Chapter 11

The New Latin American Novel in the United States

Shortly after Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* ("The Lost Steps") had been published in 1953 in Mexico, Harriet de Onís wrote to Knopf suggesting she prepare an English translation. Critics throughout Spanish-speaking America hailed Carpentier's third novel as one of the most important books ever written in their region. Sales were strong even though the book business was depressed across Latin America. The narrator of the book is a composer living in New York City who travels deep into the interior highlands of a South American country to find an indigenous group whose music had been recorded during a previous expedition. He is to bring back examples of the group's musical instruments that may well be similar to those the earliest humans made. Given that his mission is to go back to the dawn of human society, the novel proceeds, section by section, as a series of steps back into time: from the spiritually empty but comfortable modernity of Manhattan to the urban chaos of the modernizing capital city in a country modeled after Venezuela, where the narrator arrives in the midst of a bloody uprising against the local dictator. He escapes the capital city for the nearby farmlands and ranches, where people still live much as they did in the nineteenth century. As he travels up the country's major river into the barely populated interior, he enters an America continuing in the throes of the European conquest, a world that he likens to that of the Homeric epics. Then the narrator plunges into the Stone Age of the continent's indigenous peoples, who live in a world of pure, purposeless freedom. The hero discovers an imaginative universe promising psychological wholeness to anyone prepared to scrape away everything unessential and return to the purity of origins.

Herbert Weinstock, Knopf's foreign acquisitions editor, decided to reject the work, explaining that the book was not original and was "an assemblage of highly recondite references to philosophy, music, religion." He thought that it was impossible for the book to pay back the expense involved in translating,

publishing, and marketing it.[1] In defending the book against the initial decision to reject, de Onís compared Carpentier to James Joyce and William Faulkner in terms of potential importance.[2] Weinstock promised to reconsider if a planned French edition did well.[3] The French translation appeared in 1955, and the edition won the Best Foreign Book Prize for the year, auspicious for it suggested that Carpentier was becoming a likely contender for the Nobel Prize in Literature.[4] Weinstock contacted Carpentier's agent in France and de Onís informing them that Knopf wished to move forward with an English version. He confessed, "My often-expressed despair over interesting American readers in Latin-American novels led me to be overcautious in my first reactions to *Los Pasos Perdidos*."[5]

Weinstock's initial fears that Carpentier's book would fail proved correct. The reviewer in the *New York Times* disliked the book, as did several other reviewers. However, overall critical response was positive, and often strongly so. *Time* magazine's reviewer was the most enthusiastic, and he lauded the book as one of the finest fictional accounts he had yet read of the desire "to shake off the hold of modern life" by returning "to a life more innocent and less complicated."[6] Knopf had many good quotes to excerpt for promotion, but *The Lost Steps* sold less than three thousand copies. Knopf continued with the firm's plans to produce an English-language edition of Carpentier's earlier novel *El reino de este mundo* ("The Kingdom of This World"), a historical novel set during the Haitian revolution. The book appeared in 1957 to positive reviews but sales were once again tepid. Planning for a Hollywood adaptation of *The Lost Steps* starring Tyrone Power and Gina Lollobrigida came to an abrupt end with Power's sudden death in 1958 shortly before filming was scheduled to start. With two failures in a row, Knopf decided not to publish Carpentier's *El acoso* ("Harassment"), and in 1962 declined Carpentier's newest novel, *El siglo de las luces* (released in English translation in 1963 by Little, Brown with the title *Explosion in the Cathedral*).

Successful publication in France had been a factor in Knopf's initial decision to translate Carpentier's book. At the end of World War II, Roger Caillois (1913–1978) returned to France after having spent the war years in Argentina, where he worked with Victoria Ocampo and *Sur* magazine. During his exile, Caillois read work from around the continent and met many authors, all unknown in Europe before the war.[7] Trained as a sociologist, Caillois had written on the collective dimensions of unconscious life expressed in rituals, foodways, games, folktales, and myths. He became interested in Latin American popular culture as a form of resistance to liberal modernity. Communitarian values had kept utilitarian culture at bay. The result was a people who did not need, nor were they interested in, the gadgets that the rich countries of the North wanted to sell

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them. Latin America was in the throes of a fundamentally moral revolution growing out of the region's unique historic experience. Eventually, societies would emerge that could offer an alternative to both the industrial consumerism of the United States and the bureaucratic socialism of the Soviet Union. The heroes who emerged from the deep roots of popular consciousness would not be "organization men" of either left or right, but brave individuals whose courage and sacrifice had the power to destroy the superficial, rotting edifices that Europeanized elites had created. Revolutionary heroes would bring forth new forms of government consistent with the rich interior lives of the people.

The Latin American revolution was well positioned, Caillois believed, to have global influence because much of everyday Latin American popular culture had roots going back to the ancient cultures of the Latin Mediterranean, but then had been enriched through synthesis with the values and practices of African slaves and the indigenous nations, some of which were never conquered and kept alive an understanding of freedom that the peoples of the North had forgotten.[8] The parallels to Waldo Frank's imagination of Iberian cultures as a source of redemption for the citizens of industrial countries are obvious, but there were important differences. Frank always foregrounded his personal impressions and frankly idiosyncratic interpretations of what he saw. Caillois subsumed romantic identification into a rigorous sociological apparatus that required detailed description and analysis of cultural forms. When he returned to Europe, Caillois founded and edited *Diogenes*, an interdisciplinary journal for the study of culture that UNESCO published. While working for UNESCO, Caillois edited a series translating "representative" older Latin American work into French and English. In 1951, with funding from the Centre National du Livre (National Center for the Book) to subsidize the costs of translation, Caillois launched La Croix du Sud (The Southern Cross), a series published by Gallimard, one of the country's most important presses, presenting Latin American literature in French translation. Jorge Luis Borges's *Ficciones* was the first book to appear, in 1952, and over the next nineteen years, Caillois published forty-one more books, including, almost immediately after its publication in Spanish, Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*. In announcing the series at Gallimard, Caillois declared, "In the Southern Cross collection, there will be a place for the most diverse works . . . that provide insight into the formation and development of communities and their values in a still new continent, barely tamed, where the struggle with space and nature remains severe, which possesses a unique lifestyle, and whose rich resources permit a first-rank role in the near future."[9]

A more effusive description of what Caillois hoped the series could communicate was available in a short book of prose poetry that he had previously published in 1949, *Espace américain* ("American Space"). The book's evocation of

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what America had to offer overcivilized Europeans suggests some of the reasons motivating him to introduce Latin American writing to French readers. His themes were not original; indeed, the book repeated well-known stereotypes. The book opens with a reiteration of the promise the discovery of a "new land" had meant for the "world": "Isolated by an immense expanse of water that humanity did not quickly learn to cross, for a long time this continent remained unknown to the rest of the world. And the day arrived, not long ago, when the existence of a new land beyond the Ocean was revealed to the world, aged and exhausted, ensnared in difficulties that had accumulated over the centuries."[10] Out of an Old World expiring in the poison of ideas came a trickle of refugees peopling America because they craved space and freedom. "Here is what marks this country from others," Caillois continued, "those who became Americans were, by their own will, not by birth, the beginning of a lineage. Men who had abruptly broken with their heritage had formed a new race . . . staking everything on the gamble that they could defy the future and rely only on their own abilities."[11] Leaving lands that more often than not resembled gardens so long had they been worked and reworked to serve human desires, the people who created America found themselves in hostile terrains that humans (presumably, he was referring to the indigenous peoples of the hemisphere) had previously browsed but never tamed. A new question arose: how could humans carve out a place for themselves within a universe that was already complete, that did not fear or hate the newcomers because its grandeur left it indifferent to creatures whose ambitions were infinite but whose capabilities could not overcome the long forgotten obstacles rediscovered in an untended land. From the conflict arose new peoples undefeated by nature's brutality but acutely aware of their limitations. The product of Old World illusions confronting New World realities was a new race unlike any that had preceded them: "Thicker blood runs more energetically in the veins of the children, as if they held onto something, not the failures or the fears of the fathers, but the audacity of their self-confident decision; the expansiveness of an instant continues to define them . . . [even unto] the seventh and the seventeenth generation of the new line. . . . Humanity has won a primary nobility and a strange enlargement of being."[12]

The itinerary in *Espace américain*, abstract yet poetic, previews what Caillois may have seen four years later when he read Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*, a book that echoed his own response to America in more vivid and dramatic terms, while deploying rich poetic abstractions that welded an intellectual synopsis of Western history with a deeply emotional hope that returning to a constant struggle with wilderness could be an alternative source of disciplined freedom.[13]

In addition to the deeply personal and existential questions of how imagination could redeem a "world" governed by accumulated illusions and artifices, the

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books Caillois published in La Croix du Sud made a critical contribution to ongoing debates among postwar French intellectuals over how to position themselves and their country in what appeared to be a bipolar struggle between U.S. capitalism and Soviet communism, a struggle that for many had no connection whatsoever with their own dreams of a just future, yet threatened the entire world with the fearsome specter of nuclear annihilation. The dilemmas of Latin American revolution offered a moral alternative that, at least in the mythic contexts that Caillois and others invoked, restored efficacy to individual action while simultaneously proposing that an alternative international movement was forming with the potential for challenging superpower tyranny. It was a heady, inspirational myth that influenced as well how many intellectuals around the world responded to the unexpected triumph of the Cuban revolution at the beginning of 1959. "The world is not absurd," declared Uruguayan philosopher Washington Lockhart in an essay that linked developments in Cuba to a global existential movement that French writers like Caillois had initiated in the aftermath of the Second World War. Lockhart connected contemporary French writers to Cuban revolutionaries in order to demonstrate that the only legitimate intellectual response to the crisis engulfing the world since 1945 was to be discovered in the course of action. Fidel Castro and his handful of followers had demonstrated that heroes with "luminous conscience" vindicated the dream that a "new man" and "universal harmony" would arise from the ashes of corrupt societies.[14]

Knopf's presentation of *The Lost Steps* to the U.S. reading public avoided any of the philosophical, moral, and mythic questions that had been central to discussion of the work in both Latin America and France. The Knopf correspondence files present no evidence that the publisher and his editors ever considered these questions relevant to what they needed to do. They ignored every plea to place the book within the context that had made the book successful abroad. As the U.S. publisher of André Gide, Thomas Mann, and Albert Camus, among many other writers with global reputations, Knopf had an impressive track record selling foreign literature in translation. They were acutely aware of the factors limiting what U.S. firms could learn from publishing in other countries. The Latin American book market was small. Publishers there seldom printed more than three thousand copies of a book, and success in Latin America usually meant only that the editorial house had decided to do a second, equally small print run. The French book market was of impressive size, producing a broad range of titles, but also with print runs smaller than typical for commercial publishing in the United States. The success that Carpentier and most of the Latin American authors published in the Croix du Sud series achieved was more of critical esteem, which could lead to a respectable level of sales for France, but even by French standards, only a handful of the titles that Caillois

chose for the series were "best-sellers." After the failure of *The Lost Steps*, Alfred Knopf and his editors maintained a critical attitude to proposals they received to translate Latin American literature. They looked at how well a book had done in France or elsewhere in Europe, but for the most part, reports of critical success abroad did not overcome their doubts because they saw their own market as fundamentally different.

The commercial success of Jorge Amado's novel *Gabriela, Cravo e Canel* in Brazil and France, however, did catch the attention of Knopf editors, who thought that the book might well have the ingredients to attract readers in the United States. Knopf's earlier experience publishing Amado in 1945 had been a dismal failure, and the firm had not pursued a second project with him. His new book, however, broke with his previous socialist realist emphasis on the struggles of the working class for justice. In the aftermath of the revelations of Stalin's crimes, Amado left the Brazilian Communist Party, and he began work on the first of several comic novels rooted in the popular culture of Bahia. In *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, foodways and sexual customs combined in a ribald story that used humor to examine the politics of masculine honor in the cocoa-growing region of Brazil. The book, set in the small coastal city of Ilhéus during the cocoa boom of the 1920s, begins with a jury acquitting a wealthy landowner of murder. He has killed his wife and her lover when he discovers them together in their romantic hideaway. The verdict has never been in doubt, since the social order rested on the expectation that men protected their possessions. The book then tells the tale of a Syrian immigrant, the owner of the most popular tavern in town, who divorces his wife instead of killing her when he discovers she has a lover. The most conservative men in the community condemn his weakness, but the tavern owner has an unexpected ally. An ambitious young newcomer from Rio de Janeiro has come to Ilhéus with the idea of modernizing the town's port and, in so doing, carve out his share of the wealth to be made from selling cocoa beans to the world. The so-called colonels, wealthy planters with private armies, do not want to raise their taxes to pay for civic improvements, and the project languishs even with the support of many of the businessmen in the town. The tavern keeper's case opens up a political opportunity to challenge the authority of the cocoa growers. In Amado's weaving together of the diverse elements in his story, the progressive handling of a common domestic problem goes hand in hand with developing a modern industrial economy. Rule of law proves to be a prerequisite for the commercial growth and technological progress the town leaders desire, but along with "progress and order" come new, modern conceptions of honor.[15] The political story in the novel ends with a jury convicting a landowner who has killed his wife to protect his honor, while the personal story concludes with the tavern keeper and his divorced wife rediscovering their attraction to each other.

Amado surrounded the political story with fulsome descriptions of the female body and of sexual pleasures, which while far from explicit were daring for the time. Amado celebrated as well the myth of Brazil's racial harmony, symbolized in the title character Gabriela, whose mixed-race background makes her an embodiment of the Brazilian nation. Like thousands of others, she has left the impoverished interior in search of a better life in the cities. She arrives in town caked in mud and wearing only rags, but once cleaned off and properly dressed, she is revealed to be the most physically attractive woman that any of the men in the town could ever remember encountering. In addition to her stunning beauty, she has extraordinary abilities as a cook, and the tavern keeper offers her a job. Much of the book's attraction is its detailed descriptions of Bahian specialties that synthesized the culinary cultures of the native peoples, West Africa, and Portugal. Men find Gabriela irresistible and flirt with her hoping that they can spend the night in her bed. Gabriela has a matter-of-fact attitude toward sex, following her heart's desire when she encounters a man she finds attractive. Her boss falls in love with her and proposes marriage, an offer that she foolishly accepts. The marriage, with its requirement that she adhere to the puritanical moral standards constraining the lives of urban middle-class women, comes close to destroying Gabriela's soul. In the happy resolution following the divorce, Gabriela regains her freedom, she returns to the tavern's kitchen to work as a cook, and she and her former husband rediscover the sexual desires they felt for each other when they first met. Their lives remained linked, but as partners rather than as master and wife. Gabriela in regaining her personal freedom helps the hero find his as well, for he has learned that the prerogatives of the "master" made him deeply miserable.

The book appeared in Brazil in 1958 to acclaim; it was the first book to sell more than one hundred thousand copies in the country. A French translation appeared in 1960, coinciding with the craze for bossa nova and a French film shot in Rio de Janeiro during the Carnival celebrations, *Orfeu Negro* ("Black Orpheus"), featuring music by Tom Jobim and Luiz Bonfá.[16] The French version of Amado's book sold hundreds of thousands of copies. The craze for bossa nova had taken hold in the United States as well, while *Black Orpheus* won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 1960, and was one of the biggest successes on the then rapidly growing art-house circuit. Several U.S. singers, including Frank Sinatra, recorded songs from the film in versions that went to the top of the pop charts. Alfred Knopf exercised his option to do a second book by Amado and negotiated the English-language rights for *Gabriela*. Released in 1962, *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* leaped onto the *New York Times* best-seller list and stayed there for weeks. The Book-of-the-Month Club picked up the novel, as well. Knopf wrote Amado with glee that "these earnings of yours are probably

greater than any Latin American novelist has ever received from a North American publisher." He noted that he had taken "substantial financial losses" trying to promote Brazilian literature, and the success of *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* gave him the satisfaction that his years of interest and investment had finally turned profitable.[17] As a sign of the special place in his list of authors, Knopf arranged for Amado and his family to stay at the Knopfs' Paris apartment whenever they traveled to France. He tried, initially without success due to Amado's well-known history as a communist activist, to secure a visa for Amado so that he would be able to visit the United States and promote his books. Knopf hastened to put out another comic Amado novel, *Home Is the Sailor*, a picaresque story built around the fabricated adventures of a retired janitor in the city of Salvador who pretends to have been a world-traveling ship captain. The book appeared in 1964 to strong reviews and good sales. Between 1962 and 1975, Knopf put eight Amado novels on the market, all of which sold well, though only one of the titles, *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, released in 1969, came close to equaling the particularly strong performance of *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*.

Other publishers added Latin American writers to their lists, hoping to capture a bit of the Amado magic. Macmillan had high hopes for Veríssimo's next book, *His Excellency, the Ambassador*, which the editors there told him had the best chance ever of breaking into the best-seller list, and then being adapted into a successful Broadway play and big budget Hollywood film.[18] In Veríssimo's case, neither sexual romps nor comic situations were the selling point. Instead, the book offered an "insider" view of Washington intrigue applied to the topical subject of Latin American revolution. Allen Drury's *Advise and Consent*, a story of the battle within the Senate over the confirmation of the president's nominee for secretary of state, had become the surprise blockbuster of 1959, pushing presses to look for more books that could fit what seemed to be, at least through the first half of the 1960s, an insatiable reader demand. Macmillan publicity and reviews in the popular press stressed Veríssimo's former position at the Pan American Union as the basis for his knowledge of how Washington actually worked; they also noted his continuing associations with Washington and his status as a part-time resident. (Every year, Veríssimo and his wife visited with their daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren in McLean, Virginia, a suburb of Washington.) Hollywood did take an early interest in the story; even before the book was released, Macmillan optioned film rights to Veríssimo's Washington novel to a producer who intended to cast Paul Newman in the lead role.[19]

Knopf claimed the distinction of being the most important publisher of Latin American literature in the United States, but the firm also continued to lament the losses it had suffered from an investment that at times must have struck many

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at the company as more of a public service than a viable business venture. In 1969, at the time Knopf released *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, the publishing house took out a full-page advertisement in the Book Review of the Sunday *New York Times* that celebrated the publisher's long-standing commitment to Latin American literature. A short statement from Alfred Knopf recalls when Knopf's wife, Blanche, first toured Latin America in 1942 looking for interesting writers. He summoned up the ghost of the Good Neighbor Policy with a quote from Sumner Welles, in 1942 the undersecretary of state for Latin American affairs, who in responding to Knopf's decision to publish books from Latin America, declared: "there could be no more practical method of increasing understanding between all of the American peoples than for all of them to become familiar with the literature [of] every nation in the Western hemisphere." The bulk of the advertisement consists of a list of thirty-six books by sixteen authors that the publishing house had in print, and Knopf assured his readers that "the list on this page is by no means complete."[20] From the list, only Amado's six novels and a short story anthology edited by Germán Arciniegas had been financially successful. The invocation of the Good Neighbor years was out of touch with the times, particularly given that U.S.-Latin American relationships had grown increasingly antagonistic since the Cuban revolution, while the Vietnam War, raging at the time of the advertisement, had turned the United States into a lonely superpower whose leaders were at odds with international public opinion. The authors list highlighted in another way the anachronism of Knopf's approach, for only four related to the latest trends in Latin American literature, and of those only José Donoso's two novels that Knopf had published in English translation, *Coronation* (1965) and *This Sunday* (1967), reflected the new and increasingly popular generation of writers who constituted the so-called boom in Spanish-language writing in the Americas during the 1960s. Donoso (1924–1996) was a central figure in the "boom." Knopf's writers for the most part came from an earlier generation, detached from changes well under way in both Brazil and Spanish-speaking America, and they were not writing works that contemporary readers in the United States were excited to read.

Other U.S. publishers handled those newer writers. Farrar, Straus published the Mexican novelists Carlos Fuentes and Gustavo Sáinz. Hill and Wang had published Miguel Ángel Asturias's most famous novel, *El Señor Presidente*, and Delacorte had become the Guatemalan novelist's U.S. publisher when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1967. Pantheon published Julio Cortázar's difficult experimental novels in English. Harper and Row published Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Benedetti, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Reinaldo Arenas, a group of superb storytellers whose books arguably made the publisher the single most important source of Latin American writing in the

United States. Dutton picked up Manuel Puig, whose gay-themed novels exploring the mythic role of Hollywood movies and romance novels in everyday life did particularly well in the 1970s. Frequent advertising for these writers suggest higher sales than Knopf's books from the region, as does a much quicker move to paperback editions.[21] In 1964, the second book by a Latin American writer, Carlos Fuentes's novel *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, broke into best-seller lists. Unlike Jorge Amado's *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, Fuentes's novel could not be presented as light entertainment. The publisher's publicity summarized the story: "The novel opens with Artemio Cruz in a dying coma, with the voices of his wife Catalina, his daughter Teresa, and his close associates in his ears. He is a very rich man, a great power in Mexico, owner of much land, proprietor of a powerful newspaper. At 71, returning from a meeting with some government officials he has bribed and coerced, he collapses with a fatal illness. Lying on his death-bed, he begins to remember. What Artemio Cruz remembers—his whole life—is also in essence the story of the tragedy of Mexico."[22]

Cruz's memory jumps between seven critical events in his life, stretching from 1910 to 1959. Each moment presents a choice between the ideals Cruz espoused as a young man and practical opportunities to increase his personal power and wealth. The method required patience from the reader, who had to build each of the substories out of scattered fragments and then connect them into a coherent life story. The approach allowed Fuentes to juxtapose historical elements thematically to reveal an underlying, in large part mythic, tension between ideals and ego. The ironic mosaic prevented seeing each moment independently, subverting the instinct to explain what occurred as a result of immediate historical circumstances. The author traces the roots of political corruption in Mexico back to the revolution and the male egos the struggle unleashed. The novel uses the title character's life story to examine the contradictions at the heart of the revolution and why promises made were never kept and could never have been kept. The facts were historical, but the processes as portrayed in the novel operated on a mythic and existential plane. Fuentes spoke of Orson Welles's famous film *Citizen Kane* as a model for his book, and in both works, a lost moment of innocence reemerges as the story nears its conclusion, a moment that suggests what the character might have been had he somehow overcome the pressures turning him into a monster. Despite the violence and mendacity of Cruz's life, a kernel of his idealism survives, sentimentalized through association with a lost romance, but still the basis for a reader discovering the title character's sympathetic side. And readers apparently liked the book, which sold well despite reviews that questioned choices that Fuentes had made in crafting the story.

To help promote the book, Farrar, Straus publicized the difficulties it had bringing Fuentes to the United States for his book launch. In 1962, two years

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before the release of the English-language translation of *Artemio Cruz*, Fuentes had received an invitation to appear on a national U.S. television news program to debate U.S. policy in Latin America with the undersecretary of state for Latin American affairs. The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, however, denied him an entry visa. Fuentes learned that his name had been added to a list of foreign figures barred from entering the country because they were communists or engaged in activities hostile to the United States. Consular officials in Mexico City refused to explain how or why this had occurred.[23] Deborah Cohn's research suggests that Thomas Mann, the U.S. ambassador to Mexico in 1961, had personally added Fuentes to the list, likely as a result of the writer's vocal support for Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution and his public advocacy for Mexico's adopting a more independent foreign policy. Mann's antagonism to Fuentes is well documented, and efforts by Farrar, Straus and others in the United States to secure waivers to the exclusion order failed whenever Mann was needed to sign off on the request. However, journalists who secured Fuentes's FBI files under the Freedom of Information Act determined that the FBI had initiated the hold on Fuentes's visa after one of the bureau's paid informers in Mexico reported that Fuentes was an active if secret member of the Mexican Communist Party.[24]

When Farrar, Straus petitioned for a waiver to allow Fuentes to do a tour across the United States promoting *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, the State Department initially refused but relented after Roger Straus organized a well-publicized campaign that included appealing to personal friends of the publisher who were working in the White House, the State Department, and the Department of Justice. Fuentes received a restricted visa that allowed him to be in the country for five days only. He could not leave the island of Manhattan except to return directly to the airport for a flight out of the country. The restrictions then became part of further discussion of the book. State Department officials concluded that the controversy was generating only negative publicity for the department, and it began waiving his exclusion more regularly, despite agitated FBI protests. Each visit, however, required a separate interview in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. Fuentes reported that in each meeting, consular officials advised him that his case would be considerably simpler if he made an occasional anticommunist statement. Coming to the United States, where Fuentes had some of his most important business connections, had become a difficult and humiliating process. Pressure on the White House and State Department continued from publishers, universities, and philanthropies that wanted Fuentes to have unlimited entry privilege because for them he had become one of the most important figures linking North American and Latin American culture. Fuentes's backers finally secured their goal in 1970.[25]

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Fuentes was a prolific writer with seemingly unlimited energy. Between 1954, when his first volume of short stories appeared in Mexico, and 1970, he had published seven novels, two volumes of short stories, and three volumes of collected essays. Fondo de Cultura Económica published his first books. Fuentes was convinced that he needed a good U.S. publisher if he were to escape the limitations inherent to Mexican publishing with its limited print runs and uncertain distribution. He secured the services of one of the top literary agents in New York, Carl Brandt, who placed the author with Farrar, Straus. Fuentes's first novel appeared in English in 1960, only two years after its publication in Spanish. Farrar, Straus continued releasing Fuentes's books in translation within a year or two of their original publication. While valuing his U.S. agent and publisher, Fuentes did not want the relationship to limit his ability to move globally. His active support for the Cuban revolution brought him to Havana, where he lived while writing most of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. In Cuba, he was actively involved with Casa de las Américas, a new cultural center and publishing house that the revolutionary government of Cuba founded in 1959. Its publishing program aimed to promote writing from across the continent internationally without authors having to rely on either U.S. or European connections. While he lived in Havana, Fuentes met Carlos Barral, a Spanish socialist with a press in Barcelona, Seix Barral. The firm had begun printing young Latin American writers, and Barral signed Fuentes and took over distribution of Fuentes's novels in Spanish-language markets around the world. Fuentes's new connections in Barcelona led to Carmen Balcells becoming his agent for the Spanish-language market. Balcells, Brandt, Farrar Straus, and Seix Barral worked together on European and global rights. The arrangement gave Fuentes more control over his work because he was less dependent on any one publisher or on a single agent.[26]

Fuentes was an avid proponent of the new Latin American literature that his generation was producing. He wanted his own work to be seen as part of a broader movement that was "internationalizing" the writing of Spanish-speaking America. He wanted to break the isolation that limited most writers to their small, often minuscule, national literary situations, with a lucky handful securing recognition in the United States or France. Fuentes argued that even the most serious writers of the interwar years had been too verbose, and their books lacked structure. Serious writers used as few words as possible but conveyed a richer range of feelings, as Borges had done. Serious writers delved into the ugly, sweaty side of life like Pablo Neruda did in poems in which people made love, got drunk, fought each other. Serious writers pushed the Spanish language as César Vallejo had to reveal the pain of conquest and servitude. Serious writers read William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald,

William Carlos Williams, and many other modern writers from the United States, including detective novelists like Raymond Chandler and James Cain, because they offered models for how to dig into the ugliness of America and create beauty that would also be true to the world in which Americans lived. For any ambitious modern writer, Latin American writing of the first half of the twentieth century was, with a handful of significant exceptions, insufferable and deservedly provincial.[27]

Internationalization had begun with Roger Caillois's Southern Cross series. Caillois sought out authors who understood American reality but wrote in universal terms based on an understanding of myth, history, and psychology. Nonetheless, Caillois was from an older generation and did not know the authors Fuentes admired as his "compañeros." Fuentes knew many of the writers, critics, and editors on both sides of the Atlantic who might be interested in good, experimental literature, and he made it his business to connect them. In one of the defining moments of what would become the boom, Fuentes sent Emir Rodríguez Monegal a sample chapter from the novel that Gabriel García Márquez was still in the midst of writing, the novel that would appear in 1967 as *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*). García Márquez, surviving through writing for the Mexican film and television industry, had a book of short stories and a short novel in print, but he was still largely unknown in the Spanish-language book market. The sample chapter astonished Rodríguez Monegal, a prominent Uruguayan critic who was on the faculty of Yale University. He published the first two chapters of *Cien años de soledad* in his new journal, *Mundo Nuevo*, which he had started publishing in Paris in 1966, and offered García Márquez a stipend of $400 per month to write articles for the journal. Ironically, given Gabriel García Márquez's unstinting support for Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution, the first publication of *Cien años de soledad* occurred in a journal that the CIA had helped launch and covertly funded in order to convince progressive opinion in Latin America that intellectuals' priorities were more in line with thinking in the United States than in communist Cuba. The prepublication was an important element in the stunning sales that the book had when it appeared in Spanish in 1967. Public appetite had been whetted, and readers in every country wanted more. Rodríguez Monegal promoted the new novel wherever he went, and his active support helped convince Harper and Row to take on García Márquez.

The existing international language for understanding contemporary Latin American literature came from Roger Caillois. The approach had worked well in Europe, but in the U.S. context, Caillois's assessments had many overlaps with the romantic rhetoric of the interwar period that, as we have seen, poorly represented the complexity of what was occurring in Latin American countries

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and failed to sell books at the level that commercial publishers expected. Critical languages had to be developed for the U.S. market that would allow the reading public of the 1960s to understand why works were important. An important step toward the goal of helping see the importance of literature that was both narratively difficult and politically engaged came in 1967, when the Rockefeller Brothers Fund provided money to the Center for Inter-American Relations (CIAR), a nonprofit group based in New York City, for a new translation program focused on commercial publishers with proven ability to produce and market best-sellers.[28] The program required publishers to provide at least half of the translation cost, but CIAR, also led by members of the Rockefeller family, committed resources for promoting books and their authors.

For major publishers, the truly important benefit from the CIAR program was the commitment of CIAR staff to make sure that reviews of works they had funded appeared in the *New York Times,* the *New Yorker*, *Time* magazine, and a dozen other magazines that CIAR had determined most important for publicizing a new book. The program staff at CIAR recruited reviewers for specific titles and recommended them to journal editors. Whenever possible, they wanted well-known U.S. writers to review a book and in effect introduce a Latin American writer they liked to their U.S. readers. As part of the program to publicize the program's authors, CIAR provided support to a number of journals, including *Books Abroad*, the *Hudson Review*, and *Tri-Quarterly*, to produce special issues on contemporary Latin American literature. With CIAR help, Knopf and Harper and Row each published a book of interviews with contemporary Latin American writers, in both cases translations of books that had originally appeared in Latin America.[29] The program staff focused on works by authors who had sold well in Latin America and Europe but were still unknown in the United States. Writers like Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Amado, or Érico Veríssimo were not eligible for CIAR programs, but the reasoning was that all authors, including those already established in the U.S. market, benefited from a more deeply developed context for their work.[30]

The triumph of the program was having funded the translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, released by Harper and Row, a powerhouse in the U.S. publishing business, in 1970, to stunning reviews and sales. Harper and Row had released García Márquez's first book in English, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, two years earlier, but the book had not done well. CIAR understood that persistence was needed to overcome editorial reluctance to take unknown authors seriously. CIAR developed a long-term strategy that involved a continued partnership with publishers and agents to promote work long after an author's first book had come and gone. CIAR funded four books by Chilean novelist José Donoso, four books by Argentinean writer Manuel Puig, three titles by Julio

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Cortázar, and two books by Miguel Ángel Asturias. Of this group of work, Puig's books gained the most attention in the United States, partly due to a successful stage adaptation of *The Kiss of the Spider Woman* that was then made into a film starring William Hurt and Raúl Julia. Stellar sales for any author were rare, but persistence in promoting the field of Latin American writing elevated sales for many authors to levels closer to what publishers expected for a typical novel. As a result, taking on a Latin American writer need not be seen as a contribution to the national interest, but a business venture that would readily pay off the firm's investment in a book, and, in some cases, a title could turn into a winner with significant sales.

CIAR also provided funds that assisted the move of Ernesto Sábato, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, and Octavio Paz from New Directions, the most prestigious publisher of avant-garde literature in the country, to bigger commercial publishing houses. In Sábato's case, CIAR guaranteed the full translation costs of *Sobre héroes y tumbas* ("On Heroes and Tombs") and assured the publisher against losses if sales failed to cover production costs.[31] The moves do not appear to have led to increased sales for these authors, not surprising given that New Directions specialized in experimental poetry and fiction and had long experience in marketing work considered difficult. The move, however, led to more prominently placed advertising and more reviews in major periodicals, supporting the goal of a higher commercial profile within the United States for Latin American authors generally and for CIAR-funded authors specifically.

The central position of the U.S. publishing industry in the international circuit of translations was an important, additional element in program goals. Publishers in most countries looked first to the U.S. and U.K. markets in making decisions about which foreign-language books to translate. A publisher in the Netherlands, for example, waited for an English-language translation to have appeared and established itself before moving forward with a translation into Dutch, even if a book had already appeared in French or German translation.[32] Given that 70 percent of books published in the Netherlands were, and continue to be, translations, choosing which foreign books to present in Dutch is critical for a publisher's ability to survive as a business. Simultaneously, royalties from ancillary language markets had become a major factor for U.S. publishers, who typically insisted, as they did with Veríssimo, that they handle an author's international sales, but were becoming more open, as with Fuentes, to share foreign rights, provided that the author and the author's agent were prepared to work aggressively to place the book internationally. For Latin American authors, even those who had translations into French or German, a U.S. edition was critical for making the transition from being a "prestige" writer to a commercially successful author in the global book market.

The CIAR program was successful in stimulating commercial presses to adopt more titles, and the authors presses picked up tended to be those whose work was discussed in a CIAR journal, *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, launched in 1967 shortly after the translation program began. The first issue began with an introductory essay from Emir Rodríguez Monegal. He opened "The New Latin American Literature in the USA" with a terse description of the problem: "With exasperating sluggishness, the effects of the boom in new Latin American literature are beginning to be felt even here in the United States." Ignoring a by-then fifty-year history of Latin American authors in the U.S. book market, Rodríguez Monegal claimed that "the best critics had systematically refused to take any Latin American book seriously." He then identified the major authors who needed to be known in the United States, providing a preview of the program that CIAR followed for the next decade.[33] The point was not historical accuracy but to capture attention and stimulate interest, particularly among the agents, editors, and critics to whom CIAR sent the inaugural issue of *Review*. The term "boom" helped brand a new generation of writers with the expectation that what they were doing was explosively unexpected. Whatever had come before was insignificant in comparison, a record of local customs perhaps, but provincial isolation had limited earlier writers, who therefore had not been able to seize a place for Latin America on the stage of world literature.

The issue followed with reprints of recent reviews of translated books by poets César Vallejo, Pablo Neruda, and Nicanor Parra, and fiction by Jorge Luis Borges, Miguel Ángel Asturias, João Guimarães Rosa, Juan Carlos Onetti, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, and Gustavo Sáinz. The eighty-page issue provided a concise introduction to CIAR's objectives, along with a sampling of strongly positive critical response from a broad cross section of U.S. newspapers and magazines that were most important in setting cultural trends inside the country. Several of the books reviewed in the issue had received CIAR financial backing, but most had not. Subsequent issues of *Review* explored individual writers in detail, providing editors, agents, and critics with a representative sample of work and critical articles that contextualized the author, offering a language for discussing any book a U.S. publisher were to release from the featured author. In 1970, *Review* produced a special issue celebrating *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which brought together Latin American and U.S. writers to comment on a book that was already breaking sales records in every country where it had been published. Publicity for *One Hundred Years of Solitude* began a full year before the English translation appeared. Cass Canfield, Jr., García Márquez's editor at Harper and Row, told the *New York Times* in April 1969 that the publishing house was "certain" that the new book would "cause the same sensation as some of the postwar French and

German writers brought to the American literary scene." Canfield described the forthcoming book, chapters of which were being previewed in several journals, as a "witty fantasy about a mythical rural community" told "in the style of the Arabian Nights." In the same article, José Castillo, the director of CIAR's literature program, affirmed that Latin American writers were excited about the prospect of publication in the United States, and he told the reporter that the writers his program supported were good storytellers who would help readers in the United States understand the "contemporary scene" on the continent, leaving open, as frequently happened in publicity statements, whether he was referring to new cultural movements or to the political events pushing their way into the daily newspapers.[34]

Publishers rushed to find the next unexpected best-seller that might come out of Latin America, and a flurry of translations appeared in English. Attention was selective. While CIAR promoted authors whose distinction critics in Latin America had recognized, publishers and reviewers in the United States were looking for work that might explain continental social upheaval. The reviewer at *Time* magazine of Borges's *Ficciones* opined that Argentina had such fragile national institutions that "the *only* thing an intelligent, sensitive person could do was to rise up and say NO."[35] In an article on *Ficciones* in the *New York Times*, the poet John Ashbery claimed that "across this largely unknown continent, a radical spiritual revolution was underway."[36] These were two reviews of Borges, a complex writer whose work resists ideological classification, but who was introduced to U.S. readers with rhetorical flourishes linking him to the challenge Cuba had made to U.S. hegemony—an ironic use of an author who as a liberal had little sympathy for Cuban socialism, or for that matter, for populist movements in general, which he dismissed as inherently totalitarian.

Latin American writing had attained a definable niche in the U.S. publishing business, but only a few books were truly successful. José Donoso in a book on the boom that he published in 1972 insisted that international recognition had not meant that the best-known writers were earning tons of money. Gabriel García Márquez was the only writer of his generation whose income as a writer was "substantial." Even with the growth of the Spanish-language book market and the success of translations, writers typically needed university positions, diplomatic posts, and journalism assignments to survive, positions that Donoso knew were generally necessary for most North American and European writers as well. The boom for Donoso meant escaping the limitations of being a writer from a "developing" country. There was an economic aspect to the change. He recalled that in 1957, when he published his first novel, his publisher in Chile did a print run of three thousand copies. Donoso was to receive no royalties from sales of the book. The publisher gave him seven hundred copies for

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him to sell personally. That would be the only income he received for the book until Knopf brought it out in English translation.[37] By the 1970s, the marketing capabilities of Spanish-language publishers had grown. They paid advances and royalties to their authors. Equally important was international recognition that authors were writing about topics that went beyond the immediate concerns of their individual countries or even of the region. The generation that emerged after 1955 rebelled against the dogmas of social realism and nationalism, where they found only "stagnancy and poverty."[38] Some writers—Donoso cited Ciro Alegría, Germán Arciniegas, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Eduardo Mallea—"were able to represent the qualities of their continent with dignity . . . identifying themselves with the most obvious levels of their countries' struggles."[39] They were translated into a few other languages, but the world *as a whole* ignored them, probably had never even heard of them. Success in New York or Paris did not lead to readers in Cairo or Jakarta. The new generation had no choice but to start fresh and find new models for how to be a writer.

Although the ambition Donoso described was global, the writers most important to him were the modernist experimenters of Europe and North America. They helped him forget what the earlier generation had assumed was essential to being "Hispanic" and "American." He and others in his generation became *writers* first and foremost, not well-behaved spokesmen for their countries. Their stories were unruly, impolite, at times chaotic. They enjoyed putting language and narrative into play. They were not limited by the goal of reflecting social reality in their books; they used language to create new realities. As a result, for the first time ever, Spanish-speaking writers broke into the international republic of letters. People from around the world wanted to read them, including readers across Latin America, whose numbers swelled. Donoso's account summarized the language that Carlos Fuentes, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, and others had developed in the 1960s to explain what was new. It was a particularly effective summary because he described what he had learned through his own personal experience. Yet seven years earlier in 1965, Robert Clements writing in *Saturday Review* had already framed the basic argument used to explain why the literature of the day was not beholden to anything readers might have previously seen from other American countries: the Latin American novel had "reached maturity" because "the experimental narratives of Fuentes in Mexico or Cortázar in Argentina" had replaced "the nationalistic or indigenista works of the recent past," a framing that Rodríguez Monegal cited with emphatic approval in his essay from 1967 introducing CIAR's new journal, *Review: Latin American Literature and Art*.[40]

The new literature unabashedly exemplified a movement for the political, economic, and cultural independence of the writers' countries, but it rested on a liberal conception of society consisting of autonomous zones. Democratic

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government promoted their differentiation and development along increasingly separate paths, so that literature, for example, moved away from the goal of expressing or reflecting social reality to inventing, as Jorge Luis Borges had pioneered in his early fiction, artificial worlds that offered readers experiments in imaginative thinking that no other social practice could duplicate. The domain of "publicity" served to unite otherwise semiautonomous spheres and allow imaginative exercises to enter into public life. In a liberal culture, advertising one's gifts and attracting attention was paramount for anyone aiming to be a public figure. Self-advertising was a skill for which Carlos Fuentes had a natural gift. He could speak with confidence if superficially about a dazzling range of political, literary, and philosophical matters. By positing that he was part of a broader, transnational movement of contemporary Spanish-language writers working in a tradition of literary invention that he traced back to the *Arabian Nights*, Cervantes, and the Spanish Renaissance, Fuentes offered critics and casual readers a capacious context for talking about his work that transcended the limits of possible social or political interpretations. Most writers lacked Fuentes's talent for promotion, but CIAR's focus allowed a select group of writers to appear to the reading public in the United States as a movement whose novels one needed to read to understand ongoing conflicts spreading across the western hemisphere, while simultaneously thinking about the emergence of Latin American literature as a turning point in global culture. The writers who were promoted, with Gabriel García Márquez at the top of the list, had a more critical understanding of the history of U.S.–Latin American relations. They were strongly committed to the Cuban revolution, which they viewed as the first stage in the liberation of the continent from foreign domination. Their works challenged the facile liberal assumptions underlying pan-Americanism, but no simple political program could be abstracted from their work. Critics hailed the new work as a cultural breakthrough of global importance because the books stood apart from the everyday world to invite open-ended reflection that then changed how a reader experienced his or her own more immediate world.[41]

For their part, the foundations supporting the translation and publication of new Latin American writing, largely associated with the Rockefeller family, wanted to demonstrate to Latin American intellectuals that despite their disagreements with the U.S. government policies, liberal societies cherished and protected the relative autonomy of critical cultural work. The epistemological autonomy of literature that Donoso emphasized in his memoir of the boom proved, as dictatorships spread and the Cold War intensified in the western hemisphere, to be compatible with U.S. conceptions of culture but deeply at odds with those the Cuban revolution developed as its leaders defended their country's national sovereignty. For Érico Veríssimo, whose commitment to a

liberal vision of moral order had made him one of the leading midcentury voices of pan-Americanism, the changing political crisis sapped whatever remaining hopes he had for the international order that the United States was building. He still believed that good writing was a socially and morally engaged practice. The principle of literary autonomy was a practical matter: censorship of any kind was an affront to freedom of conscience and to democratic government. The deepening crisis in Brazil and around the world pushed him in the 1960s to intensify his critique of militarism and the ways a romantic embrace of violence had deformed Brazil, the United States, and Cuba alike since the end of World War II. He stood firmly for the principle that a healthy society excluded violence as a means for political change.

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Chapter 12

“I Now Believe That American Imperialism Is Real”

On March 31, 1964, with the blessings of the National Congress in Brasilia and the White House in Washington, the Brazilian military removed President João Goulart from office and jailed many of his supporters. The general whom the Congress then selected to serve as president for the remainder of Goulart’s term promised that military rule would end in 1966 with national elections. Two years later, however, the Congress agreed to cancel the election and selected another military leader to serve as president. As resistance to continued military rule spread across the political spectrum, the dictatorship responded by banning all existing political parties, exiling political leaders like former president Juscelino Kubitschek, whom most had expected to win the canceled election, and limiting rights to assemble and protest. In 1968, support for the military in the Congress dwindled, while street demonstrations demanding restoration of democratic government drew larger and larger crowds. The military then shut down the National Congress, abandoning all pretense of governing in concert with elected civilian leadership. When several leftist groups began armed resistance, the dictatorship suspended constitutional protections and barred the courts from interfering with security matters. Torture became commonplace, as did extralegal kidnappings. In its 2014 report, the Brazilian National Truth Commission concluded that the military had secretly executed 434 suspected opponents after they had been arrested. Interrogators trained at schools that the U.S. government established to professionalize the police and military of its allies learned about techniques the French had used in Algeria with captured members of the independence movement, the British had used in Kenya and Malaysia when they fought insurgents, and the U.S. military developed in Vietnam. Dilma Rousseff, elected president of Brazil in 2010, reelected in 2014, and then impeached and removed from office by the National Congress in 2016, was one of thousands of prisoners tortured while interrogated. With her wrists and

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ankles bound, she was suspended hanging upside down for hours in the "parrot's perch" position, periodically subjected to electric shocks to her feet and ears. Nearly 6,500 members of the military were arrested (and some tortured as suspected communist militants) for refusing to participate in the government's campaign to suppress all opposition.[1]

Such practices were the subject of rumor during the dictatorship, but strict censorship provisions prohibited investigative reporting as well as public discussion in the media of government strategies for combating "communist subversion." Military authorities reviewed every publication before it could be printed and distributed to the public. They also reviewed films before they were released, as well as the scripts of television and radio programming. However, the government exempted Jorge Amado and Érico Veríssimo from full application of censorship provisions. Both were open critics of the dictatorship, but as the country's two most prominent writers, their status as aging national treasures protected them in a period when the government arrested many writers, musicians, and filmmakers for producing so-called antisocial work or for suspicion of supporting underground militants.[2]

As Érico Veríssimo looked at the state of Latin America, the world, and his own country, he saw a military ethos crushing democratic values, with both the left and the right embracing violence as the best path to very different visions of a just and stable society. In the last three novels he wrote before his death in 1975, he explored the militarization of politics in dramatically different contexts. He no longer saw the United States as competent to lead a global campaign for justice and freedom. As a person who twenty years earlier had told his fellow citizens that alliance with the United States was not only strategically necessary but would lead to a more just and peaceful world, Veríssimo had to speak bluntly on the failures of U.S. global leadership and what that meant for those like him who did not want to live in a world of perpetual war.

O Senhor Embaixador (translated as *His Excellency, the Ambassador*) appeared in 1965, a period when the military dictatorship was still relatively mild and more or less observing legal due process. The book is set in 1959, and the story revolves around the political travails of an imaginary Caribbean nation with a long history of U.S. occupation and rule by corrupt dictators. It is one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere, and two large U.S. food corporations own the most productive land. When a newly elected president promulgates a land reform law that will, as in Guatemala before the coup of 1954, distribute unused land to poor peasants, the two corporations, with the assistance of the country's wealthiest landowners, ask the army to overthrow the government on the grounds of communist infiltration. The new military dictatorship suspends civil liberties along with the land reform law. Hundreds of the

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overthrown government's supporters are arrested, tortured, and murdered. Secret police sneak into the United States to murder exiles. Castro's revolutionary government in Cuba begins training and arming a guerrilla force of exiles who are readying to return home and fight.

The first three-quarters of the book unfolds in Washington, D.C. The military dictatorship's new ambassador, the title character, has arrived needing to negotiate an end to the arms embargo that the U.S. government imposed on the country when the elected government fell. U.S. leaders are concerned only with the challenge that Castro's Cuba poses to U.S. control of the Caribbean. They are dubious that the country is capable of democratic government, but they have decided that the new dictatorship, the brutality of which Veríssimo modeled after what happened in Cuba under Fulgencio Batista, the Dominican Republic under Rafael Trujillo, Nicaragua under Anastasio Somoza, or Venezuela under Marcos Pérez Jiménez, promotes the appeal of communist insurgents. The U.S. characters in any event are secondary, looming in the background, while the narrative focus remains on the interactions of the diplomatic staff, torn between supporters of the dictator and liberals who want to see democracy restored. As U.S. leaders wait with increasing impatience for liberal exiles to create a credible opposition to the dictatorship, Cuban-supported rebels land on the island, the people rally to their support, and after a brief civil war, a new revolutionary government takes power.

As he finished the book, Veríssimo told a friend that writing the book had helped him see things about life in America that he, like most of the people he knew, preferred to ignore. He arrived at a conclusion that he had not anticipated when he began the project: there was no room for effective political action once opponents turned to brute force to settle disagreements instead of debate and persuasion. Above all, he had become pessimistic about any of the options available to countries in America now that the Cold War had arrived in full force. All parties were so attached to a romance of heroic violence that a lengthy period of dictatorship and war would prevail across the western hemisphere.[3] When the book appeared in the United States, reviews as usual were strongly positive. The reviewer at the *New York Times* stressed Veríssimo's insider Washington status as a veteran of the Pan American Union and his knowledge of the city's "peculiar folkways." In addition to lauding the writing and Veríssimo's storytelling skills, the reviewer praised the novel for providing relevant insight into recent Caribbean history, particularly in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. In 1965 shortly before the book appeared, U.S. troops had once again occupied the latter country to prevent supposed supporters of Fidel Castro from establishing a new government with strong popular support. The reviewer framed the conflict at the center of the novel as one between authoritarian po-

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litical realists and an upper-class liberal who hopes to see his country develop into a modern, productive nation like the United States, but without giving up its unique and more human culture. The *New York Times* reviewer concluded his discussion of the novel by noting that the book's liberal hero is "kin to those who fought Batista and were crushed by Castro." The reviewer wanted more on why revolutions turn defenders of the poor into dictators, but overall, he strongly recommended Veríssimo's exploration of the contest between liberal idealism and revolutionary will, praising both the skillfully drawn characters from Latin America and Veríssimo's understanding if at times caustic portraits of U.S. officials, journalists, politicians, lobbyists, and pan-American enthusiasts.[4]

As reviewers in the United States consistently noted, the core of the story focuses on the dilemmas revolutionary movements posed for liberals from Latin America who wanted to see their countries progress. The novel's main character, the secretary of his country's embassy in Washington, pursues his interests in haiku poetry while surreptitiously supporting exiles working for restoration of democratic government. The turning point for him comes when secret police from his country kidnap and murder his old professor, an exiled leader of the movement for democracy with a faculty appointment at a U.S. university. The young man throws his lot in with the revolutionaries training in Cuba. He distrusts them, but they have become the only force capable of bringing change to his country. He fights in the civil war, and after victory, the revolutionary junta appoints him minister of propaganda and public information. Instructed to implement new censorship laws more draconian than those of the previous dictatorship, the young liberal refuses. The communist leader who organized the revolution and has taken charge of the new government tells him, "For you bourgeois liberals, freedom is something that exists outside the context of life and the well-being of the people. A jewel to be guarded, a family heirloom that is never worn. A false jewel, in my opinion. Useless. . . . Freedom cannot be an end in and of itself. It is a *means* for providing the majority with a better life. If it doesn't serve that objective, it has no value whatsoever."[5]

The battle between communist and liberal ideals escalates when the young liberal publicly opposes the show trials and televised executions of members of the former government, an account modeled on the public trials and executions of over five hundred police and military officials in Cuba after the revolutionary government took charge in 1959. He volunteers to serve as the attorney defending the ambassador for whom he worked in Washington. The deposed ambassador, on trial for his life for his role in the fallen dictatorship, has no illusions about what will happen to him. Had his side prevailed, he would have made sure that the leaders of the rebellion were summarily executed. Not out of love for violence, he says, but because in poor countries, power rests on

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frequent use of unforgiving brutal force. At the televised trial, the young liberal offers a stirring defense of due process and legal norms as necessary if the country is ever to become peaceful and prosperous. The defense offered gives the communist leader, acting in the role of prosecutor, an opportunity to put liberal values on trial as the cause of the nation's prolonged misery. Veríssimo narrates much of the final section of the book from the viewpoint of a retired U.S. journalist, who had spent most of his career covering revolutionary movements across Latin America. Modeled loosely on that of Carleton Beals, the fictional journalist's career took off in the 1920s when he was able to interview a guerrilla leader leading a ragtag army fighting a U.S. occupation army. He had spent a lifetime trying to report what he observed as simply and truthfully as he could. The journalist comes out of retirement to report on the new revolution, allowing Veríssimo to use him for an ongoing commentary on the ultimate failure of pan-Americanism.

Veríssimo crafted the concluding section to stress that what was new about the socialist revolutionaries emulating the Cuban path to national liberation was neither their reliance on violence nor their cynicism. That they shared with every successful political leader. Nor did he doubt their commitment to improving the welfare of the people, but, as Veríssimo narrated the story, communists see themselves as the defenders of a population that has been corrupted and demoralized by centuries of oppression. They cannot trust the citizens they have freed to make the sacrifices necessary for the nation to progress. Several generations must pass before a new nation emerges where the citizens understand what sovereignty and self-sufficiency require from them. Until then, the leaders will use the media to create a simulacrum of popular participation, while creating a secret police force that seeks out discontent before it can become a threat to the regime. According to Veríssimo's description of how a communist government takes hold, the revolution creates a nation based on pervasive suspicion, a nation where real feelings are hidden under passionate-looking but ultimately pretend displays of revolutionary enthusiasm.

The book's view is bleak, for all the alternatives are horrendous. U.S. political leaders remain in the background, but when they are glimpsed, they too are producing positive-looking media images to camouflage their cynical use of force. The difference as Veríssimo presents it is that with abundant resources and a deeper history, U.S. leaders are more refined than their communist opponents, they are better positioned to be generous if generosity makes for good politics, and they are generally more skilled at the use of naked power. At the book's end, a U.S. invasion force is assembling, and occupation looms as the likely outcome of a revolution that, at least as the novel presents the situation, the people no longer supported. Veríssimo's position in the novel is unclear as

to whether he thought U.S. occupation was preferable to communist dictatorship, or simply one more disaster in the long tragic history of his fictional country. In the final pages, the novel shifts from geopolitics to the existential realities of leadership. The closing scene presents the televised execution of the former ambassador, who is determined to deny his captors the spectacle they desire by facing his death with bravery and honor. Men like him, whether of the right or the left, who have staked their lives on action and brute force understand that gambling for power always involves the risk of failure and paying the penalty fate sends them. Liberals in the book who take their principles seriously, whether North American, Latin American, European, or Japanese, cannot comprehend that imposing their principles on the world requires risking everything, their lives certainly, but even the very values that they hold most deeply. Unable to compromise on their principles, they wield at best symbolic power. The hardness of the book lies in its refusal of romantic escape. For the foreseeable future, the initiative belongs to those ready to use force, not to those who believe in the transcendent power of ideas. The will to power will bring change, but anyone who believes that either the Pax Americana or the Cuban revolution will make the world more just or, at the least, more prosperous will inevitably discover the emptiness of their hopes.

In 1965, when the book appeared, not one of the Spanish-language authors associated with the boom would have published even the most minor criticism of the Cuban revolution or the many movements it had inspired across the hemisphere. The overwhelming majority of writers in Brazil sympathized with the Cuban cause, as did many prominent writers in the United States. For most on the left, Cuba under Castro was the only place in the Americas where U.S. economic and military power no longer dictated what a country could do. The Cuban people had said no to corrupt dictators and to imperialism. This accomplishment alone required putting aside any misgivings about any specific policies revolutionary leaders had taken. In addition, through the 1960s, the rapid pace of social projects—land and housing reform, universal education, universal access to health care, the elimination of racial discrimination—provided convincing evidence that revolutionary Cuba was addressing the basic problems of the Cuban people in ways that surpassed every other country in the Americas, perhaps including the United States. So universal was the sympathy for Cuba among Latin American intellectuals that Emir Rodríguez Monegal did not allow criticisms of Cuba to appear in *Nuevo Mundo*, and the Council on Inter-American Relations was equally insistent that its publications maintain a neutral tone whenever the Cuban revolution was discussed.

Veríssimo had long taken a firm stand against communism. He had argued that communists relied on manufactured images that supporters bought because

sentimental ideas made them feel good. When potential contradictions appeared like the show trials in Moscow or the Soviet pact with the Nazis, supporters denied facts that were obvious to everybody else. Veríssimo concluded that communists preferred to live in a world of romantic fantasies only tenuously connected to reality. He had been the target of public vitriol within Brazil as a result. He was not inclined to temper his criticisms of the left when communism came to power in an American country. He recognized the appeal that the communist message had for many, but he was dubious that the reforms that inspired so many of his closest friends would actually improve the lives of the Cuban people. Everyone judged Cuba by its ideals, while they were fed up with the actual conditions of their own countries. Toward the end of *O Senhor Embaixador*, a Brazilian diplomat in Washington, a young friend of the main character, like him from a prominent family and deeply committed to liberal values, explodes with an angry diatribe about the continuous looting, found at all levels of society, that shaped every aspect of life in his country. Bribes and payoffs had become a necessary, expected part of life, he complains. The communists were brutal, but their methods if carried to their logical conclusion would eliminate evils that everyone knew kept the country in a disastrous state. Communists did not value money, so the compulsion to take part in the looting had no appeal to them. Could humanists formed in debates over principles ever discover the power necessary to counter the communist appeal? If they could not, the military would seize power to lead the resistance to communism, as it had already in Brazil, when Veríssimo's novel appeared. The tragic conclusion: revolutionary existential demands that intellectuals transform themselves into "new men" through heroic action led only to dictatorship, either of the right or of the left.[6]

This was a message that few other intellectuals wanted to hear in 1965. Over the next few years, the Latin American intellectual left divided over how to respond to new developments in Cuba that were more consistent with Veríssimo's analysis than with their initial enthusiasm. The first glimmer of dissension came in 1966 when Alejo Carpentier, joined by a distinguished group of Cuban writers, published an open letter in the Cuban journal *Casa de las Américas* and the Uruguayan journal *Marcha* condemning Pablo Neruda for having participated in an international writers conference in New York City and then doing a circuit of spectacularly successful poetry readings during a brief visit to the United States. The letter singled out Carlos Fuentes as well, criticizing him for helping writers find U.S. publishers. Carpentier and his colleagues declared that solidarity with the global revolutionary movement required them to reject any future requests to publish their books in the United States and to boycott cultural activities organized by U.S. institutions, whether run by the government or private institutions. The personal attack incensed

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Fuentes, but he decided not to respond lest he get embroiled in a fruitless dispute with the Cuban novelist.[7]

A criticism of Neruda, a prominent international figure who was also a leading member of a fraternal communist party and a prominent voice defending the Cuban revolution, was unlikely to have occurred without Fidel Castro’s personal approval. The attack put a chill in the relation between intellectuals and the revolutionary government, but like Carlos Fuentes, no one wanted to get into an open quarrel. Things worsened in 1968, when Fidel Castro strongly supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Castro’s stand was incomprehensible to writers like Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and José Donoso, who had traveled to Prague during the short-lived experiment in democratic socialism. Fuentes had thought that the Czech attempt to claim independence from the Soviet Union was potentially as important as what Cuba had done, pointing, he claimed, to a possible end to the Cold War through the refusal of the world’s small countries to participate. But even if one had qualms about what the Czechs were doing, did not the principle of national sovereignty, so important to Latin America, demand principled opposition to Soviet intervention?[8]

For many intellectuals, the definitive break came in 1971, when several Cuban writers went on trial on charges of counterrevolutionary activity. Heberto Padilla, young but already gaining international recognition for his poetry, made a televised confession that his writings that criticized aspects of life in revolutionary Cuba were the result of his having become friends with exiled antisocialist eastern European writers he had met while working in the Cuban Embassy in London. The confession had all the earmarks of a show trial from the Stalin era.[9] Writers from around the world, including many of the writers most closely associated with the boom, signed a letter condemning the treatment Padilla had received. The Cuban government responded by equating any criticism of the revolutionary government with counterrevolutionary support for the United States. Fidel personally dismissed several writers, including Carlos Fuentes and José Donoso, as bourgeois opportunists whose support for the revolution had been a platform for promoting their own work in the United States. The writers who had achieved success split over how to respond to Cuba: Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez maintained their loyalty to Cuba, explaining the actions of the Cuban government as necessary to protect their country from continuous imperialist attack. García Márquez had little sympathy for Padilla, but the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia had shaken him. He told a friend, “My world collapsed but now I think maybe it’s better like this: to demonstrate, without nuances, that we stand between two imperialisms, equally cruel and voracious, is in a certain sense a liberation for one’s conscience.” The moral example that the Cuban revolution continued to provide to Latin America

and Africa outweighed inevitable political and economic shortcomings. If Castro's endorsement of Soviet policies had been a tragic error, to make public pronouncements that effectively put one in alliance with the United States was an even greater mistake. "It's our dirty washing and we'll do it at home," García Márquez said, adding with realistic frankness that politics required a different ethics than literature or everyday morals. "But the truth is I don't think it will be washed very easily."[10]

Only a minority of the authors associated with the boom shared his position. For José Donoso, for example, the autonomy of literature in the revolutionary process was an existential question that no writer could compromise. As he explained in his "personal history" of the boom, the job of the writer was not to set forth facts and arguments, which others (social scientists, journalists, lawyers, polemicists) could do more accurately. Writers have a unique skill—the exploration of metaphor, which allows many questions to be experienced in a new way, allows for unexpected connections to emerge, which is a perception of the world in new ways because less hemmed in by starting assumptions. Indeed, for Donoso, the task of writing requires abandoning all starting points so that following the inner logic of the material leads to conclusions impossible to imagine before writing began. Cuba like other revolutionary socialist societies had decided that writing had to serve the government's political priorities. In the capitalist United States, writers faced another form of oppression: the market determined that most books were read and sold as "entertainment." Fortunately, universities provided a viable space where reading was not done for "entertainment" but for "pleasure."[11] Given that space—which in the United States was well developed and well funded, indeed a source of pride for national culture, if also of irritation—the university provided serious writing with a home that justified the work of small publishers and university presses, and at times influenced the decisions that commercial publishers made. As relations with Cuba soured, Donoso realized that U.S. society, despite the viciousness of its foreign policy, remained open to what he most valued. Finding a warm welcome and intelligent exploration of the questions that good writing posed in the U.S. university, he taught in the creative writing program at the University of Iowa.[12]

Disillusionment with the Cuban revolution was the central theme of Jorge Edwards's book *Persona non grata*.[13] Edwards, a Chilean novelist who worked in the Chilean Foreign Service from 1957 to 1973, arrived in Havana at the end of 1970, sent by the newly elected Allende government to prepare for reopening the Chilean Embassy. Four months later, Fidel Castro personally ordered the expulsion of Edwards for activities Castro deemed hostile to the revolution. Heberto Padilla's frequent association with Edwards during the Chilean's short time in Cuba was the catalyst leading to Padilla's arrest, trial, and public con-

fession. In the introduction to the 1993 edition of his account, Edwards described his work as the first book "by a left-wing Latin American intellectual . . . that was openly critical of the Cuban regime."[14] The book challenged leftist writers in Europe and Latin America to rethink the association of the Cuban revolution with a uniquely moral and humanist revolution. If his story was accurate, Cuba had become another socialist dictatorship unable to satisfy either its people's material needs or their moral aspirations.

Edwards put himself forward as a socialist intellectual forced to confront bitter and disappointing realities. He arrived in Cuba shortly before Christmas 1970 to assume his duties as the first Chilean diplomatic representative in the country since 1964, when the Organization of American States voted to expel Cuba, and all the members, save Mexico, severed diplomatic relations. He had visited Cuba only once before, in 1968, to participate in a writers workshop. It had been a short trip, spent entirely among writers. Despite intimations from most of the Cuban writers participating in the event that much was wrong in Cuba, Edwards left in 1968 convinced that the political and cultural revolutions in Cuba were moving forward. When he returned in 1970, the country no longer seemed hopeful. The sugar harvest had failed, food supplies were being rationed, and Havana was a city in an advanced state of decay. People's lives were miserable, and a police state had formed even though the Cuban people still seemed to support Fidel. But after twelve years of revolution, their lives were getting worse, not better, and the revolutionary government was determined to suppress any expression of popular discontent. As a result, the Cubans Edwards met, regular working people as well as writers and intellectuals, seemed to move about in a constant state of fear, always careful about what they said, for someone might inform on them, or there might be a hidden microphone allowing the police to listen in on otherwise private conversations.

At his last meeting with Fidel Castro, when Edwards received his expulsion orders, he told Castro, "I must explain to you what happens to a Chilean of good faith, a person who has never skimped on his friendship for the Cuban Revolution, who arrives in Cuba today. . . . A Chilean reads in the situation of Cuba today one of the possibilities of his own country's future. To speak with complete frankness, I think it is only natural that this Chilean not particularly enjoy contemplating that future as it may be seen in the situation of Cuba today. Nor would the people of Cuba have much enjoyed contemplating that future if they had been able to anticipate in 1959 what Cuba would be like in 1971."[15] Fidel responded, Edwards reported, that the history of Cuba had not produced a people who were good at building things, but they were great fighters who preferred to go down fighting rather than compromise. Edwards gloomily predicted that the failures of the revolution would lead to military adventures.

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Fidel had wanted to send his army to Chile. Allende had refused, but Edwards was convinced that Castro would find other countries for military adventures that might compensate for the revolution's failures.

The final section of *Persona non grata* focuses on his work at the Chilean Embassy in Paris, as personal assistant to Pablo Neruda, charged as ambassador to France with negotiating a settlement that could end the economic embargo strangling Chile's economy after Allende's inauguration as president in 1970. The United States proved an implacable enemy, clear about what it wanted and was prepared to do. The Allende government had equally implacable enemies within Chile. Nor could it count on the support of western European governments, which, despite considerable verbal support for Allende's peaceful and democratic transition to socialism, were unwilling to compromise in the slightest on the issues of greatest concern to the Chilean government. Frustrated with the failure of diplomacy to find solutions to Chile's problems, Edwards resigned his position in the diplomatic service to dedicate his time to writing. He was living in Spain when the news of the military coup in Chile came on September 11, 1973. He published his book on his Cuban experiences shortly after Allende's fall, with the final chapters dealing with the buildup to the coup. The juxtaposition was clear: the convergence of left and right on the continent in the form of military-based dictatorships. Were U.S. leftists prepared to recognize Edwards's bravery in criticizing the Castro regime? No reviews appeared in the left press. A Cuban-American academic reviewing *Persona non grata* in 1994 admitted that the book had been a difficult challenge for her when it first appeared and it remained hard to read in the 1990s even though she could acknowledge that historical developments largely vindicated Edwards's arguments. She asked herself, if Edwards's descriptions were indeed accurate, had it nonetheless been imperative to support the Cuban revolution even if it were a police state? A review from 1974 published in an academic journal dedicated to Latin American literature noted that Edwards dealt with a fundamental theme, "the struggle of the thinking man to reconcile ideals with realities," but concluded that the Cuban government had been correct to eject a foreign diplomat who was more concerned about the status of writers in Cuba than the threat to the revolution that U.S. imperialism posed.[16] After the 1973 coup in Chile, Edwards affirmed his commitment to democratic socialism and maintained a distance from the United States, but he had joined a coalition that was successfully equating freedom of expression with a global movement against dictatorship of any ideological stripe. Indeed, he was an active leader in the movement. He returned to Chile in 1978, where he participated in the founding of a national committee to defend freedom of expression in Chile. The ability of the organization to continue working in a particularly repressive environment was due to the support it

received from international groups, including philanthropies and advocacy groups in the United States.

Well before the end of the Cold War, the space for the relative autonomy of civil society and of literature within the United States incorporated the writers of the boom into a liberal social order, even as the revolutionary policies that Cuba pursued insisted on subordination of cultural work to the objectives that the revolutionary government determined. U.S. civil society, even in its relatively conservative forms like CIAR, could contest with rigid cold warriors over how best to combat communism in Latin America. At times, groups like CIAR succeeded in putting limits to what government policymakers were free to do. They whittled away at the exclusion of writers from the United States who had been supportive of Castro, and they contributed to making human rights an increasingly salient issue. In 1974, publicity about the disappearances, the widespread use of torture in interrogations, and the extent of summary executions led Congress to suspend training and financial assistance programs for Vietnamese and most Latin American police.[17] Simultaneously, the Organization of American States strengthened its Commission on Human Rights to give OAS investigators greater powers to document human rights abuses in the member states. Civil society operating on liberal values moved very slowly, but the liberal premise that debate must remain open for there to be responsible governance led to shifts in policy that on occasion had major effects.

In the last decade of his life, however, Veríssimo's trajectory went in a direction dramatically different from those of Donoso and Edwards. His next novel, *O Prisoneiro* ("The Prisoner"), published in 1967, took on the Vietnam War. He developed a story of American soldiers stationed in Vietnam—the country in the novel is unnamed, but is described as a former French colony in Southeast Asia where U.S. soldiers are fighting communist insurgents. They have captured a young guerrilla soldier who their commanders believe has precise information about planned attacks within a city modeled after Hué. When it appeared, the book might have played the role that Elihu Root had proposed for writers like Veríssimo: as the United States fought through deep internal divisions over Vietnam and the larger foreign policy directions the war indicated, sympathetic neighbors could contribute to the debate with independent perspectives needed as a reality check. Veríssimo was asking had the militarization of U.S. society undermined norms that encouraged decency and respect for law? Why, after World War II, had the United States failed so dramatically "to bring the world to a more decent and just place"?[18] Veríssimo's connections to the United States had grown much closer than ever before after he returned home to Brazil in 1958, but not at an official level. His daughter married a North American, a young physicist she had met at a community theater group while the family

lived in Washington, D.C. For the remaining seventeen years of his life, the novelist had a North American branch of his family that quickly grew to include three Yankee grandchildren, living in Virginia, on the outskirts of Washington. Veríssimo and his wife made regular yearly visits, often staying for months at a time. When staying with his daughter and her family, he resumed the routine of traveling around the United States to give talks.[19]

The militarization of the United States increasingly worried him, not only for what it portended for his country and for the continent but, with the Vietnam War, Veríssimo worried that his three grandsons would be drafted as soon as they turned eighteen to fight in an endless series of colonial wars somewhere in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. The United States he admired under Franklin Delano Roosevelt had turned into something ugly under Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. When President Kennedy replaced Eisenhower, Veríssimo briefly hoped that the United States would no longer turn itself against the rest of the world. The Vietnam War destroyed those hopes permanently.

The "prisoner" indicated in the title has multiple connotations as the story unfolds. At the center of the story is the captured communist soldier. Because he is labeled a "terrorist," the U.S. soldiers need not treat him according to the laws of war. When he refuses to cooperate, they turn to torture. At an allegorical level, Veríssimo presents the war as a defense of neocolonial relations, a campaign launched to enforce a global hierarchy. Nations like Vietnam, or Brazil, have become prisoners of a U.S. foreign policy that cannot acknowledge nations of color as equals and will destroy them if popular movements emerge to challenge their subordinate position within the international community. The novel articulates a grim indictment: the United States has failed to use its global leadership to create a better world, the good soldier of the Second World War has been turned into a monster, brutal violence defines the U.S. position in the world. Veríssimo identifies the source of the problem as the failure of the United States to eradicate its domestic racial hierarchy and continue the country's development into a fuller democracy. The third prisoner in the story is the lieutenant in charge of the interrogation. He is a light-skinned African American, who has passed for white whenever it was in his interest. The interrogation intensifies a message that the lieutenant has been receiving since he arrived in Vietnam. The subordination of Asians internationally reinforces his own subordination within the United States. The character's mixed-race status dramatizes the deadly choice he must make: does he identify with those who oppress him and only pretend that he is one with them, or does he embrace the links he feels with the young Vietnamese prisoner who never breaks or surrenders his inherent dignity even as the soldiers torture him? Ultimately, the title highlights the status of anyone trapped in a racialized, neocolonial relationship with U.S.

power. The Vietnam War had revealed with brutal clarity that the world that the United States wanted to lead was doomed to be unequal, that U.S. leadership required the continuing humiliation of the majority of the world’s peoples. Anticommunism served as a rationale for U.S. supremacy, which in practice was inseparable from white supremacy. The United States had proven itself no different from its communist opponents, or the European empires that preceded it. All talk of improving how people lived, whether it came from U.S. liberals, from Soviet communists, or from Cuban revolutionary nationalists masked the system of terror each needed. While Veríssimo wanted this book to reach his readers in the United States, he wrote the book primarily for Brazilians at a time when the Brazilian military dictatorship had entered into a particularly close alliance with the United States based on anticommunism.

Veríssimo could explain the United States to Brazilians, what he had been doing since 1941, but he could no longer be part of a project to develop a conversation between the nations, a conversation that, were utopia realizable, might contribute to responsible world governance. In the United States, the questions raised in *O Prisoneiro* were never considered, even in the superficial format of book reviews and brief interviews with the media, because the book was not translated. Given the ferocity of 1967 and 1968 in the United States, it may not be surprising that the book’s argument was not heard. Veríssimo’s long history as an anticommunist and apologist for the United States meant that he did not fit well into the categories dividing “radicals” from the “establishment.” With intelligent marketing, *O Prisioneiro* might have been seen as a companion to Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, first published in 1955 as U.S. advisers appeared in Vietnam. However, Veríssimo’s inability to contribute to the din reflected economic rather than political pressures within the U.S. publishing business. In 1960, Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, a giant in the magazine business, took over Macmillan. The company diversified with the purchase of a major bookstore chain, language schools, a large manufacturer of musical instruments, and a chain of specialty clothing stores. In addition, the company acquired several companies involved with data processing, as management made expanding the firm’s position in technology its highest priority. Books were increasingly a smaller and less profitable part of the corporate portfolio, although book profits provided a steady source of cash underwriting the costs of diversification. In 1966, the new owners shook up the Macmillan editorial staff and implemented new policies intended to decrease the number of titles published while looking for books that could meet higher minimum sales goals. By 1970, over half the authors that Macmillan had published had been dropped, Veríssimo included.[20]

His New York agent, Lucille Sullivan from the prestigious and very old Maurice Crain agency, started searching for a new U.S. press to take on Veríssimo’s

work. She tried placing him with Knopf, Jorge Amado's publisher, but her take was that, despite the many supportive things Alfred Knopf said to Veríssimo and to her personally, he remained deeply offended that Veríssimo had had success with Macmillan and was happy that the major Brazilian competitor to Jorge Amado in the English-language market was in trouble.[21] Having failed with Knopf, Sullivan negotiated a contract with Greenwood Press, a commercial publisher that had done well in the social science and legal markets and wanted to expand into fiction. Greenwood agreed to reprint all of Veríssimo's translations, in both paper and hardback, along with translations of *O Prisioneiro*, a new travel book he had written about a stay in Israel, and any future work he produced. But as the Vietnam War began to weaken the national economy, Greenwood found itself overextended with its new venture in fiction publishing. The owners were forced to sell the firm to Williamhouse-Regency, a paper and stationery manufacturing company with no prior experience in publishing. The new owners reorganized the company, eliminating the fiction division entirely. Sullivan then decided to retire, and the Maurice Crain agency closed, another victim of a difficult economic climate. The agency that took over Veríssimo in 1971 had no personal connections with him. The generation of agents, editors, and publishers he had worked with was gone or going. His new agents handled opportunities as they developed, but they had no incentive to save the career of a writer whose heyday, at least in the United States, had passed, and whose books expressed cultural perspectives of an earlier, disappearing generation.[22]

At the end of his life, Veríssimo was thrown back onto the Brazilian book market, which was growing rapidly once again. While the dictatorship increased supervision of all publishers, it provided incentives to publishers that would promote growth. The 1967 constitution exempted publishers from most taxes. Government credits assisted publishers who wanted to purchase new equipment. With lower costs for materials and improved technology, publishers could do larger print runs, which allowed for lower unit costs per book. With literacy increasing and a growing middle class in the cities, earning more money in the 1960s, the number of books printed grew from 43 million copies in 1966 to 245 million in 1980.[23] By the beginning of the 1970s, Brazilian publishers and bookstores began to operate at volumes more comparable to North America and Europe. Best-sellers could sell hundreds of thousands of copies. Growth provided more stable income for an older generation of well-established Brazilian writers. For many of them, the biggest change was that they no longer were writing exclusively for other intellectuals, but now had to consider the ideas and tastes of a broader urban middle class. If we go by sales figures, Brazilian readers continued to prefer translated books by foreign writers, but also wanted to read national

authors. Given limitations on what the government allowed to be printed, public desires for something daring, perhaps slightly oppositional, took unusual turns. Erotic novels from Europe and the United States were popular, but so were U.S. poets associated with the Beat movement, particularly Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Charles Bukowski. Several U.S. modernist poets including William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound sold very well. Irene Hirsch and John Milton, analyzing the impact of U.S. involvement in Brazilian publishing during the dictatorship, point out its contradictory nature: ideologically conservative but culturally innovative.[24] Brazilian writers, however, remained constrained by censorship laws and the government's propensity to arrest, often torture, writers and editors identified as threats.

Veríssimo's next novel was directed to Brazilians above all for he decided to write about Brazil's current military dictatorship. *Incidente em Antares* ("Incident in Antares," not translated into English), published in 1971, is set in a small fictional town in Rio Grande do Sul. The everyday use of torture by security forces forms a central thread in the story. Even though the book appeared during a particularly brutal phase of the dictatorship, the government chose not to suppress it. Partly because of its subject matter and the absence of anything comparable speaking as daringly about current actualities, *Incidente em Antares* quickly became the biggest selling book in Brazilian history up to that point. The liberal Veríssimo, tainted for many on the left because of his close connections to the United States, produced a book that stood out for its critical analysis of the social origins of the military dictatorship and the reasons behind its reliance on torture.

The book has two contrasting sections: first, a history of the fictional town of Antares, located on the eastern bank of the Uruguay River on the border with Argentina, from its foundation in 1830 to the eve of the military dictatorship in 1964. The history is presented as a university report examining the social, economic, and political conditions of the small city. The report emphasizes that as Antares modernized, it became an increasingly stratified community, with two wealthy families owning most of the wealth and making all decisions. Dictatorship proved convenient and comfortable for the town's leaders, who approved wholeheartedly of the military remaining indefinitely in charge of government. They did not want public debate about how to improve the community, nor did they like research done at the university showing that racism was rampant or that the lives of the working classes had deteriorated as the city increased its production for foreign markets. They did not want to hear that the very poor living on the outskirts of the city lacked basic sanitation. Or that tuberculosis was rampant among the poor, along with other diseases indicating widespread malnourishment. The wealthy condemned the university report as a pack of lies

intended to stir up trouble, and the controversy becomes a factor in the novel explaining their enthusiasm in 1964 for the military coup. Veríssimo's social science credentials were limited, and the novel's university report has little in common with what Brazilian academics were producing at the time. His limitations as an economic and political theorist notwithstanding, he succeeded in forcing public discussion of social phenemona that censorship prohibited from appearing in the news media.[25]

The "incident" at the heart of the novel forms the second, more clearly novelistic section of the book. Workers in the city have called a general strike demanding wage increases to keep up with inflation. Because funeral workers have joined the strike, the bodies of those who died in the town over the weekend remain unburied. One was the matriarch of the town's wealthiest family, another a militant who died while the police tortured him. The rest present a typical Veríssimo cross section of the community: a music teacher, an anarcho-syndicalist shoemaker, an alcoholic, a prostitute, and a lawyer. The noise of fighting between workers and the police outside on the street awakens the matriarch as she lies in her coffin. Used to governing others, she demands the other six corpses awaken and assist her in forcing the living to bury them. The dead march into the center of town to demand the respect due them. For four days, the temporarily awakened corpses terrorize the city with their peaceful protests, marked by their continuing decomposition and the mordant satire of their observations, for as the lawyer warns, "Given that we are dead and are no longer players in the human comedy, I can be absolutely frank."[26] The dead visit the places where each of them had lived to demand that relatives and neighbors do something. Each stage in the pilgrimage reveals another feature of the city's devastating social and political corruption. Only in one of the stories did Veríssimo allow for hope for those who remain in the "human comedy": the murdered militant visits his pregnant wife and helps her to escape to Argentina, foiling a police conspiracy to kill her. The most disturbing revelation for the dead is that police violence is systematic and appears necessary for how the government believes it should manage society.

Even if the book was written for Brazilians, Veríssimo wanted the work translated internationally. The United States bore partial responsibility for the dictatorship, and its citizens ought to have better understanding of the societies swallowed into the U.S. imperium. His agent submitted the book to Knopf, but reader reports were negative. The editors concluded that they could not successfully introduce it to a U.S. audience. Alfred Knopf personally wrote to Veríssimo that his press was declining the work. He added that if he were younger, he would override his editors' judgment. "But now," he concluded, "the dice are loaded against any such arbitrary action on my part. I am nearing

eighty and cannot hope to continue to have any active voice at all in the day-by-day running of the business. It would be cruel for both of us if I were to insist on publishing a book by you or anyone which my younger colleagues had no heart for."[27] The decision at Knopf no doubt reflected the generally poor sales of the books on its Latin American list, outside the novels of Jorge Amado. After the publication of *O Tempo e o Vento*, Veríssimo had become a contender for the Nobel Prize for Literature, but that possibility faded in the mid-1960s, when international anger over the Vietnam War made it extremely unlikely that authors like Veríssimo or Borges who had close associations with the United States would be chosen.

Veríssimo's success in the United States had always been likely to be temporary because few authors continue to be read generally by succeeding generations. The rapid decline of his reputation in the United States parallels that of authors he knew personally and admired like Thornton Wilder, John Dos Passos, Hendrik Van Loon, or even Aldous Huxley and John Steinbeck. While Veríssimo was committed to the autonomy of literature, his last set of books had overt social and political functions, albeit in the service of liberal, democratic values. His stories, even with the fantasy element of the dead demonstrating to be allowed to depart in peace, focused on contemporary social dilemmas without engaging in the anthropologically inflected narrative experiments that characterized the generation of writers around the world who emerged in the 1960s. In a period when U.S. strategic objectives in the Cold War included emphasizing the professional autonomy of cultural and intellectual work, Veríssimo's insistence on addressing contemporary political questions harked back to the expectations of the 1930s that important literature spoke clearly and directly to difficult social realities. He strove to communicate in easily understandable terms, avoiding the narrative and linguistic exploration defining the new Latin American literature on the international stage. Veríssimo's social realism may well have naively repeated universalist values without digging into their limitations, but, since he had begun writing in the 1930s, the author's belief in democracy as a necessary foundation for economic and social progress pushed him to write a series of books that spoke directly to the immediate political challenges of the moment in terms that a broad range of readers found meaningful even if the subject matter was disturbing. Veríssimo's books offered an opportunity for readers to insist, in the aftermath of *Incidente em Antares*, on public discussion of whether torture was an instrument of state policy in Brazil. Few books achieve comparable effects, which require readers disengaging from reading as a form of entertainment—or of enchantment in the case of profoundly important and powerful writers like Gabriel García Márquez—and deciding that they must talk about a book and listen to others talking about it.

Veríssimo's ability to transform readers into a potential public was an important factor in his continuing success from the mid-1930s to his death. His conviction that writing could not be autonomous from everyday realities was central to what allowed him, from the mid-1930s to the 1970s, to provoke public discussion of topics that a succession of governments preferred be left ignored. With *Incidente em Antares*, Veríssimo's fame within Brazil, already significant, became nearly unassailable, even if uncomfortable for some on the left or for critics who preferred more creative experimentation and ideological decoding. In the United States, Veríssimo disappeared from the public stage. With a new emphasis on literature as the invention of alternative realities, Jorge Luis Borges joined Gabriel García Márquez as the preeminent Latin American writers, the almost obligatory reads. Borges's liberal politics could be shunted aside for they were irrelevant to understanding what his work proposed about the relationship of imagination, free will, and obsession. Veríssimo explored the damage, personal as well as collective, accompanying the twentieth-century romance of violence and force. His liberal politics could not be ignored, nor could his condemnation of the left as equally culpable. His anticommunism had no marketable value in the United States even if his perspectives might have much to say about the failures of U.S. global leadership. Veríssimo's books posed a puzzle for marketing departments that the publishing industry in the 1960s and 1970s did not know how to solve. By purging him from the U.S. book market, they effectively ignored a complicating perspective that would have been valuable simply for understanding the complexity of thought in another country. The decisions at Macmillan, Knopf, and Greenwood reflected each company's assessment of the publishing market and how a given author fit into a firm's business priorities. The result was not ideologically driven but reinforced an ideological divide that had proved profitable over many years.

At the beginning of the Cold War, Richard Pattee looked back on the eight years he had spent at the State Department working to facilitate exchange between the United States and its allies in the Pan American Union. He concluded that "actual knowledge" of Latin America remained thin in the United States.[28] Even good books continued to present a partial, distorted view of thought and values in Latin America, with too much emphasis on the sources of social chaos and not enough on the depth of the resources for holding things together. The most serious failing was that the variety of opinions actually present in every country was missing, particularly the strong levels of support that conservatives enjoyed among the poor. The result was that the outcome of political and social disputes in Latin American countries generally appeared mysterious to North Americans, for the information U.S. readers received suggested that radicals were always on the verge of taking power, even if experts with more detailed

information understood that revolutionaries had limited, albeit vocal support. Twenty-five years later, little had changed. U.S. readers, given the writers presented to them after 1960, still primarily saw the more politically and aesthetically radical aspects of cultural thought in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking America. Through a sequence of no doubt reasonable publishing decisions, the shape of a continent emerged for U.S. readers that had considerably greater literary depth but lacked political complexity or ambiguity. As translation increased in the 1960s, a puzzling phenomenon became clearer: even when cultural products crossed borders in larger quantities, the earlier expectation that shared cultural markets would lead to shared public spaces, shared expectations, and accountable systems for making decisions together did not materialize, was in fact perversely further away. It was an unexpected outcome given the rapid growth of international media markets increasingly producing work for sale in every part of the globe.