THE VULNERABLE IMAGINATION

DIASPORA AND NATURAL DISASTERS IN SALVADOREAN CULTURE

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This paper was first presented by Miguel Huezco in Spanish and has been translated by Marivic Wyndham. Jorge Avalos also made valuable contributions to the English translation of this text.

For Catalina, who made me her guest.

Let me begin by telling you a story. Some one thousand seven hundred years ago, in a remote region of the world which we now know as Central America, a terrible catastrophe took place. The volcano Caldera, at the centre of what is now the territory of El Salvador, erupted, turning thousands of kilometres of land into an inferno.¹ We can only imagine what happened. The little that we know, however, is enough for us to imagine that it changed the nature of life in that part of the world. The spectacular explosions and the aftershocks which were heard hundreds of kilometres away were accompanied by seismic movements that changed the course of rivers and levelled all that was standing.² For the unfortunate inhabitants of the area it was like a rehearsal of the end of the world. The magma produced rivers that embraced everything they found on their path; from the crater of the volcano, as from the mouth of a crazed giant, leapt

innumerable boulders of igneous stone. The fumes and the ash climbed to heights of many kilometres, changed the colour of the sky and eclipsed the light of the sun, enveloping everything in darkness. A thick mantle of ash a foot high covered the ground for many hundreds of kilometres and contaminated the rivers and the estuaries, killing animal and vegetable life. Nowadays, when excavating several metres below the earth in zones of central and eastern El Salvador, labourers of public works and archaeologists find a coating of white earth superimposed over ancient strata of earth sedimented over many centuries. In that layer not so deep is found inert, the memory of the horror.

Our imagination, heir to the horrors of the twentieth century, can only compare that catastrophe to a nuclear attack of great proportions. Thousands of people must have died and many other thousands would have been forced to flee, never to return. When the fires subsided, some

witness, if indeed there were one, would have been in the presence of a chilling panorama: ten thousand square kilometres, way beyond what the eye could see, had been left desolate, without trace of life. For a large country, such a surface, though not insignificant, represents only a small piece of its map; but I ask you to imagine, just for a moment, what this signifies in terms of space for an inhabitant of my country. Ten thousand square kilometres represents half of the surface of my country.

Despite its severity, the eruption was only one of the many frequent and devastating earthquakes that have taken place in that land bristling with volcanoes. Wherever one looks, a volcano dominates the horizon. For ten years those same volcanoes, surrounded by highways, were the sanctuaries of the guerrillas. The principal Spanish cities in the country, baptised with Christian names (San Salvador, Santa Ana, San Miguel, San Vicente), were always founded alongside a volcano. They are the representation of Vulcan, the terrible Roman blacksmith. And of Zipacana, the choleric engineer of the underworld of the maya-quiché. If we believe in mythology, sooner or later those volcanoes erupted due to the devastation of the woods, which will awaken once again and their fury will be like a revenge. They seem to be there to remind us of the histories of innumerable shocks that took place long before their torrid interior valleys were inhabited. But, in fact, such happenings, such as eruptions, earthquakes, floods, 'sleep' in a security zone of the hard disk of our memory. Even the most recent seem to have been forgotten all too soon. (In the last century, there have been at least five earthquakes.) When I speak of such things, I am reminded of a personal

experience during the civil war. Though it may seem incredible, while the jet planes and the UH1H army helicopters shot their interminable rounds of ammunition, we would be momentarily asleep in the trenches. It has been proven that the body subjected to the stress of violence distils a certain substance which re-establishes some equilibrium without which one might become insane. As they say, pain brings its own anaesthesia. It is only in this way that I can explain in part the sleepiness of the Salvadoreans in the face of our history.

Let us return to our story. Several generations had to pass before the area of disaster could return to a place of habitation. It is difficult to imagine that the lead-blue sheet of water which is Lake Ilopango, its surface now disturbed by boat builders and motor boats, was once the mouth of that cataclysm. Surely for many years that territory was regarded as a cursed land. Little by little, new waves of migration by groups of Mayan Indians and Mexicans began arriving at 'ground zero'. There is evidence that around the sixth century of the Christian era, migrants from the north and the south of the continent began to change that awful landscape.³ In a strict sense, the culture was born of the ashes. There were built then the clay huts for the masses and the monumental centres with their amazing pyramidal temples destined for the higher social hierarchy; weddings were celebrated, and business carried on, and there were also wars; there were built trastos (a piece of furniture or junk) for the kitchen and jewellery; basic grains were cultivated and paths created. That process took centuries. The last migratory waves came just within 300 years of the first Spanish expeditions of 1524 originating from Guatemala. The brutality

of that encounter finds a pale reflection in the stereotypical images of the Lienzo de Tlaxcala, which is like the portfolios of an unimaginative artist.⁴

Contrary to the romantic legend, indigenous societies were not gardens of delight. The social contrasts must have been great. For example, in the place known today as San Andrés,⁵ some twenty minutes by car from the capital, which flowered between the years 600–900 of our era, of that splendour only the vestiges of the monumental conglomerate in which the powerful lived remain. The area that held the homes of the poor has not been sufficiently excavated, but archaeological researchers estimate that it was not very different to the area of bay huts and cane of Joya de Cerén⁶ (300–900 of our era) which the archaeologists, with a poor sense of scale, have named ‘the Pompeii of America’. In fact, that suburb of agriculturalists bears no resemblance at all to that opulent bathing place that is the Bay of Naples. Herein lies an unfortunate comparison.

The Spanish conquistadores therefore found themselves in a highly hierarchical society at whose peak was found a complex mix of wealthy families of noble titles, military chiefs and religious leaders; and in the middle and lower classes, soldiers, merchants, hunters, farmers, artisans and prostitutes. I will not enter into detail about the new disasters that accompanied the coming of the Europeans; suffice it for the moment to mention the butcheries of the wars of conquest, the deaths caused by forced labour and — worst of all — the plagues. The first century after the coming of the Spaniards brought about a major drop in the indigenous population.⁷ The country became a death camp. Malaria, yellow fever, measles, smallpox and tuberculosis

spread with the speed of lightning and extinguished humans in large areas of the land. The tale of a cleric in 1636 is terrifying: ‘I have seen large indigenous populations almost destroyed after the indigo sawmills were installed near them ... Several times I have witnessed a great number of Indians with fever and I have been there when they have been taken from the mills for burial.’⁸

The years have passed and in ‘ground zero’ there has developed a culture which, as if in a fatal cycle which defies the imagination, continues to live under the signs of the diaspora and the disasters. But it is the imagination itself which seems stubbornly to resist leaving a fresh memory of such misfortune.

We are aware that the fountains of knowledge symbolic of the past express themselves principally in literary and pictorial ways. My argument insists that certain origins of today’s Salvadoreans and their identity have been shaped, and are the way they are, partly due to the absence of elaborate forms of representation from the arts and literature, capable of spilling themselves over the social corpus and of creating images which would grant greater quality to that kind of traction which is the memory, and without which societies seem to lose their grip as they step on the ladder.

In El Salvador there exists a kind of lethargy of the arts and literature — and it is even worse in the field of scientific research — in relation to our history of natural calamities.

Shouldn’t we, the writers, the painters, the musicians, pause more often in those places of grief?

Perhaps it is not possible for us to offer a response to such a question with the tools of psychology or sociology, but rather, as a *zahori* (clairvoyant), through

the arts of questioning the subterranean currents of our culture.

George Steiner maintains that what governs us as the human race is not the past in a literal sense, but rather the images of the past;⁹ highly structured images which remain engraved on our sensibility, almost in the same way as genetic information. In the case of Salvadorean culture, the images and the symbolic constructions of our past, our knowledges, which in any event are engraved on our sensibility, are relegated to the most profound of our subconscious. We know that in the past there were earthquakes, and we know there will be more; we also know that these repeat themselves with demonic persistence; we know that every so many years Salvadorean society is confronted by the sudden interruption of its activities in order to excavate in a primitive way the hidden parts wherein lie buried our loved ones. Finally, we also know that the disasters, though some may be of natural causes, in many cases are the work of the human hand: through indolence, inability or irresponsibility. We know this.

Those knowledges, incapable of granting us an appropriate approach to confront materially and spiritually the catastrophes which are yet to come and which make us less capable of recovering from their effects, are a kind of non-knowledge.

Contemplating things from a practical angle, why do the tragedies continue to repeat themselves without there apparently being a will capable of creating a culture able to prevent such risks? In El Salvador in the last one hundred years there have been no less than five earthquakes of considerable magnitude, and yet neither the private corporations, nor the state nor the universities are

involved in seismological research that might help design responses to events that with all certainty will happen again. Neither do there exist brigades well trained in the rescue of victims. What happened at noon on the thirteenth of January of 2001 is a parable of the country. In the hours immediately after the earthquake, hundreds of impotent arms were unable to undertake the rescue of the victims because they lacked the tools to do so.

Events such as this cannot be seen as anything but a cultural failure which compromises the whole of the society.

Let us return to the theme of the imagination. In the aftermath of the earthquakes of January and February 2001, the press engaged in efforts without precedent to document our past of natural calamities. When they tried to find its traces in the literature, these could hardly be found, like clouds set in a clear sky, a few allusions to the earthquakes and other disasters. This silence is disquieting when we take into account the fact that, on the other hand, the grief caused by social injustice has in the last century captured the attention of an important part of the work of our major writers. And yet, the repeated punishment from the elements is absent from our symbolic representation. As if the fatal repetition of the tragedy had through the centuries segregated in our blood an acid capable of rendering its memory into a lethargy. The ambitious human objective of transcending, of overcoming through the imagination, literary or artistic, the frontiers of death, has not been able to give us a handle so that our memory might comprehend catastrophe.

Each era is reflected in the frame of its own past. Each era confirms its sense of identity with that past as its background.

Earth itself has its own memory: those sediments of black, white and brown earth, of many textures and colourings, like the 'matericas' paintings, which can be seen in the layers of the hills traversed by the highways, are the cerebral circumvolutions of its memory. It has to do with an inert knowledge which requires long processes of excavation and interpretation. The centuries that we Salvadoreans hold within us could be represented as a blend of great white stripes, some grey and some dark, one next to the other, like a zebra's skin, which speaks of our way of being to those with ears to listen. Continuing with the metaphor, we could say that in regard to the internalising of the catastrophe as part of the soul of our culture, the imaginative arts, literature, the visual arts, the theatre can be located in one of those dark stripes. Whoever bothers to find it will appreciate that in an important way we lack the elaborate ways of representation that might help us to awaken our past.

I might sound like a radical, but I would argue that we can not only speak of the vulnerability of our ways but also of the vulnerability of our imagination. And this should not be understood as a gratuitous reproach. Evasion is a means by which the imagination grips the complex reconstruction of emotional texture. The imagination does not usually admit criticisms, but I would like to conclude this part of my discussion by saying that the concentrated light which the arts and literature cast over the realities of life, and in this case, over tragedy, are the vital kinds of contestation which our citizens also need. I want to underscore that we Salvadoreans are still to discover many links with our past; one of them, as I have tried to say, is the relationship with the catastrophes, and the inconceivable

impassive perspective and amnesia that we commonly assume towards them.

I want now to jump to a second element: if in the 'skin of the zebra' of our memory the catastrophes occupy a dark stripe, the diaspora is a grey stripe. And this is thanks to the existence of at least one great poem. It is not necessary that there be many novels, many poems or innumerable plays, or to have hundreds of paintings, or to erect statues in remembrance of individuals, cities, events and martyrs. There is no doubt of the need for such things, but one great poem where genius shines is capable of crystallising, as does a timely gesture, the complexity of life and feeling. Let me offer a small part of that poem. It says:

We were wrong
For years and years and years we were
wrong
The blizzard the hail the violent
windstorms
The great devouring beasts
Nothing could detain our steps
We crossed rivers
Mountains
Abysms of terror
Peaks which no one had attempted
before
Mighty deserts
Nothing could detain our steps
On the earth and stone we left deep
prints
By the sea we strode
Over the high hills
We walked by day
By night
Without pausing
Walking being born and walking
Dreaming and walking
Giving birth and walking
We walked singing and walking
Nothing could detain our steps

With our home on our backs
Burying dates
Settling the dead
...
Walking
Directly to destiny
Walking
Growing in hope
Walking
For years and years and years walking
walking walking¹⁰

In the course of the history of El Salvador the events of which the poet speaks here have taken place on innumerable occasions. This poem by Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, entitled 'Account of the peregrination', contains one of those nervous extremes critical in the social and intellectual life of El Salvador. The emotion, the passionate adventure, the monotonous sense of the walk through unknown geographies and the rhythm of the changing pulse of the experience are present in this beautiful litany.

Of what does he speak to us? Or, more to the point, of whom does he speak to us?

Let us speak even if briefly of its author. Pedro Geoffroy Rivas was born early in the last century in the womb of a well-to-do family. Troublemaking, irreverent and visionary, he was persecuted and exiled many times more for his academic prestige as a linguist and indigenous scholar than for his poetry and his vital attitude which made him into a kind of cultural hero for many writers of the generation that preceded me. The metamorphosis of Geoffroy Rivas represents a key 'mutation' in Salvadorean culture. Not only because notwithstanding his origins from a landed family he embraced radical social struggles against injustice, but also because he was

amongst the first to focus his penetrating gaze at the culturally and socially invisible indigenous people.

On the surface his poem speaks to us of the ancient migratory waves of the Mexican Anahuac reaching to the valleys and hills of what is today Salvadorean territory, when 'ground zero' began once again to be populated. But it also speaks to us of things intensely current. In reading it, within a context such as the Central Americas — and surely it would have resonances in places such as Bosnia and Afghanistan — it is impossible not to think of the hundreds of Salvadoreans that at this moment are hollowing the deserts, crossing the frontiers of the 'free world' in the frontier of the United States.

The poem, in short, speaks of our diaspora. The diaspora has been a constant in Salvadorean history. Since antiquity Salvadorean land was a thoroughfare for indigenous groups from the north and south of the continent, it formed part of an intermediate space between the great pre-Columbian civilisations and was a place of intermingling of the vegetables and animals of the north and south of the continent. Its privileged position has also been the cause of some of its tragedies. It has been a space dominated by four successive empires: Aztec, Spanish, British and the United States. It is difficult to understand El Salvador and Central America without relating them to this geopolitical condition and with imperial logics which have ravaged its sovereignty and which have always shaped our identities.

From our relations with the United States stems, in fact, a cultural phenomenon which is regarded with apprehension, but which is of vital importance like almost no other in the last

century. Since the 1980s, the Salvadorean diaspora to the United States has become an altogether new and transcendental agent in the economy and culture of the people of El Salvador. The capital stemming from the United States, not in the form of government aid towards development but rather directly from the pockets of migrants for their families, is as important as the PIB (Producto Interno Bruto). Our cities, as a reflection, are a replica of 'gringolandia'. North American pop music is played in bands at private and social occasions: in the courtship of couples, in the rites of passage (the celebration of the fifteenth birthdays for girls and graduations) and in mass celebrations (national holidays and political campaigns).

The construction of that we call the 'cultural imaginary', traditionally rooted in historical, religious, ethnic and territorial peculiarities and in a common tongue, have simply changed. El Salvador literally has its gaze on the North. Many of our symbolic representations stem from there. Curiously, with all the implications of this phenomenon for the present and future of our country, there still does not exist a centre for the study of migrations.

Through the migrants established in Los Angeles and New York, in El Salvador there are emerging new identities which contradict the idea of an identity founded exclusively on 'national' values. Let me linger a moment longer on this point.

Once again, if we pause to examine the 'images of the Salvadorean past', that is, the foundations of knowledge of our being as a society, we would realise the course of our feelings speak always — and I am here going to use an expression of the geographer David Browning¹¹ — of a 'well cultivated garden', whose splendour has been spoiled by successive invaders.

That is the idealised and false 'garden of the indigenous past' which in popular narratives appears devastated by the Spanish military expeditions; it is also the 'garden of progress' of the producers and manufacturers of coffee, threatened by communist aggression. To cling with our nails and teeth to those ideas of the past and to the political actions that derive from it, is one of the sources of our present difficulties.

The modern migrants are turning that nostalgia into wet paper. That garden a long time ago proved incapable of feeding its mourners. In fact, the region around the capital receives annually an influx of some 20 000 migrants from the interior where opportunities for work or even for survival are significantly lower. That movement assumed dramatic numbers during the eleven years of the civil war. The migration away from the country, which some analysts graphically termed an 'expulsion of manual labour', has a long history. One of the most moving stories of our literature, written by Salarrue at the start of the last century, deals with the journey of an old man and a child through the mountains of Honduras' Chamelecon, carrying with them a phonograph.¹² And one of the most popular poems of Salvador's revolutionary era, in the second half of the twentieth century, by Roque Dalton,¹³ celebrates the deeds of Salvadoreans in foreign lands. Salvadorean migrants penetrating the Honduran mountains or constructing magnificent works of engineering in Panama, or illegally crossing the frontier with the United States, is not much different to that of which Geoffroy Rivas' poem speaks: 'walking through the deserts ... with the sun on our backs ... with the sun on our eyes ...' The diaspora has found its

imagination. Meanwhile, in the midst of so much coming and going, the imagination itself has undergone its own diaspora.

In the midst of the over 70 000 Salvadoreans who every year move — mostly illegally — to the United States (it is estimated that 20 per cent of El Salvador's population live outside the country),¹⁴ can also be found, now, as in the past, numerous artists and writers. The reasons have been principally political exile and the search for employment. I will not talk to you here about the difficult conditions confronting, in a country like El Salvador, the artist, the writer of literature, the scientist, the chess player or the ballerina; even though we are dealing here with educated individuals, their destiny is not much different to that of the men and women of low education, brought up in squalor, devastated by catastrophes and also, and this despite the notable advances that followed the peace of 1992, by diverse levels of political intolerance, racism (principally towards the indigenous peoples), exclusion and social violence. Our history has witnessed time and again the mutual disgust and hatred between Salvadoreans born equally under the law, fed sometimes by substantial, sometimes by trivial, motives. Violence has turned into a snake that bites its own tail: it has been cause and effect of the despair and the need to leave.

We say among ourselves that we are people without roots, a people without identity. Some researchers even speak of the 'indelible identity'. This is the kind of nonsense that even educated mouths repeat. It is impossible not to have an identity. In cultural terms, the real issue is not whether our identity is 'strong' or 'weak', but rather on what it is based. Our identity, or rather, our identities, will

remain an enigma while we continue to look to the false 'essences' of that country left behind. Research into our past is important, but it is perhaps as — or even more — important to research our present. In that sense, whether we like it or not, Salvadorean identity forms part of a more complex canvas: that of dependent societies in a global world. Our dependence on the US political, cultural, linguistic and territorial space is, at first glance, one of the largest in the whole of America. Said with a tongue-twister that will hopefully not be unpronounceable, we might not be what we would like to be, but that does not mean that we are not. Ours are, like so many others, roots which walk, and with our legs, bags in hand, pulling our children, we have crossed, and have settled in many latitudes, among the rest of humanity, under diverse and sometimes infamous physiognomies: that of the exile, the refugee, the lawbreaker, the expatriate. And perhaps on this matter our arts are underscoring the route of our present and our future. The diaspora of the imagination has had as one of its consequences the incorporation into the Salvadorean 'canon' of landscapes, principally urban, languages and vivid tales by writers in their diasporas to Mexico, Havana, Managua, Washington DC and New York. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I claim that in a verbal sense Salvadorean literature is global. It moves across tongues, ideologies, frontiers.

Dr Beatriz Cortez, a young academic of Salvadorean origin who teaches in a university in California, has suggested that in postwar literature it is possible to find a critical resistance to the idea of a rigid identity which in her way of thinking holds and ultimately derives from, forms of violence.¹⁵ If against such a panorama

we hold the butter-like sheet of paper of Salvadorean literature, the vision we behold will be inevitably diffuse, contradictory and in many ways rich. Based on some contemporary Salvadorean stories, Cortez suggests several metaphors with which to approach the dislocated cultural identities. I am naturally suspicious of theory in relation to literature and the arts, especially because I hold the view that in most cases those word games and artificial constructions of models tend to make sterile an approach that, above all, is profoundly emotional and intuitive. And yet I believe that in works such as this and others, like those of Rafael Lara Martínez and Silvia Lucinda Castellanos, academics of Salvadorean origin who hold chairs in North American universities, have begun a dialogue between artists and academics, which hopefully will serve to feed those two poles of knowledge through the language as a source of knowledge.

The challenges for the arts and literature are immense. Sometimes there emerge insufferable stereotypes, of the kind good versus bad, or migrants versus the police. It is always this way. In *The Diáspora*,¹⁶ a novel by Horacio Castellanos Moya, is launched more of an ironic gaze at the desolate world of the Salvadorean exiles in Mexico City in the years of the civil war, and here is exposed the scourge of opportunism which is cultivated in the name of humanist values. Naturally, not all literary expressions prompted by the world of migration contain 'the genius' of which I have just spoken. We cannot condescend to mediocrity. But even in that 'literature without genius', descriptive, with stylistic demands, without substantive characters, attached to the methodologies of testimony, there have begun to be produced some images of our present identity, the sediments of

which the Salvadorean memory will turn to. The dramas of the migration of men and women farmers who abandoned their places before the hurricane of the war, as well as the vicissitudes of the migrants to North American cities, are already being drawn in some of these works.

Surely the period before us holds new challenges for us. Our insistence on knocking on doors that all too frequently are closed before us, but which also open, has perhaps come to characterise us as a people who, in whatever latitude, exercises its right to be, live and work. Hatred and fear are what defeat the migrant; we who travel the world as guests or fugitives with the blue Salvadorean passport, know this all too well. Because of its history, its culture, its identity, El Salvador should become a major force in the study of migrations and take part in international initiatives which bring protection to the nomads of the world. This is why, our children, like an endless current — and if things continue as they are, our children's children — as much as our grandparents, one good day will close the door behind them and head for the paths of the diaspora. To the North or to the South, whatever. What is a fact is that the fatal cycle of our culture will have been completed. And when in twenty or one hundred years, a volcanic eruption or a new development of the tectonic plagues beneath our feet destroys the dreams of a whole society, we will hopefully be in a better position to respond to the question which lies at the base of this long disquisition of mine about the fugitive memory:

'Why does the imagination follow impotently the frenetic rhythm of the lines in the seismographs of our tragedy?'

Incurable victims of forgetfulness, our present indifference before the tragedy, if it is not caught inside the net of rhetorical reproaches and lies with the odour of bad politics, should present us with not only political but also with aesthetic concerns. We tend to spout all manner of general and well-founded recriminations against the politicians, but perhaps we do not realise that the language, that curved arc able to bind personal and collective histories with the pulse of conscience and with the devastations of love and passion, able to sink itself in the most hidden substrata of the memory, with its sequel of endurance, does not come to the rescue of our solitude, of our dissatisfaction, to tell us that life makes sense in the midst of tragedy and human vileness. To sleep for a moment at the trenches is, like the evasion of pain, perfectly legitimate; but thankfully this is not the only road that the imagination takes.

Even if I am called a sceptic, I do not see the gates opening to an era of genuine confidence and hope; rather, the futures and inevitable setbacks that will come from social catastrophes and explosions whose regressive count has already begun, and which will be commensurate with the indexes of human development, earnings per capita and other terms of the gloomy economic sciences, today seem to condemn us to a path with only one exit: to flee, by foot, by train, swimming or on board an unexpected rocket of the imagination, just so long as it is far, very far from here.

La Antigua, Guatemala, agosto 2002

ENDNOTES

- 1 P. Sheets, 'The Prehistory of El Salvador: An interpretative summary', in F. Langue y Stone, *The Archaeology of Lower Central America*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1984) pp. 94, 96.
- 2 Sheets, 'The Prehistory of El Salvador'.
- 3 Fowler and Earnest, cited by George Hasemann and Gloria Lara Pinto in 'The Central Zone: Regionalism and Interaction', in *Historia General de Centroamérica, I*, (Madrid: FLASCO, 1993) I, p. 161.
- 4 The Lienzo de Tlaxcala contains representations of battles between Spaniards and the indigenous peoples in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. A reproduction of these images corresponding to El Salvadorean territory can be seen in P. Escalante Arce, *The Tlaxcaltecas in Central America*, (San Salvador: CONCULTURA, 2001).
- 5 San Andrés had been a regional capital which came to dominate the fertile valley of Zapotitán. It was discovered in 1910.
- 6 The site of Joya de Cerén was discovered in 1976. The first excavations begun in 1978 brought to light a complex of humble communal dwellings extraordinarily preserved by the action of volcanic ash, which may have occurred 1400 years ago. It has been declared World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.
- 7 For a view of the effect of epidemics in the Central American area in the 'six tragic decades' (1520–1582), see Christopher Lutz and others, 'La Conquista Española en Centroamérica', in *Historia General de Centroamérica, II*, (Madrid: FLASCO, 1993) pp. 71ff.

- 8 Cited in D. Browning, *El Salvador, la Tierra y el Hombre*, (4th edn), (San Salvador: CONCULTURA, 1998).
- 9 George Steiner, *En el Castillo de Barbara Azul*, (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1998), p. 17.
- 10 Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, *Los Nietos del Jaguar*, (San Salvador: CONCULTURA, 1996).
- 11 Browning, *El Salvador, la Tierra y el Hombre*.
- 12 The story is entitled 'Semos Malos' and formed part of the volume *Cuentos de Barro, Narrativa Completa I*, (San Salvador: CONCULTURA, 1994).
- 13 I refer to the 'Poema de amor' included in *Historias Prohibidas de Pulgarcito*, (México: Siglo XXI, 1974).
- 14 *Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano de El Salvador*, (San Salvador: PNUD, 2001).
- 15 Original typescript, cited by permission of the author.
- 16 Horacio Castellanos Moya, *La Diáspora*, (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1st edn, 1989).