

# **Beyond the Fantastic**

Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America

Edited by Gerardo Mosquera

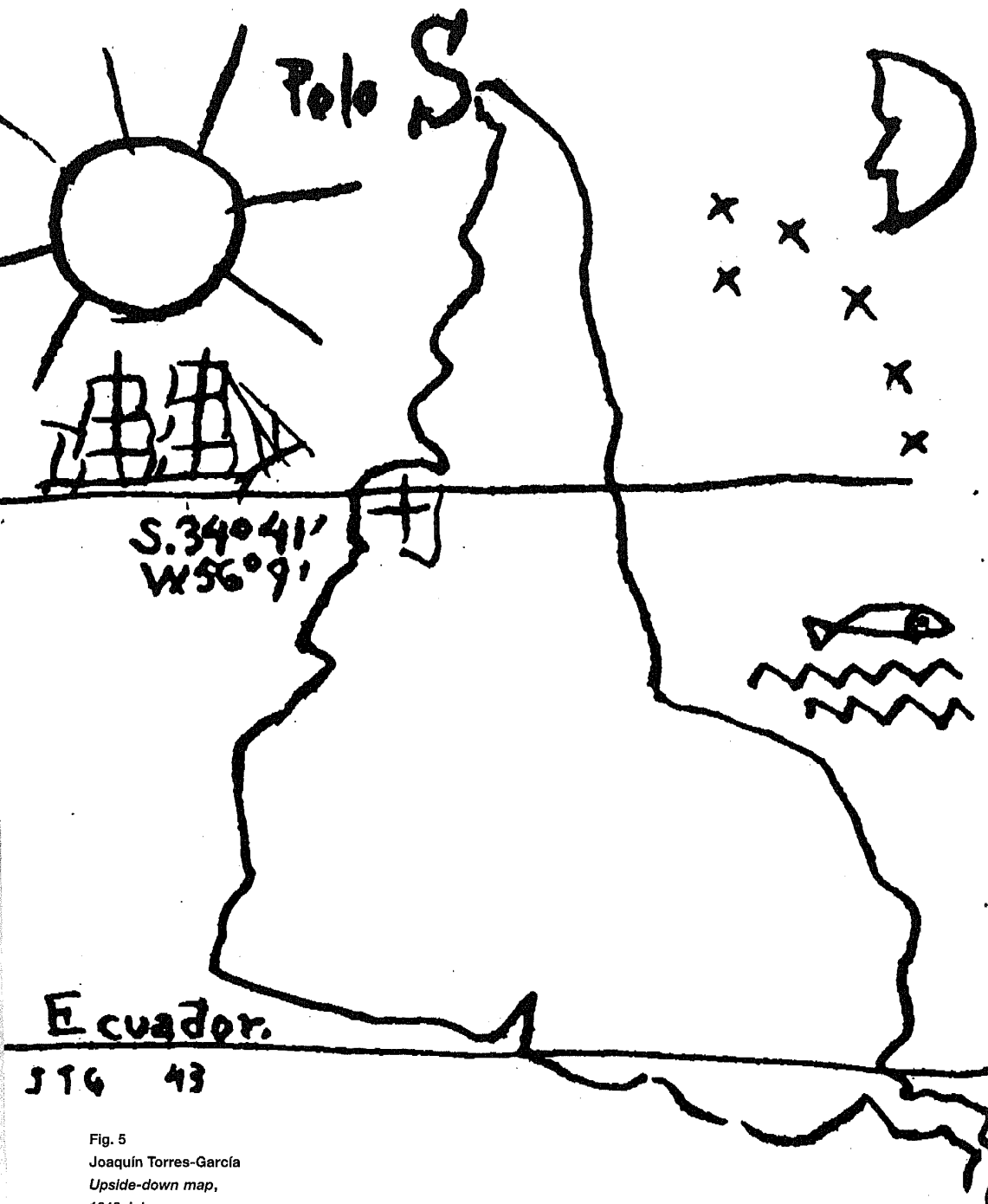


Fig. 5  
Joaquín Torres-García  
Upside-down map,  
1943, ink on paper  
Torres García Family  
Collection, Montevideo

## Strategies of Modernity in Latin America

Andrea Giunta

'It starts with a story, almost a parable.' (Mário de Andrade)

Around 1570 the *curacas* (chiefs of the 'ayllu' or Indian community) of Huamanga – a region in the heart of the old Inca Empire – surprisingly joined forces with other Andean chiefs to offer Philip II of Spain an enormous bribe to end the *encomienda* system.<sup>1</sup> Their offer was 100,000 ducados more than that of any of the Spanish *encomenderos* interested in maintaining the system.

This bribe was not the last strategy of the *curacas* during the first stage of the Conquest. Once the Inca Empire was dissolved in 1532 those communities freed from oppression chose to ally themselves with the Spanish in a series of negotiations between *encomenderos* and *curacas*.<sup>2</sup> These negotiations show the Indians' capacity for developing strategies when faced with the devastating power of the Conquest, and their ability to adapt them as new situations arose.<sup>3</sup> With the discovery of gold and silver in Atunsulla (1560) and mercury in Huancavelica (1563), Huamanga became an important mineral region, crucial to the colonial economy. Indians, either individually or collectively, found ways of making the most of new economic developments. They even proved to be aggressive entrepreneurs, sending representatives to open mines in the gold *sierras* abandoned by the Incas. But it was precisely mining and the devastating effect of the *mita*<sup>4</sup> that underlined the irreconcilable interests on which these initial agreements were based. *Curacas* refused to work in the mines and hostility increased. The final strategy was force. Huamanga burned in the epoch-making revolt of Taqui-Ongo.<sup>5</sup>

### Them and Us

The 'encounter of two worlds' was marked by certain characteristics. In its first version the image of the New World was defined by its difference from the Old. The European *logos* was forced to stretch itself to cope with a new and diverse reality, which, not fitting the patterns, was inevitably distorted in this process. This was a conflict that affected, above all, language. In response to this, Alejo Carpentier was to propose the use of localisms, even of exoticisms, as an answer to his question: 'Are we to suffer the anguish of Hernán Cortés when he complained to Charles V of not being able to describe certain great things in America "because I do not know the words by which they are known"?'<sup>6</sup> The dispute between a reality and a language that tried to describe it is revealed in a graphic and eloquent manner by Carpentier in *El siglo de las luces*:

Esteban was astonished as he realized how, in these islands, language had been

forced to use agglutination, verbal amalgamation and metaphor to translate the formal ambiguity of things in which various essences were involved. Just as many trees were called 'acacia-bracelets', 'pineapple-porcelain', 'wood-rib', 'broom-ten', 'cousin-clover', 'pine-kernel-jug', 'tisane-cloud', 'branch-iguana', many marine creatures were given names that by trying to fix an image, created verbal errors, giving origin to a fantastic zoology of dog-fish, bull-fish, tiger-fish, snorers, blowers, flyers, red-coloured, striped, tattooed, tawnys . . .<sup>7</sup>

Columbus arrived in America with a clear image of what he was going to find. Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, Pliny's *Historia Natural* (in its 1489 Italian version), Aeneas Sylvius's *Historiae Rerum Ubique Gestarunt*, and Marco Polo's *Voyages* (1485), were the sources from which he could select the images that would shape his perception of foreign worlds. Columbus did not discover, he verified and identified, mutilated and reduced. He started a long tradition of interpreting the reality of America through the reality of Europe, ignoring indigenous perceptions of it.<sup>8</sup> Our image was made through a deforming mirror reflection. Our cultural development has been marked by being defined in terms of the 'other'.

Modernity is another great organizational discourse with symbolic and interpretative value (after the Conquest and along with nationality), and continues this tradition of 'relative to . . . ' definitions. Our most typical means of operation has been transgression of central discourse to communicate with a different reality.

### Tactics and Strategies

The *curacas* of Huamanga demonstrated that they were not lacking in understanding. The intention and the fact of bribing are significant in many ways. First they prove that, faced with the appalling conditions created by the Conquest, the *curacas* could develop an economic strategy. It also shows that Indians – contrary to what one may tend to believe – understood the workings of a monetary economy, even to the point of accumulating cash reserves. Finally, we can see that when the original alliances stopped working, they were able to change them. The *curacas* of Huamanga proved to be excellent strategists.

To speak of cultural strategies implies a conflict with something diverse and opposed. To develop a strategy it is essential to have previous knowledge of a situation in order to attack it through several tactics. It also implies finding weak spots that suggest ways to subvert an established order. Alternatively, it can be undermined through alliances, counter-discourses, value inversions, appropriations, mixtures, hybridizations, and even the practice of a certain clandestinity, creating a

history of schemes and wit. One can borrow in order to develop one's own version, turn it upside down, deform, and selectively and intentionally assimilate.

Modernity in Latin America was a misappropriated and modified project. An educated and travelling intelligentsia built up alliances between a project born in the context of nascent capitalism in the nineteenth century and a discordant periphery. However, they soon realized the contradiction in singing the praises of technology and the machine age in countries where there were few cars (and those were imported) or roads on which to experience the heady excitement of speed.

Borges, Mariátegui and Vallejo all suggested an initial inversion of values. They coincided in criticizing the ideology of novelty.<sup>9</sup> Peripheral strategies relativize the absolute truths of dominant discourse (be they of unlimited progress or 'the end of history'). By deconstructing this discourse they can find the relevant parts and rebuild it in relation to a diverse object. Latin American culture has worked in this way since it first gained independence. To formulate strategies and tactics requires an intelligent use of arms and tools, in this case cultural.

### The Strategy of Swallowing

Few images are as successful as that of swallowing: eating the white man, devouring and digesting him. That which will nourish is selected and the negative parts are discarded. The swallowing metaphor was radically developed by the Brazilian avant-garde. Marked as an inaugural fact, it was also felt to be the start of a history that even required a new date-system, a chronological mark to vindicate the value of anthropophagy.<sup>10</sup>

The revolt against the past born of the ideology of the new – an uprising marked in Latin America by Futurist discourse and by its iconoclastic choice, which was simultaneously foundational – was mixed with other elements from the very outset. Inaugural utopia arose in Brazil with a local rhythm that sought to establish differences from the beginning. The cult of the machine had a coffee aroma. In 'Atelier', Oswald de Andrade 'tropicalizes' the urban scenery from the tropicalized image of a Tarsila do Amaral, 'Caipirinha vestida por Poiré':

Fords  
Viaducts  
Coffee aroma  
In a framed silence.<sup>11</sup>

From Amazonia to the big city, Macunaíma's migratory journey also superimposes

scenes. Mário de Andrade also questions the belligerences of language that are now disputes translated into a *bricolage* of discourses, quotations and meta-narratives.<sup>12</sup> It is a conflict that leaves Macunaíma for a week 'unable to eat, play or sleep just because he wanted to know the languages of the land'.<sup>13</sup>

São Paulo had a transformational impact that found montage to be the only way not to impoverish its description:

... A new scale ... A new form of industry, of aviation. Pylons. Petrol stations. Rails. Laboratories and technical workshops. Voices and clicking cables, and airwaves and flashing lights.<sup>14</sup>

It was a landscape ripe for Futurism that, in opposition to the substitutional break with the past beloved of the Italian movement, would propose a new image charged with localisms. It would vindicate invention and surprise from a culture that already existed 'in fact'; a complex reality, superimposed and impossible to abandon.

The shacks of saffron and ochre among the greens of the hillside favelas, under cabraline blue, are aesthetic facts. The Carnival in Rio is the religious outpouring of our race. Pau-Brazil. Wagner yields to the samba school of Botafogo. Barbaric, but ours ...

The learned side. Fate of the first white colonizer, the political master of the virgin jungle. The graduate. We can't stop being learned. Doctors. Country of anonymous pain, anonymous doctors. The Empire was like that. We are all erudite ...

Language free of archaisms, free of erudition. Natural and neological. The millionfold contribution of error. How we speak. How we are.<sup>15</sup>

The battle for the new, which in the 1922 Week of Modern Art still lacked a distinctive visual aesthetic, would vindicate the option of also starting from what is given.<sup>16</sup> From this reality Pau-Brazil inverted values and launched its export plan for a culture that assimilates all it can in a new creation:

One lone battle – the battle for the way forward. Let us distinguish: imported poetry. And Pau-Brazil Poetry, for export.<sup>17</sup>

Markets, letters, industrial and telegraph towers, hillsides, fruits, cubes, are all filtered through an aesthetic that mixes Art Deco with Légeresque Cubism; Tarsila do

Amaral's landscapes define the new in terms of the different. Nature is hot, rationalized, anthropomorphic and anthropophagite. In *Abaporu* (fig. 7) the whole painting is filled with a man, naked, whose giant size is greater than nature. The anamorphic body extracts its meaning from the land on which it rests. The man-eating man is, for Oswald de Andrade, the Brazilian devourer of cultures, the creator of an existent culture that refounds, through each appropriation, its own culture:

Tupy, or not Tupy, that is the question.

Down with all catechisms. And down with the mother of Gracchi.

The only things that interest me are those that are not mine. The laws of men. The laws of the anthropophagite ... Justice became a code of vengeance and Science was transformed into magic. Anthropophagy. The permanent transformation of taboo into totem.<sup>18</sup>

The *Pau-Brazil Manifesto* (1924) and *Anthropophagite Manifesto* (1928, fig. 6) proposed the revaluation of (primitive) elements of nationality. Through a radical inversion of values, they searched for a new synthesis. Haroldo de Campos defined the anthropophagy of Pau-Brazil as: '... the theory of a critical swallowing of a universal cultural legacy, developed not from the passive and acceptable perspective of the "noble savage" ... but rather from the uncompromising viewpoint of the "bad savage", the one that eats white men, the cannibal ... Any past that is for us "other" should be ignored. In other words, it should be eaten and devoured. With this clarification: the cannibal is a "polemicist" (from the Greek *polemos*: fight, combat), but also an "anthologist": he only eats those enemies he considers to be brave, to eat their protein and marrow, to gain strength and renew their natural strengths.'<sup>19</sup>

### The Inverted Map

In 1935 Joaquín Torres-García launched his text-manifesto *La Escuela del Sur* ('The School of the South'). Forceful and didactic, Torres translated into images what he may have thought as he saw the port of Montevideo from the ship in which he returned after forty-three years of absence, on 30 April 1934:

Montevideo is unique. It has a character so peculiarly its own that it is unmistakable. It is apparent when you see the Cerro; and then its port; and it is perfectly fulfilled in the plazas, Independencia and Matriz.<sup>20</sup>

With the foundation, with Michel Seuphor, of *Cercle et Carré* (1930), Torres-García

Fig. 6  
*Anthropophagite*  
 Manifesto in *Revista*  
 de *Antropofagia*, 1928

Revista de Antropofagia

3

## MANIFESTO ANTROPOFAGO

Só a antropofagia nos une. Socialmente. Economicamente. Filosoficamente.

Única lei do mundo. Expressão mascarada de todos os individualismos, de todos os colectivismo. De todas as religiões. De todos os tratados de paz.

Tupy, or not tupy that is the question.

Contra toda as cathecheses. E contra a mãe dos Gracchos.

Só me interessa o que não é meu. Lei do homem. Lei do antropofago.

Estamos fadados de todos os maridos catholicos suspeitosos postos em drama. Freud acabou com o enigma mulher e com outros sustos da psychologia impressa.

O que atropelava a verdade era a roupa, o impermeavel entre o mundo interior e o mundo exterior. A reacção contra o homem vestido. O cinema americano informa-rá.

Filhos do sol, mãe dos viventes. Encontrados e amados ferozmente, com toda a hypocrisia da saudade, pelos imigrados, pelos traficados e pelos tou-ristas. No palz da cobra grande.

Foi porque nunca tivemos gram-maticas, nem col-lecções de velhos vegetaes. E nunca soubemos o que era urbano, suburbano, fronteiriço e continental. Preguicosos no mappa mundi do Brasil.

Uma consciencia participante, una rythmica religiosa.

Contra todos os importadores de consciencia enlatada. A existencia palpavel da vida. E a mentalidade prelogica para o Sr. Levy Bruhl estudar.

Queremos a revolução Carahiba. Maior que a revolução Francesa. A unificação de todas as revoltas ef-ficazes na direcção do homem. Sem nós a Europa não teria sequer a sua

polbre declaração dos direitos do homem.

A idade de ouro annunciada pela America. A idade de ouro. E todas as girls.

Filiação. O contacto com o Brasil Carahiba. Oú Villeganthon print terre. Montaigne. O homem natural. Rousseau. Da Revolução Francesa ao Romantismo, á Revolução Bol-chevista, á Revolução surrealista e ao barbaro technizado de Keyserling. Caminhamos.

Nunca fomos cathechizados. Vive-mos através de um direito sonambu-lo. Fizemos Christo nascer na Ba-hia. Ou em Belem do Pará.

Mas nunca admittimos o nasci-mento da logica entre nós.

Só podemos attender ao mundo oreular.

Tinhamos a justiça codificação da vingança A sciencia codificação da Magia. Antropofagia. A transforma-ção permanente do Tabú em to-tem.

Contra o mundo reversível e as idéas objectivadas. Cadaverizadas. O stop do pensamento que é dyna-mico. O individuo victima do syste-ma. Fonte das injustiças classicas. Das injustiças romanticas. E o es-quecimento das conquistas interio-res.

Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Ro-teiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros.

O instincto Carahiba.

Morte e vida das hypothe-ses. Da equação eu parte do Kosmos ao axioma Kosmos parte do eu. Subsistencia. Co-nhecimento. Antropofagia.

Contra as elites vegetaes. Ein comunicação com o sólo.

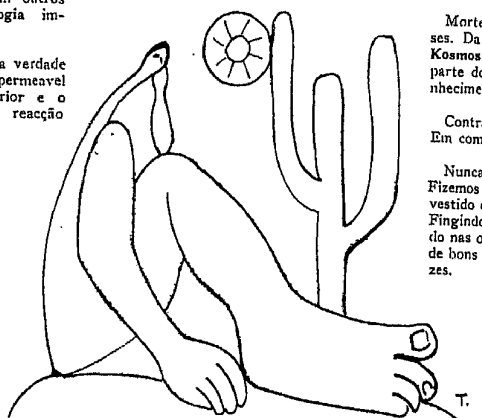
Nunca fomos cathechizados. Fizemos foi Carnaval. O indio vestido de senador do Imperio. Fingindo de Pitt. Ou figuran-do nas operas de Alencar cheio de bons sentimentos portugue-zes.

Já tinhamos o comunismo. Já ti-nhamos a lingua surrealista. A eda-de de ouro. Catiti Catiti Imara Notia Notia Imara Ipejú

A magia e a vida. Tinhamos a rela-ção e a distribuição dos bens phy-sicos, dos bens moraes, dos bens di-gnarios. E sabiamos transpor o mys-terio e a morte com o auxilio de al-gumas formas grammaticaes.

Perguntei a um homem o que era o Direito. Elle me respondeu que era a garantia do exercicio da pos-sibilidade. Esse homem chamava-se Galli Mathias. Comi-o

Só não ha determinismo - onde ha misterio. Mas que temos nós com isso?



Desenho de Tarcila 1928 - De um quadro que figurará na sua proxima exposiçao de Junho na galeria Perle, em Paris.

Contra o Padre Vieira. Autor do nosso primeiro emprestimo, para ganhar commissão. O rei analpha-beto dissera-lhe: ponha isso no papel mas sem muita labia. Fez-se o em-prestimo. Gravou-se o assucar bra-sileiro. Vieira deixou o dinheiro em Portugal e nos trouxe a labia,

O espirito recusa-se a conceber o espirito sem corpo. O antropomor-fismo. Necessidade da vaccina an-tropofagica. Para o equilibrio contra as religiões de meridiano. E as in-quisições exteriores.

had been a protagonist of the avant-garde in Europe. The development of his production connected successively to Mediterranean Classicism, Vibracionismo, Cubism, Fauvism; and the incorporation in his final Paris visit of the Golden Section and of a formal repertoire linked to pre-Columbian cultures had become by 1934 the form of a programme that Torres would redefine on arriving in Montevideo.<sup>21</sup> The journey was a break for him. It is significant that *Historia de mi vida* (the autobiography that Torres narrates in the third person, from outside, as though it were about another person) ends precisely with his arrival in Uruguay, where he started a task of, first of all, recognition:

The steamship enters into the port, looks for a place and . . . over there a group of people. Torres-García has very fine eyesight and can already recognize them . . . He is among his own! Now he recognizes it well! He breathes. Then he recognizes the houses and the paving stones, with little pieces of grass between them! That's them, the same ones! And for the rest about Torres-García, someone else will tell.<sup>22</sup>

What Torres did not find in the artistic field that he entered on his return he searched for in houses, colours, the air, the great River Plate, the special and different appearance of people (a type based simultaneously on the European, the Indian *mestizo* or the negro).<sup>23</sup> It was a different city in which Torres denied precisely the distinguishing features of modernity visible in the new neighbourhoods, in as much as these traces of modernity were not his own ones. At this point Torres started to use his characteristic method of searching for a synthesis in opposed elements: dynamic syntheses that, in their contradictions, demonstrate the complex mixtures of a culture for which he wants to define a programme that is both sacrificial and integral.

Torres's concern is not with written or spoken language but with forms. His gesture takes on a graphic and visual form. To invert the map is a decontextualizing and resemanticizing operation. Once again it is the inaugural gesture of wanting to establish new parameters, which are now spatial:

. . . *Our north is the South*. There should be no north for us, except in opposition to our South.

That is why we now turn the map upside down, and now we know what our true position is, and it is not the way the rest of the world would like to have it. From now on, the elongated tip of South America will point insistently at the South, our North. Our compass as well; it will incline irremediably and

forever towards the South, towards our pole. When ships sail from here travelling north, they will be *travelling down*, not up as before. Because the North is now below. And as we face our South, the East is to our left.

This is a necessary rectification; so that now we know where we are.<sup>24</sup>

The act of inversion implies a fundamentally ideological replacing; it marks a new stage, aiming for independence, for Latin American art. Torres's aesthetic programme, formed in a European context and led on by the interest in the exotic that fed the avant-garde of the central countries, would acquire a new dimension from its confrontation with a diverse reality in which currents of Latin Americanist thought circulated intensely.<sup>25</sup>

Neither Mondrian nor all the theories on geometry and abstraction born in the European context can explain Torres's development in Montevideo. This development is not visible from a reading that interprets him as an epigonal figure. What is more, it was only in Montevideo that Torres could realize his original project. Thus these are the developments that follow a full understanding of his earlier itinerary in Europe and the USA.<sup>26</sup>

While it is true that Torres always expressed his rejection of aestheticism, it was in the country to which he returned that his proposals to integrate art with life from the perspective of a retroactive utopia were received and accepted. It was also in Montevideo that Torres developed the corpus of his theories; it was there that he would launch a monumental didactic programme; and there, finally, that he would give form to his aspirations to create an anonymous, popular, monumental, metaphysical and ritual art.

Torres's intention was foundational. Thus he added a strategy of vacuum to the significant gesture of inverting the map. Considering Uruguay to be lacking in a strong local tradition, he proposed to use the universal tradition of art as a starting point, a constructive tradition to which the 'continental Inca civilization' also belonged:

... [for] we *rioplatenses*<sup>27</sup>, as regards *local tradition*, or one of our own, [it] is so short as not to warrant discussion. Habits and customs, folklore ... should be forgotten before they are remembered ...

This is true as regards our immediate tradition because, on the other hand, can we not rely on the *civilization of our Continent*?

... if the ancient culture of this land can still be valid for us, it is because it is in line with the universal principles. For this reason, these cultures can

incorporate themselves into the great tradition of knowledge of all ages.<sup>28</sup>

To not take a line or motif of Inca art, but instead to create with the ruler, with geometric order. The extreme austerity characteristic of Torres's work in the years following his return can be understood as the most radical expression of an art that, overcoming all temptation (pictorial, vanguard, realist), allows him to create an anonymous and monumental art. The abandoning of all sensual elements would become the pictorial expression of that stony and monumental art that was his ultimate aspiration.<sup>29</sup>

Torres's utopia, simultaneously retrospective and foundational, synthesized the most extreme aspirations of European modernity. With his return journey to Montevideo his original ideas would be submitted to a series of inversions that would allow him to reformulate his project and make America the measure of the Universe.

### Appropriation of Appropriation

When Wifredo Lam created *The Jungle* (1942–3, fig. 20) in Cuba he repeated an act that the European avant-garde had done previously and which he now charged with a subversive content. Lam took the forms and structures of Cubism, which had itself appropriated the forms and structures of primitive art, in a movement that he himself described as intentional:

Since my stay in Paris I had a fixed idea: to take African art and to make it operate in its own world, in Cuba. I needed to express in a work combative energy, the protest of my ancestors.<sup>30</sup>

However, rather than repeating a form of operation, Lam wanted a rebellion based on a vindication of cultural mixture. This mix has much more to do with his own pictorial formation than with ethnicity. His development also allows one to reconstruct a double itinerary: the consolidation process of the Latin American artistic field and that of the European avant-gardes.

On Lam's biographical 'journey' he stopped over at the best ports offered by Western culture at the time. From Cuba, Lam constructed his first imaginary map of Europe: Paris, the Louvre, Catalonia, Chardin, Anglada Camarasa.<sup>31</sup> He started his academic formation in San Alejandro, Havana, and completed it in the Prado with Fernando Alvarez de Sotomayor: José Ribera, Pedro Berruguete, Diego Velázquez, Goya, Zurbarán, knowing Klee and Brancusi (which would take on another dimension when he met Picasso in Paris). This journey was also the confrontation of the magical

world of his birth town (Sagua la Grande) with Spain's religious world.<sup>32</sup> And it gave him experience of an event that cut across the intellectual world of the 1930s: the Spanish Civil War. Subsequently, Paris, Picasso, Leiris, Marseille's Surrealism with his images for Breton's *Fata Morgana*, then the return to Cuba with a new starting point.

European modernity's appropriation of 'primitive' formal structures as food for a self-centred discourse was imitated and disarticulated as an operative system in Lam's work after his return to Cuba. He made the mechanisms of the centre evident, repeated them and charged them with a new meaning. He fed from their usurped forms. He expressed his 'otherness' in the central discourse so as to insert it, alive, into the universalizing discourses of modernity. Thus it was discovered that what, in European discourse, was a horizon of desires or the object of a laboratory experiment, in the Caribbean was the latent everyday, hidden and suppressed since the Conquest and slavery.

Lam, in common with other Latin American intellectuals, managed to establish an undoubtedly privileged position through his cultural travels. This was owing to his coexistence from childhood with America's cultural mix and because he also shared and participated in the European cultural and social laboratory. Lam did not observe the West from outside, he rather recognized himself and learnt. It is all this heritage that allowed him to undertake new researches upon his return. A knowledge of the decontextualizing operations of the European avant-gardes allowed him in turn to decontextualize the forms of the avant-garde to charge them with revolutionary and prophetic contents. And not only with the forms, but also with the utopian telos of modernity, allowing him to conceive his programme as the start of a different time. Lam repeated the pillaging gesture he had learnt, using whatever served his purpose of giving form to a different culture for which he had, through his journeys, developed a new vision that he now proposed as a recontextualizing programme.

In *The Jungle*, the revenge of a small Caribbean country, Cuba, against the colonizers is plotted. I used the scissors as a symbol of a necessary cut against all foreign imposition in Cuba, against all colonization . . . To paint *The Jungle*, I used to the maximum the lessons learned from a study of the classics . . . I did my work like a ritual, based on experiences acquired in Spain and France.<sup>33</sup>

This inverted appropriation of the strategies of the centre by the periphery allowed Lam to refound Afro-Caribbean culture, along with Cubism and Surrealism.

As Gerardo Mosquera has said: 'It is amazing how critics and art historians have not recognized Wifredo Lam as the first artist who presented a vision from the African in America in all the history of gallery visual arts.'<sup>34</sup>

Lam is a protagonist of the modern construction of Afro-American visuality. It is a construction in which, from the baroque aspects of Cubism, he discovered the sensual outlines of a nature that is simultaneously vegetable and religious. He wrote his own modern project taking advantage of the complex receptive constitution of European modernity and feeding it, in turn, with new components. Simultaneously, he interpreted his rereading as a cut: in America, culture is both summary and project; it gives new forms from difference.

#### To be Modern in America

The cultural responses artists made when faced with contexts that the transoceanic journey would necessarily redefine were, above all, visionary gazes towards the future. As an organizational discourse of experiences and expectations in which projective and reactive components germinated in a complex jumble of culture, modernity in the periphery was also an irritative, subversive and activist proposal. A response in which nationalism, cosmopolitanism, regionalism and internationalism coexisted and fought for hegemony. A proposal that was also articulated from research in existing lexicons and catalogues and which, when the conflict proposed by these doubts demanded a renunciation of all simulation, gave rise to a discourse that aimed at a rupture and subversion of the moral, spatial and temporal parameters in which it had initially moved.

This travelling backwards through the tracks of the conquistador towards a brief voluntary exile undertaken by a sector of the enlightened intelligentsia was fed by the fantasies provided by reading and fragmentary images and was also, for this reason, a voyage of self-discovery. A construction guided by diverse data, deposited in diverse times, and to which that which came from European political history (especially regarding wars and revolutions) was not alien and which, when faced with the reality of this land until the moment of the long-awaited journey, was inevitably modified. This was a modification that would also affect the vision of Latin America when it was time to come home.<sup>35</sup>

The strategies used by Torres-García, Lam, Tarsila do Amaral or the Andrades to meditate on the cultural map of America were born of a kaleidoscopic game. Europe and America were reconfigured from shattered images, the fragments of which declared a battle to impose a new order.

Since the sixteenth century America had been an active element in the

construction of European modernity: the 'encounter of two worlds' also forced a change in the conceptualization of the world.<sup>36</sup> American modernity in turn absorbed differential characteristics that are not fully described by notions of copy, addition or epigonal development.

In the early twentieth century cultural proposals were born of strategies that implied, above all, an ideological inversion of values. To devour, mix, appropriate and reappropriate, invert, fragment and join, take central discourse, penetrate and cut through it until it becomes a useful tool for the search for and creation (plagued with achievements and failures) of our own subversive discourse: these are the exploratory ways in which some enlightened artists created their visual constructions as part of the programme of a liberational culture.

## NOTES

- 1 *Encomienda*: concession granted by the Spanish king for some Spanish colonists to receive tribute and labour from the Indians. The *encomendero* was supposed to look after the Indians financially and spiritually.
- 2 For an account of the diverse white-Indian alliances, see S Stern, 'The Rise and Fall of Indian-White Alliances: A Regional View of "Conquest"', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 6, no. 3 (August 1981).
- 3 Although I do not totally agree, I am strategically adopting a unilateral view of the Conquest. I would like to point out, however, that there is another aspect at least as important as that which I am discussing: the powerlessness of the Indians when faced with the savage destructive power (psychological, economic, demographic) of the European Conquest. On this subject, see N Wachtel, *Los vencidos: los indios del Perú frente a la conquista española (1530-1570)* (Madrid: Alianza, 1976).
- 4 *Mita*: the system (originally of Indian origin) with which the Spanish controlled Indian labour. Indians were selected to work in the mines by drawing lots [translator's note].
- 5 *Taqui-Ongo*: name of the religious sect whose beliefs spread in the 1560s in the provinces of Central Peru as a way of confronting Christianity. See Wachtel, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-9.
- 6 Alejo Carpentier, 'Problemática del tiempo y del idioma en la moderna novela latinoamericana', lecture given in Venezuela, 1975, in *Razón de ser* (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1984), p. 81.
- 7 Alejo Carpentier, *El siglo de las luces* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1980), p. 172.
- 8 See B Pastor, *El discurso narrativo de la conquista de América* (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1984), p. 24.
- 9 The young Borges, influenced by Expressionism during his stay in Europe (1914-21), discovered his natal city of Buenos Aires when he returned. This can be seen in his books, *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923), *Luna de enfrente* (1925), *Cuaderno de San Martín* (1929) and in his collection of essays *Evaristo Carriego*. In the 1930s César Vallejo also launched his attack on the avant-garde: *El tungsteno* (1931) and *España, aparta de mí ese cáliz* (1939) are in a very different vein from his most famous book *Trilce* (1922). As a compromise, Mariátegui also fought for an avant-garde that was not limited to formal issues. See Jorge Schwartz, *Las vanguardias latinoamericanas: Textos programáticos y críticos* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991).

- 10 Oswald de Andrade's *Anthropophagite Manifesto* is dated at the end 'Piratininga [Indian name for the area on which São Paulo was built in 1554, around a school founded by the Jesuits], the year 374 after the swallowing of Bishop Sardinha'. The manifesto was published in 1928.
- 11 Quoted by J Schwartz, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 12 See Raúl Antelo (ed.), *Macunaíma o herói sem nenhum caráter* (Brasília: edn Crítica CNPq, 1988), pp. 255-65.
- 13 Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma o herói sem nenhum caráter*, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
- 14 Oswald de Andrade, 'Pau-Brazil Poetry: Manifesto', in Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America* (London: South Bank Centre, 1989), p. 310.
- 15 Ades, *op. cit.*
- 16 For the Week of 1922, see Aracy Amaral's fundamental reconstruction, *Artes plásticas na Semana de 22* (São Paulo: BM&F, 1992).
- 17 Ades, *op. cit.*
- 18 Oswald de Andrade, 'Anthropophagite Manifesto', in Dawn Ades, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- 19 Haroldo de Campos, 'Da razão antropofágica: diálogo e diferença na cultura brasileira', Boletim Bibliográfico Biblioteca Mário de Andrade 44 (January-December 1983), p.107. Quoted by J Schwartz, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6.
- 20 Torres-García, *The School of the South*, 1935. Reproduced in Mari Carmen Ramírez (ed.), *El Taller Torres-García. The School of the South and Its Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), p. 53.
- 21 See Margit Rowell, 'Ordre i simbol: les fonts europees i americanes del constructivisme de Torres-García', in *Torres-García: estructura-dibuix-símbol*, exhibition catalogue (Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, 1986), pp. 15-16. The incidence and the protagonism of this culture in Torres-García's work has been evaluated in different ways. Juan Fló says: 'The influence of pre-Columbian art in Torres-García is irrelevant. The Indoamerican art, as all primitive arts and that of the main archaist cultures, are of interest to him if they are part of the art paradigm with an aesthetic sense, but not linked with an imitative representation.' See Juan Fló, *Torres-García en (y desde) Montevideo* (Montevideo: Arca, 1991), p. 48. I agree with this idea. However, I think Torres-García had an American programme. See Torres-García, *Metafísica de la prehistoria indoamericana* (Montevideo: Asociación Arte Constructivo, 1939) and many chapters of the *Universalismo Constructivo: Contribución a la unificación del arte y la cultura de América* (Buenos Aires: Poseidón, 1944).
- 22 Torres-García, *Historia de mi vida* (Barcelona: Paidós), p. 234.
- 23 An analysis of the different tendencies in this field can be found in an unpublished lecture by Gabriel Peluffo Linari, 'Regionalismo cultural y la vanguardia: el Taller Torres-García', presented in Austin, Texas, 1991.
- 24 Torres-García, *The School of the South*, 1935. Reproduced in Mari Carmen Ramírez (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- 25 The studies of the American Constructivist tradition started by Torres-García in 1938 were developed by the Asociación Arte Constructivo. This work was continued in the Taller Torres-García.
- 26 Juan Fló has written: 'Torres's Montevideo period is not only significant in itself, but also because it provides us with some important keys with which to understand his whole trajectory.' See J Fló, *op. cit.*, p. 9.



27 *Rioplatense*: literally 'of the River Plate', adjective used to characterize the shared culture of Buenos Aires and Montevideo [translator's note].

28 Torres-García, *Metafísica de la prehistoria indoamericana* (Montevideo: Asociación de Arte Constructivo, 1939). Original emphases.

29 Fló, *op.cit.*, pp. 28–9.

30 In Antonio Nuñez Jimenez, *Wifredo Lam* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982), p. 173.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 173–5.

34 Gerardo Mosquera, 'Modernismo desde afroamérica: Wifredo Lam cambia el sentido', mimeograph, p. 6.

35 For an interpretation of the transoceanic journey between Europe and America, see Nicolás Casullo's article, 'La modernidad como destierro: la iluminación de los bordes', in AA.VV. *Imágenes desconocidas. La modernidad en la encrucijada postmoderna* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 1988), pp. 31–5.

36 See Anibal Quijano, 'Modernidad, identidad y utopía en América Latina', in AA.VV. *op. cit.*, pp.17–24.