, author of the Quijote,” postulates a critical theory based fully on operational reading, freed from the biographical phantom. Menard writes the same Quijote because he understands that it is another Quijote, his, rewritten upon being read. Borges implies in that operation the contemporary notion that a classic is a book that becomes current in the present of our reading, alive in the time of the language. The thesis postulated is supported in the idea that human nature, more than bearing a similarity to dreams, resembles language, of which we are made, from the time we learn to read until it abandons us. A Cervantine joke about language is the one he made when he declared that as a boy he had read the Quijote first in English and only afterwards in Spanish. Some critics took the joke literally and, without any sense of irony, deduced the modern superstition that as bilinguals we adopt the language of prestige. Less predictable is to remember that Borges adapted the verbal games of Baroque paradox. In this case, it was enough to recall that Byron, who wrote his Don Juan to combat the boredom of English of his time, had said that Shakespeare is better read in Italian.

Other poets, like César Moro, wrote in French. Vallejo also introduced some features of French into his poetry. A place full of people is said in French to be “plein de monde”: “full of the world.” In as much as he was a new speaker of French, like César Moro, Vallejo enjoyed those paradoxes of involuntary humor that arise when languages cross. In a poem from España, aparta de mí este cáliz (Spain, Let This Cup Pass From Me), dedicated to the Spanish Civil War, Vallejo sings of the death of a militiaman, and concludes: “Su cadáver estaba lleno de mundo”: “His corpse was full of world” (Trans. Eshleman and Rubia Barcia). He was a dead soldier of cosmic dimension.

Vallejo was the one who put into doubt most radically the use of the Spanish language. I want to write, he said, but I get stuck, because there is no spoken cipher that does not end up as mist and there is no written pyramid without a center. That is, I have a lot to say but I can’t write it
because to do so I would have to use language, which is successive and requires an order; besides, to write a poem demands a center and verbal unity. That condemnation of the poem to the nature of language impedes him from writing. How to write without using language? By writing poorly, he responds in *Trilce*, from the margins of incongruence and pathos. And he proposes, in consequence, a poetics of erasure: he erases referential connections and produces an organic and naked speech of crude emotion with which he mounts a sharp critique of representation, that is, of the material loss of the world in language. In this extreme poetry, the Spanish language thinks itself residually, and at the same time, by forging itself as the living image of the world.

Lorca had explored the light and circular forms of the Arabic poem, where speech flows like verbal time and traces an arabesque in its current. And in *Poeta en Nueva York* (*Poet in New York*) he demonstrated his deep coincidence with Vallejo in favoring the organic force of speech against writing. Aleixandre turned to the associative language of dreams in the Freudian scene. Lazily, his critics believed that his “communicative” poetry was better, when actually his poetry that disputes the rationality of over-codified communication is superior. Nicanor Parra nurtured his poetry from the fount of mathematics and English philosophy of language to dismantle the lyric as an expressive extravagance and recover the irony of popular diction as common knowledge. José Lezama Lima returned to the sources of the Baroque to convert the poem into the ceremonial space of a language that is indebted to the fecundity of the image. Carlos Germán Belli has forged a baroque style made of technical terms, colloquial speech and classical forms, whose *chiaroscuro* is a scene of

José-Miguel Ullán opens up words from within in order to render them through drawing as another language, freer and more playful, capable of remaking the very writing of the world as a universal exposition of the powers of the graphic. Julia Castillo polishes her poems like timeless bones, incantations engraved in verbal geography made clear thanks to coded obscurity. Reina María Rodríguez plots the circular fluidity of speech as a map of the affective world; Juan Carlos Flores owes much to the genius of the art of random surprise, capable of giving form to uncertainty; Arturo Carrera, to the baroque ritual inherent in the speech which inhabits us; Coral Bracho, to the poem as a generative instrument without explanation,
as pure event. Those poets, among several others, have demonstrated the unfathomable creativity of Spanish, filtered by dialogue and opened up by textuality, capable of saying everything again in an unfolding of possible combinations, plots and networks of voice, image, graphics, and the poetic workings of writing in pursuit of a referent of mutual liberation and spaces under construction. Poetry, in all other respects, has not given up searching for the reverberation of speech in time, whose Latin model of oral liveliness and whose Anglo-American breed of vocative immediacy have been made into a pattern of utterance, emotional duration and dialogic wit, from the fresh diction of Ernesto Cardenal, the transparent image of Claribel Alegría, the introspective dialogue of Fernández Retamar, the intimate melancholy of Juan Gelman, the noble clarity of José Emilio Pacheco, the joyful brio of Antonio Cisneros, and the street baroque of Roger Santiváñez...

In the novel, Juan Goytisolo has vindicated time and again the narrative of invention, which he continues to practice, putting into question dominant representations, anachronistic notions of casticismo, and the trivializations of the literary marketplace. Julián Ríos is the one who has taken the dismantling of Spanish narrative language the farthest, in a practice of rupture created by wit and humor, whose subverting consequences we can verify today in the contemporary Spanish novel—transatlantic in its vocation, thanks to Borges, and postnational, thanks to Goytisolo. Diamela Eltit, for her part, has explored the marginal spaces where the word of the other questions the occupation of the public, making literary space a restitution of sites at once poetic and political, that is, dialogic. In no literature like the Chilean of this century is the intelligibility of space disputed; as place (phantasmatic drama and emptied out), and disinhabited (occupied by the market). Space turns political: evidence of the irresolvable discontent of community lost in the face of relentless power.

It was a Peruvian narrator of powerful poetic persuasion, José María Arguedas (1911-1969), who in making Spanish speak from Quechua would demonstrate that regional languages still have much to accomplish not only regarding the values of their own independence but in the cultural space of compatibility, that capacity for the articulation of Andean culture and the Quechua language, whose syntax unfolds creating the space of an epistemology of fortuitous design. I propose to designate this incorporating syntax as a baroque algorithm. A principle of appropriation and displacement that does not erase the terms which are added together, but rather negotiates the place of each form in the dynamic of its occurrence, unfolded towards the future.

Before the dilemma of what language to write in, Arguedas opted for a
Spanish within which Quechua resonates as matrix, translation, substrate and bilingual project. His is not a mixed language but an interpolated language, where mixture is a trace but above all a space under construction or, better yet, a space in the process of being invented. In *Los ríos profundos* (Deep Rivers) (1968), like Cervantes in the *Quijote*, Arguedas tells of the apprenticeship the speaker of a new language undergoes in order to wield his own. The full communication of the natural world is the model for his Quechua language, and the conflictive communication of his social world is the hierarchization imposed by the Spanish language, which he confronts, lays siege to and makes his own. If in Peru a man cannot speak freely with another, given the extreme and archaic social stratification, over the course of social conflicts Spanish comes to learn Quechua, and Quechua, to speak Spanish. The novel, one might say, is written in a language no one speaks; it is not written only in Spanish, but neither is it written only in Quechua. It is recounted in a Spanish enunciated from within Quechua. It is, thus, a poetic language that invents its future reader. Because it is the language we Peruvians would speak if we were bilingual. A polyglot community occupies the future as its origin.

What do Quechua and Catalan, Aymara and Galician, Guaraní and Basque, Mapuche and Bable have in common? Spanish, I will assert, as a mediating language. The languages that are spoken with Spanish can cross over its authoritarian genealogy and by liberating it from bureaucracy and restrictive power, can recover its critical horizon in the plurilingualism that they add to us. Nothing would be less modern than to condemn ourselves to monolingualism. The literature that makes up this varied family, in spite of the traumas and traps of the past that insists on repeating itself, is already a community of the future. In Iberian-American cultural history, literature has always been a communicative utopia.

In the nineteenth century, philology had been the discipline that accompanied the national state. Thanks to it, each European country located a founding text implicated in the origins of the formation of the state. Andrés Bello restored to us the *Cantar de Mio Cid* (*Song of the Cid*) as one of its first attentive editors. From London, where he had as an interlocutor Blanco White, it occurred to him that we Latin Americans needed for Spain to have a founding text in order for her to be a modern civilization and our point of reference. The *Song of the Cid* had been considered a barbaric text, but Bello demonstrated the contrary: its plot was elaborated in a refined metric, which came from the learned memory of Romance. That philology might be a verbal history of the future is not the least discovery of the polyglot Humanism of Bello, Darío, Alfonso Reyes and Borges, who saw in names not only the object but also its setting, not only the subject but also its freedom. Borges
practiced a later history of the language, not the history of origins, which are another discourse, but of the simultaneous concurrence of language, which Octavio Paz conceived of as contemporary citizenship. Borges, one might say, un-founded Spanish origins, liberating its most vital literature from regional obligations, topological manners of speaking, and biographies that substitute for the work. Not in vain have Spanish narrators and poets of this century taken as their own the inventive intelligence of Borges's deconstructive operation and now seek to do it all over again.

Alfonso Reyes must have carried out the first great Atlantic cultural summation, not as a mere encyclopedic leveling, but as a permanent affirmation of difference, made from the side of the future, which in his weighty discourse is always liberal and at times, prudently radical. For that reason, he said that Fernando de los Ríos, upon leaving jail, flashed a smile "more liberal than Spanish." Smiles, he allowed, do not require discussion. Reyes had us converse with Greeks and Latins to improve our contemporaneity. But today we can appreciate better his work as a precursor for making Brazil part of the American figure of modern cultural summation, in spite of the fact that the conservative mob chose him as their target and came to dismiss his ambassadorship as "communist." He wrote chronicles, stories and poems, even articles of basic information, during his laborious diplomatic period while stationed in Río de Janeiro. The joyful astonishment of that body of work precedes the writings of Emir Rodríguez Monegal by making contemporary Brazilian literature a frontier without borders, of mutual transit and mutual intelligence. The writings of Haroldo de Campos are a parallel attempt to convert translation into another form of celebratory conversation. Haroldo resolved the Brazilian discussion of the place of Gregorio de Matos in that literature (whether it corresponded to the 17th century or to his modern discovery) by postulating a textual beginning: the Baroque as a displacement of origins. A great translator of all the languages he tried to read, he came to terms with the present as a time without beginning or end, as a pure geotextuality, polyglot and happy. He coincided, knowingly, with Lezama Lima, another antiencyclopedic encyclopedist, with his thesis that the American mode of representation is indebted to the Baroque, to the full maturity of the Spanish language.

I would like to argue that Brazilian culture, from the poetics of modernista Anthropophagy to the migration sagas of Nélida Piñón and Moacyr Scliar, up to the dexterity of its current poetry, joined like communicating vessels to the Hispano-American, has been constructing what will be one of the literary horizons of this century: Spanish/Portuguese dialogism, that other bilingualism under way, whose political strength and multilingual vocation can well erect one of the literary spaces of the future, which among us is always the part rescued from history. Given the globalization of the market
and its attendant rights, that cultural territory is affirmed as a compatible promise. To the hypothesis under construction of a *baroque algorithm*, the Brazilian lesson adds its anti-traumatic horizon and its future tradition. Brazil will be the American space from which this century proves the existence of Latin America.

These correspondences of spaces under interpolated construction are, if nothing else, confirmed by the fact that the inclusive end of the spectrum, that figure of rhetoric in which the Atlantic reading is most prodigious, is also at stake, this century, in Cuba. One of the smallest countries of Spanish-speaking humanity, where all the phases of modernity were rehearsed, has dedicated itself completely to its historic and artistic culture, which is parallel to the Brazilian (exceptionalists, Baroque, and products of mixture: Atlantic, the one; Lusitanian, the other); and whose literary allegory is animated by the same poetic certainty of the future which gives such vigor to the Orígenes generation and Brazilian modernism. Those poles of alternating current appear to us as two spaces of prodigious textuality, inclusive of Africa and Asia, and against ideological predictions, as decisive at the hour of sharing the wagers of the most critical, and the most creative, language.

Montaigne had shown himself to be desirous of participating in this transatlantic conversation. He thought that the discovery of the New World was a major human adventure, and he hired sailors who had been in the Caribbean so that they might narrate to him their odyssey. But he concluded that they were poor informants and even worse conversationalists. Melancholically, he imagined himself conversing with Plato instead.

Montaigne wrote the following: “I am sorry that Lycurgus and Plato did not know these American peoples because these nations surpass the paintings of the Golden Age . . . . It is a people, I would tell Plato, in which there are neither rich nor poor. . . . The very words that signify lying and envy . . . are unknown to them.”

It is extraordinary that he thought that, contrary to the European languages, where he considered these words to be prominent, they might be unknown in the languages of the Americas. In that Atlantic alterity, he saw a conversation yet to be had.

I would like to propose that we think of transatlantic literature as an intent to reconstruct the public square of common languages, from the perspective of an international Humanism and departing from the model of mixture, which continues to be the principle of modernity *par excellence*. This construction of inclusive spaces passes through the radical questioning of authoritarian language, in order to take up again in its full dialogic contemporaneity the civilization of the naked voice, which Levinas postulated as ethical certainty. The critique of language, which is our genealogy of the future, will permit
us to exorcise the ideological monster that ravages our tongue.

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**SOURCES**


