

Civilization and Barbarism: *Tirano Banderas*' Legacy

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Abstract In 1926, five years after his second visit to Mexico, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán published *Tirano Banderas*, one of the most important Spanish-language novels of the twentieth century. This article analyses the way in which Valle-Inclán absorbed the dictates of the Mexican post-revolutionary muralist school, integrated by figures like José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera. It is the thesis of this article that Valle-Inclán conferred a pro-traditionalist twist in his adoption of some of the ruling ideologemes of this school, which sharply depart from Vasconcelo's *mestizo* theories. Familiar with the Latin American identity battleground established by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in *Facundo* — civilization versus barbarism —, Valle-Inclán rewrote the identifications set by the Argentinian, following instead a pro-Hispanic and traditionalist set of references based on the selective adoption of master-narratives of the nineteenth-century Spanish historiography — both liberal and traditionalist. The result of this rewriting creates a social paradigm in the novel that mimics the identity visions of traditional historiography — with a clear separation of Jews, Moors and Christians — which is applied to present Mexico. The racial visions brought with this shift drain or neutralize the *mestizo* ideologemes, favoring a traditionalist stance loosely identifiable with pre-Columbian forms of governance on both sides of the Atlantic.

Key words Valle-Inclán; transatlantic studies; Spanish historiographical and literary revisionism; Hispanic identities; Baroque literature

Ningún otro escritor Español, salvo los que pasaron allí el exilio a partir de 1939, ha incorporado lo americano con tanta intensidad a su pensamiento ni ha vivido el mundo de la lengua castellana, de la cultura latina, con tan sentida unidad.
(Casado 63)

[No other Spanish writer, except for those who lived exiled there after 1939, has incorporated with such intensity that which is American to his thinking, nor has lived the world of Spanish language, of Latin culture, in such heartfelt unity. (personal translation)]

Debemos de sumar al castellano todos los modos de hablar el Español. En Méjico está la esencia más pura de España. Debemos ser todos unos. Todos una lengua.
(Valle-Inclán, qtd. in Hormigón vol. 2.2 610)

[We must add to Castilian all the ways of speaking the Spanish language. In Mexico lays the purest essence of Spain. We must all be one. All one language. (personal translation)]

In 1890, shortly after his father's death, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán abandoned his law studies — which he had pursued at his father's request — at the University of Santiago de Compostela, in his native Galicia. At age 26 the young author felt the call for adventure and went to Mexico to pursue his destiny. He arrived in Veracruz, the city founded by Hernán Cortés, on April 8, 1892. His romantic visions of the continent had been molded by the colonial fantasies sparked by the old metropolis, in tune with his anachronistic traditionalism. Once in Mexico Valle-Inclán fancied himself a conqueror (qtd. in Martínez Saura 272). He also aimed to recover the lost grandeur of his lineage, as he explained in 1903 in a *faux* autobiography where he presented himself as his own *Sonatas*' character, the Marquis of Bradomín (Valle-Inclán, "Juventud"). Upon his arrival he immediately felt sympathy for the pro-Western rule of General Porfirio Díaz (Alberca and González 61), who he praised — in an interview published January 1, 1915 — comparing his stature in history to that of Pope Leo XIII or Julius Caesar (López Núñez 132).

It was in Mexico where Valle-Inclán declares he was born to literature (qtd. in Schneider 157), in a very literary way too... It is very well known that — during his stay there — Valle-Inclán requested a duel to repair the affront that the Spanish colony had received, in a letter to the editor of *El Tiempo*, where he was working. The anonymous letter signed by "Óscar" — published May 12, 1892 —, accused the Spanish colony of committing usury and abuses of power. To the young Valle-Inclán, Spain and Europe represented civilization versus the atavist barbarism that the Amerindian past posed.¹

In due time, Valle-Inclán will reformulate the above-mentioned perspective in *Tirano Banderas. Novela de Tierra Caliente* (1926), with a sharp difference.² This article will analyze how the writer develops in this particular novel the ideologeme of civilization versus barbarism. It is relevant to note to this purpose that Valle-Inclán's review is partially informed by Mexican muralism — especially by his personal relationship with Diego Rivera, whose life and figure intertwined on many occasions with that of the Spanish novelist. This article will demonstrate that Valle-Inclán's substantially appropriates common ideologemes to those of Rivera's work, to confer in them a pro-traditionalist meaning which counteracts the Mexican revolutionary agenda. This appropriation favors a messianic neo-feudal vision, a regenerative program pro-Hispanic in nature.³ It will also be discussed that in order to achieve this goal, the author will approach existing tensions in the Mexican society with the tools of Spanish national historiography. Valle-Inclán's ultimate purpose is to analyze Mexico's present from an ethnic and racial perspective, establishing a parallel with Medieval Spain.

On January 6, 1907, a promising yet unknown 21-year-old Mexican artist named Diego Rivera arrived in Spain to continue his education as a painter (Rivera *et al* 212). Rivera reached the shores of the old colonial empire at a time when Spain was preparing for the centennial celebration of the so-called War of Independence (1808)

that had put an end to the Napoleonic invasion. During this first European tour that lasted several years, the young Rivera received the first international recognition for his work, presented in 1908 at the Hispano-French Exposition held in Zaragoza. In Madrid, Rivera studied at Eduardo Chicharro's painting academy. While he lived there, Rivera became a frequent visitor of the Museo del Prado, the Café de Pombo (where he met the even younger Ramón Gómez de la Serna, among others), and the Nuevo Café de Levante, where the modernist poet and novelist Ramón María del Valle-Inclán held his *tertulia* or "literary gathering." Paraphrasing Serrano Alonso, Valle-Inclán's was not a *tertulia à la mode*; the attendance was shaped by painters, sculptors, architecture students... and his influence on them was evident, probably unlike that of any other intellectual (Serrano Alonso 28–9).

The mixed emotions Rivera underwent in Spain as a foreigner had been felt before by Valle-Inclán in 1892, when he went to Mexico at a young age to earn a living.⁴ Valle-Inclán's first visit left a big impression on his writings: the rich language and exotic experiences he had were integrated or re-created in the *Sonata de estío* (*Summer Sonata*, 1904), one of the peak novels of Modernism. Young Rivera soon felt a strong admiration for Valle-Inclán: "'I have the impression,' says Diego, 'that at the time only he [Chaumier], I and a very few others realized the stature of Valle Inclán.'"' (Rivera 219). From the older writer Rivera learned many lessons, and not just aesthetic only; for example, a decade after Valle-Inclán's return from Mexico (he was there in 1892–93), he started spreading a *faux* story about his heroic military participation in Mexico under the command of Sóstenes Rocha (Fernández Almagro 20); similarly, Diego Rivera later lied about his involvement in the early stages of the Mexican Revolution.⁵

After a short stay in Mexico, Rivera decided to return to Paris in 1911, where he resided until 1920. This second stay was extremely precarious due to economic hardship. During his stay in France, when he met Pablo Ruiz Picasso and Amadeo Modigliani, among others, he familiarized himself with the pre-war *avant-garde* movements, Cubism and Post-Impressionism. In 1920, the final year of the Mexican Revolution, and one year before the celebration of the centennial of the Declaration of Independence of Mexico in 1821, Diego traded Paris for Italy. The reasons for his Italian stop had a strong political motivation: "[...] [Rivera went] to Italy to study Renaissance art in the hopes of establishing a philosophy of public art that will be adequate for postrevolutionary Mexico" (Hurlburt 47). The new Mexican post-revolutionary government, established by General Álvaro Obregón, under whose presidency the philosopher, politician and writer José Vasconcelos worked, fostered the creation of a national school of painting: Mexican Muralism. Rivera's visit to Italy was triggered by the need to familiarize himself with the early Renaissance fresco techniques of the *quattrocento* (Downs 17), which he had the chance to apply later in Mexico with an evident ideological aim: to (re)create a Mexicanist tradition that portrayed, in the frescoes, the native and mestizo realities of the Mexican peoples.⁶

The Mexican muralist school reflected the ideologemes of the Revolution, with a set of values antagonistic to Porfirio Díaz's previous Eurocentric views.⁷ The model for the rising nation was no longer France — as it was during Díaz's reign — but Mexico

for its Aztec- and Maya-inspired arts, which until then were non-officially backed forms of art. These models were to be the mirror in which the Revolution looked for its own reflection, and provided the self-imagery that was to be broadcasted to the world from then on.

The centennial festivities of the Independence of Mexico were attended by an official delegation of the Spanish government on behalf of Alfonso XIII. It is worth noting that the Spanish administration had not yet recognized the new Mexican government, due to the risk it posed to the economic and real estate interests of the Spaniards living in Mexico. The official representation was shaped by the dignitaries sent from Madrid plus the main figures of the Spanish colony in the country; the unofficial representation was none other than Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, whom President Obregón invited with the assistance of Alfonso Reyes. Valle-Inclán was elevated in these festivities to the rank of *Ambassador in pectore* of the Spanish intellectuals. As Dru Dougherty has pointed out, the ideological connotations of this invitation should not be underestimated (Dougherty, “El Segundo” 193–4), since he ended up playing a counter-figure to what the Spanish government represented, acting in some ways as a speaker in favor of Obregón’s agrarian policies (Dougherty, *Un Valle* 124), and of revolutionary ideals. Though it may seem paradoxical, Valle-Inclán was able to combine the ideals of Obregón’s reform with his earlier Carlism, even with his growing interest for Bolshevism, since all of them were a rejection of Liberalism.⁸ Symptomatic of this fact was the display in his house, side by side, of dedicated Obregón and Carlos de Borbón portraits (Valencia 17).

The dissonant voices of the official and un-official legacies were evident from the beginning. While the *gachupines*—a derogatory word for “Spaniard”, in Mexico—were asking for monetary compensation for them, Valle-Inclán called for an uprising of the *indio mexicano* against the *encomenderos* (the name given to the Peninsular enslavers in the first stages of the colonial administration in the Americas), recommending that they be killed.⁹ Three decades before Valle-Inclán envisioned himself in the role of *conquistador*, legitimizing the results of the conquest and colonial periods, and backing the Spanish Colony “civilizing mandate” in their journals. Conversely, in 1921 he embodied an anti-colonial position for Mexicans. His visions were rooted not in the official figures of the Spanish conquest, but in pro-Indigenous figures like Father De las Casas, whom he identified as bearer of a Spanish ethical tradition in the New World (Dougherty, *Un Valle* 128–9). It is pertinent to notice that though Valle-Inclán praised Father De las Casas, he felt sympathy as well for Cortés the conqueror — one of the idealized representatives of the Empire — based on the defense of this ethical mandate.¹⁰ On one occasion Valle-Inclán compared Don Porfirio’s leadership with Caesar; in 1921 he found a resemblance between Father De las Casas and present revolutionary leaders like Obregón and Madero but without disowning Cortés.¹¹ In both comparisons he read these figures through European lens and set of references, a European legitimizing standard.

At the end of the centennial celebrations, Valle-Inclán travelled around Mexico by train with some members of the revolutionary cultural elite, Diego Rivera among

them.¹² The train had been arranged for Valle-Inclán's personal use per Obregón's request. This intellectual's retreat/tour fostered the discussion and development of the new Mexican aesthetic, which also inspired some visits to pre-Columbian archeological sites. Among these revolutionary elites, a new aesthetic blossomed. Both for Valle-Inclán and the revolutionary elites, the future of each culture was to be rooted in their pre-Columbian past.¹³ This model of successful cooperation between artists and political leaders of the revolution left a deep imprint on Valle-Inclán, whose anti-liberalism and traditionalism at first brought him closer but later distanced him from, several representative and non-representative forms of government.¹⁴ However, he always remained a traditionalist *avant la lettre*, and the agrarian demands of the Mexican Revolution revived in Valle-Inclán anachronistic semi-feudal dreams.¹⁵ The vitality of the Soviet Union, even to some extent the arrival of Mussolini, were seen by Valle-Inclán as the messianic symptoms of a new era, a covenant of political elites, aesthetics and lettered men, like the one he had just experienced in Mexico.

Back in Spain, Valle-Inclán soon started writing one of the most important novels of the twentieth century: *Tirano Banderas* (1926; partially published in installments in 1925). Several critics have already emphasized the watermark in this novel of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo, o civilización y barbarie. Vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga* (1845 – 51).¹⁶ This text was one of the favorite readings both of Miguel de Unamuno and Valle-Inclán (Montes 286). The ideological battle between civilization and barbarism had a long progeny after Sarmiento's pro-European stand in the Hispanic world, with both defenders and detractors. In *Tirano* Valle-Inclán took a clear pro-Indian stand — not to be confused with pro-Indigenist — attacking the dregs of the Spanish Empire represented in the Spanish colony; unlike Sarmiento, he did not present the natives and the countrymen as barbarians *per se* but as redemptive figures for the Hispanic world. It is evident that Valle-Inclán had a pro-Indian and not a pro-Indigenist stand, due to the weight he conferred to the Spanish language — although not the native ones — presented as a national tie, and given the narrow racial separations that operate in the text.

This pro-Indian/anti-European positioning clearly put Valle-Inclán at odds with the desire of Spanish liberal thinkers to *européizar* and modernize Spain; for them, like for Sarmiento, Europe equated civilization; but unlike the Spanish liberals, Sarmiento considered the Spanish atavism a cause for current Latin American barbarism. What is worth evaluating more in detail are the consequences that Valle-Inclán's pro-Indian twists bestowed on this discussion, a twist that attests to all the contradictions existing in his political thinking and in that of the era.

Mimicking the identity dialectics of Latin America expressed by Sarmiento in *Facundo*, Spain underwent a rewrite of these concepts in the early twentieth century. The majority of Spanish intellectuals defended the conquest and colonization based on the *imperativo Español* or “Spanish civilizing mandate”: the conservatives emphasized the need that existed to proselytize the Catholic faith and teach the Castilian language to the natives; the liberals stressed the necessity to modernize the undeveloped native cultures and economies. In both cases the Spanish intellectuals saw themselves as Europeans, at the center. To the affront of the Spanish, the postcolonial thinkers of Lat-

in America identified Spain with barbarism and anti-modernity, as non-Europeans.

To the astonishment of the pro-European philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, Miguel de Unamuno pointed to the African and Celt-Iberian substrata as important elements of the modern Spanish *castizo* identity.¹⁷ Valle-Inclán, like Unamuno, also conceived of Spain and the Hispanic world as an “other” of the European civilization — a well-established trend in European Romanticism. However, Valle-Inclán absolutely despised the African and *levantino* or “easterly” substratum¹⁸, and blamed all the problems of the present on that past, just like Sarmiento loathed the Spanish substratum in the Southern Cone:

Apart from these considerations, the speech [of Valle-Inclán] presented an apparent novelty: the root of his support for Obregón’s regime, Don Ramón left aside the concept of social revolution and established a link between Madrid and Mexico via Christianity and other features of the Latin Culture, transmitted by Spain to the New World: “As Greece inherited the Egyptian civilization, and Rome the Hellenic, Spain rose with the Latin civilization and erected cities, and dictated laws, and spread its language in America... The official Spain does not want to relinquish its obscure African spirit, and contributes to the destruction of this highly Christian national entity of three centuries”. To return to this civilizing tradition would be, in the end, to recuperate the historic mission of Spain in America. Moreover, it would place the official politics in harmony with its national will, which did not establish any separation between what was revolutionary and what was Christian.¹⁹ (Dougherty, “El Segundo” 202; square brackets in the original; personal translation)

The logic performed in Valle-Inclán’s rewrite of civilization and barbarism can be easily understood when we take into account his favor for traditionalism and the old forms of production (Santos Zas 356). He envisioned a social and political return to a medieval Arcadia, loosely identifiable with the feudal peninsular kingdoms, which ideally portrayed the Spanish identity.²⁰ In his view, that Arcadia was put to an end by the marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand, the Catholic Monarchs (Dougherty, *Valle-Inclán* 33). In Valle-Inclán’s idealized vision of the past, the Empire’s greed for gold and material riches can be identified with the entrance of (what later would be) Protestant Europe into the national politics. This entrance was certified via the wedding of Juana, the daughter of the Catholic Monarchs, with Philip of Hapsburg, a European (Dutch) and hence a foreigner. By holding this vision Valle-Inclán coincided with the established trends of Spanish liberal historiography, as Inman Fox explains eloquently in *La invención de España* (51). Valle-Inclán also departed from this model, as will be explained later.

Emperor Charles V, the son of Juana and Philip, survived and won the feudal Revolt of the Comunards (1520 – 1522), which literally marks the end of feudalism. Valle-Inclán, in *Tirano*, praises Father De las Casas—a coetaneous figure to Charles V—, and his Humanism is read more as an extension of the Medieval Scholasticism than as a result of the Renaissance Anthropocentrism. Valle-Inclán’s de-

fense of De las Casas is more than an attack of the colonial system of the Empire; it is in tune with the Mexican revolutionary politics as well as with liberal historiography in Spain. As Bretz notes: "Condemnations of Charles I and Philip II recur frequently in writers of the [Modernist] period and the repudiation of Hapsburgs monarchy typically combines with calls for religious and racial tolerance, abolition of the patriarchy, and aperture to the outside" (Bretz 165). Valle-Inclán's condemnation, nevertheless, seems to depart from these parameters; his defense of the *conquistador* implies a yearning for the arrival of an idyllic neo-feudal concord, parallel to that he understands existed before the Catholic Monarchs, and it is anything but clear whether he advocates for racial and religious tolerance.

A vast majority of the critical production written about *Tirano* assumes that Valle-Inclán takes a postcolonial stance as the default ideology of the novel, disregarding or not noticing the problem posed by his defense of Cortés. Those supporting this stance find in *Tirano* a redeeming work that "saves" Valle-Inclán from his previous traditionalist positions; that approach may be an over-simplification of Valle-Inclán's complex historical thought. As Souto Alabarce explains, though with a very different reading:

It has been said that *Tirano Banderas* is antipatriotic because it scorns the Spaniards in America, but that is a very narrow and prudish sense of patriotism. When Valle-Inclán criticizes the bad *gachupín* in America, he is criticizing the bad Spaniard in Spain.²¹ (xix; personal translation)

The question that needs to be answered is: what is it that makes them "bad"? Is that a circumstantial, a willful or an innate tendency? To answer this question it is necessary to take into consideration the social divisions operating in *Tierra Caliente*. In an interview with Gregorio Martínez Sierra — published December 19, 1928 —, Valle-Inclán declared:

In *Tirano Banderas* there is, in addition, the literary will to add to the *castizo* Spanish the vocabulary created in Latin America. It is evident that, in order to achieve this, I needed to invent a Republic with an imagined geography. For the plot, I thought about an America made up by the aboriginal Indian, the creole and the foreigner. The Indian, who is either the president or on most occasions the pariah, I developed as three figures: Generalito Banderas; the pariah that suffers the terrible punishment of whipping; and the Indian whose wife was arrested and from the revolutionary group, Zacarías the Crusader.

The creole, in a parallel way, I developed in three kinds: the eloquent Dr. Sánchez Ocaña; the guerrilla fighter Filomeno Cuevas and the creole filled with religious fervor that echoes that of Assisi, that is Roque de Cepeda.

The foreigner, I also developed as three types: the Spanish Minister; the rich Don Celes and the pawnshop owner Señor Peredita.²² (Martínez Sierra 395; personal translation)

It is obvious that this ethnic division is too simplistic since it lacks a major group present in the Latin American republics: the *mestizo*. The author mostly presents a two-dimensional scheme: Indians — the “real” Americans — and Europeans, being possible to divide the last category between *criollos* or “creoles” (the good Europeans called to liberate the Indian race²³) and *peninsulares* (the worst kind). Indeed, in the few occasions when the word *mestizo* or relative words appear in the book, they tend to be presented in a negative fashion.²⁴ Contrary to that, one of the positive attributes used to describe Zacarías the Cruzader is imported from the Spanish historiography; in this case the virtue of this Indian is equated with that of “real” Spaniards: *estoico*, or “stoic” (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 174), a word associated with virtue and purity. In sharp contrast with that, one of the derogatory words he uses to describe Don Quintín—probably the worst characters in the novel—is *ladino* (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 135), a synonymous word used in Central America for *mestizo*.

It is symptomatic of his traditionalism and colonialist vision how Valle-Inclán saw the whole continent as a racial unity, disregarding the existing differences between the myriad of populations existing in the Americas. Valle-Inclán, with a clear colonialist gaze that unifies the other, considers Latin America a racial unity, an “other”, as stated in an article published May 21, 1930: “Mexico does not resemble any of the other American republics; his race is made of oak, it is the race of the Incas” (Valle-Inclán, qtd. in Hormigón vol. 2.2 512; personal translation).²⁵

The tripartite scheme — actually bipartite, the “norm” versus the “other” — recalls that of the Spanish traditionalist historiography, which projected a clear separation between Christians (the “real” Spanish), versus Jews and Muslims (the “others” or foreigners). Subsequently, Valle-Inclán does not seem to subscribe an integrated mixed vision à la Américo Castro, as his letter to Alfonso Reyes dated December 20, 1923 demonstrates:

The *gachupines* possess seventy percent of the territory: —they are the essence of the Iberian barbarism—the land at the hands of those foreigners is the most noxious form of possession. A thousand times worse than at the hands of dead people. Our Mexico, to finish with the revolutions, must divide the property of the land, and the *encomendero*.

[...] The revolution for independence cannot be reduced to a change of viceroys, but to the cultural overcoming of the Indian race, the completion of their rights, and the expulsion of Jewish and Moorish *gachupines*. Better it would be, surely, to slit their throats.²⁶ (Valle-Inclán, qtd. in Hormigón vol. 3 312 – 3; personal translation)

In *Tirano* the *gachupines* are foreigners to the Mexican land as Jews and Moors are to traditionalist historiography in Spain, and he proposed the same solution that the Catholic Monarchs reached four centuries earlier: expulsion.²⁷ In the novel the *peninsulares* are greedy outsiders (a frequent accusation against the Jews in Spain) or effeminate sodomites (an accusation against Moors and other Orientals, or *levantinos*). Thus, Don Quintín and the Spanish colony are usurers, and the Spanish Ambassador

Don Mariano Isabel Cristino and Currito—the bullfighter-like Andalusian—have homosexual intercourse. In addition, the Ambassador receives the Spanish colony reclined like an Arab odalisque, wearing silk gowns, with makeup on his face (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 30–31). Like the Jewish population in Spain was often viewed, the Spanish colony in *Tirano* does not mix with the natives; they have their own journals, their own casinos and associations, marry within their own group, etcetera. They are *faux* Spaniards, they do not represent the “ethical tradition” of Spain in the Americas, just like *conversos* were fake Christians to the Inquisition. Bělič appropriately indicates how in *Tirano*: “Symmetry, in my opinion, has the special mission to underline, by confronting and strikingly opposing, the contrasts”²⁸ (23; personal translation). The contrast shows how the Spaniards of Mexico lack some kind of purity of blood/ethics: they can pass for “real” Spanish people—they shape the “official” Spain in the country—but they do not share the values of “real” Spain, the medieval Spain.²⁹

Well known is the letter dated November 14, 1923 that Valle-Inclán sent to Alfonso Reyes. In this correspondence the Spanish writer describes his work-in-progress *Tirano Banderas* as a synthesis — of Latin American cultures, regions, ages, people, language, and etcetera. The word he uses to designate the process, synthesis, is worthy of thought because of the etymological implications it carries. A synthesis is the byproduct of mixing (at least) two separate components which produce a different outcome, a processed outcome.³⁰ Very different from the Mexican muralist school, that presented Mexico as a synthesis of the two races producing a mestizo one — as Vasconcelos theorized in *La raza cósmica* (1925)³¹ —, in *Tirano* Valle-Inclán portrayed a racially segregated scheme. Against the false Spain portrayed by the colony, Valle-Inclán opposes the Arcadia of Spanish traditional historiography with the twist that it is not a Catholic, but a Christian Arcadia. The anti-Catholic stance of Don Roque in the novel (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 60), on the other hand, is a direct transposition of Vasconcelos' political views.

The undesirability of racial mixing between the American race and this *marrano* colony — *marrano* or ‘pig’ is the name given in the Golden Age to the fake *converso* Jews — does not mean that there can be no transculturation, although it is clear that it must not be accomplished by the mixing of races. This racial segregation can only be overcome via Christianity, understood as a way to transcend national frontiers; he also expressed this idea in 1922 in “El deber Cristiano de España en América” (Valle-Inclán, *Entrevistas* 227–8), right after his return from Mexico. He sees a redemptive project in common for the Hispanic world between the Indians and the best of the creoles through language and its attached culture, more than race. In the messianic scheme of Valle-Inclán, the synthesis that he seems to endorse for the Hispanic world is not the racial mixing of the “real” Americans with the “real” Spain but a linguistic and religious synthesis. His solution is the adoption and acceptance of the language and the religion of the conqueror by the conquered.³²

Valle-Inclán's concept of synthesis is also linked with pictorial aesthetics, as the self-comparison of his technique in *Tirano* with El Greco's use of space denotes.³³ The synthesis of time and space produces an uchronic kaleidoscope that allows for the co-

appearance of multiple sides of reality and time altogether, similar to cubist techniques. Yet the most important synthesis at play in the novel is that which is operated on the language through its baroque stylistics. It is this linguistic synthesis that had a wider progeny in the twentieth century in the Hispanic *lettres*: Carpentier, Lezama Lima, Sarduy, Paz, Fuentes, and etcetera. All these Latin American thinkers and novelists spoke about or made use of the baroque in order to instill a concept of Latin American community.

One of the biggest innovations of *Tirano* is how Valle-Inclán rewrites the topic of civilization versus barbarism following a strictly peninsular set of references and values. To Sarmiento's Eurocentric cluster he opposes the idealized Latin cultures, led by Spain's Christianity and traditionalism, making use of baroque stylistics, cubism and the muralist aesthetics learned from Rivera. It is sure that Valle-Inclán's synthetic use of baroque language bridges both sides of the Atlantic, and therefore he pictures an *esprit* of Hispanic unity that modifies both sides, as Dougherty rightly notes (Dougherty, *Palimpsestos* 188). Although that reading is always sustainable and positive, a problem continues to be posed; the tenets underneath it can be very easily reinscribed from the old metropolis and appropriated as a pro-colonial stance, as Arraco's comments on Valle-Inclán probe, as early as 1947:

Cervantes did not need to leave Spain to see the grandeur of his country; but Valle-Inclán, locked in the Iberian [bullfighting] ring, narrow, miniscule, breaks the barriers, gallantly jumps, and unable to pull down the helmet or to wear the lance, brandishes the pen, with a steady hand and calm reason, to become the first soldier of this army that is only moved by the strategy of pure hearts, and whose aim is to reconquer America through the spirit of one same language.³⁴ (Arraco 141; personal translation)

The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Valle-Inclán's death and decades since these ideologemes were put into circulation, it is time to consider how much of an exogenous/colonialist impulse may lie underneath the pro-baroque fervor on a part of the Spanish and Latin American Academies of the last decades. In this sense the case of *Tirano* may be paradigmatic: it has been interpreted as a novel that gives voice to the drama of the native populations through the synthetic use of a baroque language; but as it has been argued in this article, the voicing of the oppressed comes paradoxically hand in hand with a pro-traditionalist rewriting of the oppressors' history.

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Notes

1. "He aquí dos tropos fundamentales del discurso colonialista Español de 1926: jerarquías raciales, civilización y barbarie. De la Madre Patria parte la civilización que se imparte con látigo sobre las espaldas del indio «naturalmente ruin». Patriotismo, racismo y misión civilizadora se entretrejen en este diálogo que llama la atención sobre ciertas actitudes que sostienen la tradición colonial de España en América." (Dougherty, *Palimpsestos* 184)
2. "Si comparamos los resultados literarios más relevantes que se derivan de cada viaje, el contraste no es menor. Para decirlo de una manera indirecta; la distancia que hay entre la lujuriente niña Chole y el humilde y digno indio Zacarías el Cruzado, y entre el decadente mundo galante de la *Sonata de estío* y la caída de la sórdida tiranía en los umbrales revolucionarios de la novela *Tirano Banderas* es la medida evidente de este cambio." (Alberca and González 190)
3. "Así pues, tanto el aristocratismo como el tradicionalismo no son factores estrictamente formalistas; el culto a la tradición —como bien señala Gómez Marín— es megalomanía, pero también encierra un sentido regeneracionista —es pasión regeneradora—, en cuanto guarda un modelo de vida que aspira a recuperar y, sobre todo, se opone a otro considerado corrupción y degeneración del primero. [···/...] Este rechazo le conduce a refugiarse en un pasado idealizado, pervivencia de glorias pretéritas, 'la 'otra España' —más que posible, definitivamente imposible— representada por el retablo medieval y caballeresco del carlismo' [Seco Serrano 205], que se opone a la mediocridad del presente." (Santos Zas 349, 357)
4. "One of the principal reasons for his [Rivera's] feeling of foreignness was the difference in language. To hear the language in which he had thought he expressed himself and to realize the strangeness of the Spanish of Mexico was something that isolated him more than if had heard Chinese being spoken around him. In the peninsula, the Spanish of a Mexican seems slow, sweet, and high-pitched, with many colloquial nouns and adjectives, precisely the most Mexican ones, which are as foreign to the Spaniards as Chinese; no one understands them. [/] He suddenly understood the linguistic drama of Mexico." (Loló de la Torre, in Rivera *et al* 214)
5. "At the Café de Pombo, a hang-out for the Spanish *avant-garde*, Diego spent time with the two Ramóns and María Blanchard. Ramón number one was Ramón Gómez de la Serna, a critic and soon-to-be Dada poet. Ramón number two was Ramón del Valle-Inclán, a Spanish novelist who had lost his left arm to the swing of a cane in a brutal café brawl. He was a grand storyteller, and Diego thoroughly absorbed his enthralling gift of prevarication, adding touches to expand his own myth-making machine. [···/...] Having the documented evidence of Rivera's movement and associations during this 1910 to 1911 period, the self-portrait he painted of the 'revolutionary' and 'patriot' Diego Rivera years later during this explosive time in Mexico's history makes for wonderful fiction. In later years when he had once again become the artistic symbol of Mexico and needed to show his street credentials to the latest regime, his part in the Mexican Revolution between 1911 and 1920 became a lusty tale of adventure." (Souter 37, 59)
6. "The invitation from Pani and Vasconcelos was confirmed a few months later and Diego embarked on June 10, 1921. By June 21 he was already giving interviews in Mexico City. Did Rivera intend to create an especially Mexican style, a goal on the minds of many Mexican artists and intellectuals of the time? There has been much speculation on this subject. The received view is that the predominantly *Byzantine* style of his first murals proves the contrary, given the contrast with the overtly Mexican style of his Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública/SEP) work. But Rivera was already thinking of a mixed style in which *lo mexicano* would have a place. An anonymous interview offers evidence on this point. 'Why have you returned to Mexico?' asked the reporter: 'My motive for coming back was something more than the nostalgia for Mexico I've felt in Paris, Madrid and Rome, indeed, wherever I went. I want to study popular art and the ruins of our amazing past in order to clarify certain notions of art, certain projects I have; if I can realize them,

they will undoubtedly give a broad new sense to my work.’ The reporter further asked: ‘So, do you think that popular art — which is insufficiently appreciated here in Mexico — has within it a well-spring of beauty that can be put to use?’ Rivera replied: ‘Precisely. What the European artists are so ardently seeking is abundantly present here, above all in Mexican art’. ” (Lozano and Coronel Rivera 11)

7. “El ministro de educación [Vasconcelos] había comenzado a propagar su ideología mexicana y sus ideales humanistas por medio de un programa de pinturas murales que confió a los artistas interesados en el tema. Además estaba firmemente decidido a utilizar la amplia reforma cultural, iniciada por él, para apoyar la igualdad social y racial de la población india, proclamada en la Revolución, y a favorecer la integración cultural y la recuperación de una cultura mexicana propia, después de siglos de opresión católica-hispánica. La pintura de murales, provista ahora de una fundación educativa, era un pilar fundamental de su política cultural, con la que quería hacer patente la ruptura con el pasado sin interrumpir la tradición y sobre todo el rechazo a la época colonial y a la cultura europeizada del siglo XIX. ” (Kettenmann 22)

8. “En suma; como resultado del repudio de la realidad entorno, Valle busca un modelo social que opone idealmente al histórico en el que él mismo se mueve. Y ese modelo se aproxima significativamente al que el carlismo ofrece en su doctrina como alternativa al liberal-burgués vigente, ya que el carlismo —conviene subrayarlo— es un movimiento esencialmente contrarrevolucionario, es decir, nace como reacción a la revolución liberal burguesa. ” (Santos Zas 357)

9. “Valle-Inclán [at the International Congress of Students] toma una de las banderitas mexicanas de papel que adornaban la mesa y escribe: «Indio mexicano / mano en la mano, / mi verdad te digo: / lo primero, matar al encomendero, / y después segar el trigo.»” (Hormigón vol. 2. 1 122)

10. “Con esto España no hará más que seguir la tradición nacional iniciada en el siglo XVI por el padre Las Casas. Y Hernán Cortés en su testamento dispuso que le enterraran en el Hospital de Jesús, que él había fundado para asilo de indios desvalidos. El conquistador quería ser enterrado en el seno popular y no en el panteón de la catedral, entre encomenderos y preladados. Este es el ejemplo que debemos seguir. ” (Valle-Inclán, qtd. in Díaz Migoyo 211)

11. In that sense, this rejection to disown Cortés separates *Tirano* from the trend that Bretz finds in Modernist writings: “However, the indeterminacy of the future does not efface a clear repudiation of major aspects of the past. ” (Bretz 92)

12. “Sale hacia Jalisco en ferrocarril, en un tren especial formado por una locomotora, un vagón dormitorio y un vagón comedor. Viajan junto a Valle-Inclán, Daniel Cosío Villegas (1898 – 1976), Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Diego Rivero, Gerardo Murillo (el Dr. Atl) (1875 – 1964), Julio Torri (1889 – 1970), la soprano Carmen García Cornejo, Roberto Montenegro, Carlos Pellicer y los estudiantes argentinos Arnaldo Orfila y Ripaveldi. ” (Hormigón vol. 2. 1 13)

13. As Alberca and González noted: “Valle continuará su lucha contra la sociedad moderna, proponiendo un futuro revolucionario que era para él en realidad la vuelta a un primitivos arcaico y, por tanto, utópico. Pero en estas obras citadas, asumió el desafío estético y político de recuperar una sociedad periclitada con la aspiración ilusoria, pero noble y sincera, de hacerla otra vez posible. ” (132). This idealization of the past is evident in *Tirano*, where sentences like the following can be read: “— Las antiguas colonias Españolas, para volver a la ruta de su destino histórico, habrán de escuchar las voces de las civilizaciones originarias de América. ” (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 60)

14. “Con los portavoces de la derecha, compartía el escritor gallego el deseo de recobrar la «esencia» de España (una esencia ahistórica, claro está, de signo espiritual) y la visión de un «dictador» que fuera instrumento de la dignificación del país. A los revolucionarios de izquierdas le aproximaba su desprecio por la burguesía así como el espíritu populista y el afán justiciero que laten en sus obras literarias. Y con los anarquistas coincidía don Ramón al ensalzar la libertad individual y al asignar un fin espiritual a la revolución. Los puntos de contacto eran numerosos, en fin, creando la impresión de una variedad de tendencias que la mayoría ha dado en calificar de «incoherente» o

«contradictoria». ” (Dougherty, *Valle-Inclán* 57 –58)

15. “Frente al mundo elitista en el que se mueve Ortega, que abraza con entusiasmo los cambios traídos por la sociedad capitalista, que anhela la llegada de una sociedad democrática dirigida por una minoría selecta y que incluso recibe con brazos abiertos la dictadura de Primo de Rivera, Valle se muestra partidario de una sociedad tradicional, se solidariza con el estamento que progresivamente es desposeído de su honra y sus privilegios por una sociedad burguesa cada vez más afianzada y manifiesta su oposición a la dictadura, llegando a convertirse incluso en un símbolo antidictatorial (Entrambasaguas 383). Ortega, como puntualiza Predmore, defiende una tradición liberal cuya misión es forjar una nueva España democrática, mientras que Valle no comparte ese espíritu democrático.” (Tasende 154 –5)

16. See for example Dougherty “Sarmiento” and Orbe to have two antithetic perspectives.

17. “En España, aún más que en América, se adoptaron desde el siglo XVIII las influencia extranjeras — francesas, inglesas, alemanas —, se reaccionó contra la tradición Española, y se abogó por la europeización por reformadores, progresistas, krausistas, institucionistas, modernistas, etc., desde Feijóo hasta Ortega y Gasset, al mismo tiempo que se afirmaba el indigenismo ibérico por los mejores europeizantes, como don Joaquín Costa, al buscar la construcción de su nueva política salvadora en la organización política, civil y religiosa de los celtíberos, o don Miguel de Unamuno, al afirmar como un desafío a Europa el africanismo de España.” (Onís 14)

18. “Las notas anteriores dan razones suficientes para entender una concepción tripartita de las Españas: la nórdica, la meseteña y la ‘levantina’ — expresión, esta última, de cierta elasticidad, puesto que incluye todos los modos ‘meridionales’ Españoles —, es decir, Castilla la Nueva — Madrid incluido — y Andalucía.” (Díaz-Plaja 78)

19. “Aparte de estas consideraciones, la conferencia presentó una aparente novedad: como base de su apoyo al régimen de Obregón, don Ramón dejó a un lado el concepto de la revolución social y estableció un enlace entre Madrid y México por medio del cristianismo y otros rasgos de la cultura latina transmitidos por España al Nuevo Mundo; ‘Como Grecia fue heredera de la civilización egipcia y Roma de la helénica, alzóse España con la civilización latina y erigió ciudades y dictó leyes y difundió su idioma por América... La España oficial no quiere desposeerse de su oscuro espíritu africano, y contribuye a destruir [esta] obra nacional altamente cristiana de tres siglos’. Volver a esa tradición civilizadora sería, en fin, recuperar la misión histórica de España en América. Además, sería poner la política oficial en consonancia con la voluntad nacional, que no hacía separación alguna entre lo revolucionario y lo cristiano.”

20. “El rasgo ideal de ese paraíso perdido era, en el caso de don Ramón, su síntesis de barbarismo y civilización, de energía primitiva entregada a la voluntad y normas de cultura aptas para encauzar ese vitalismo. La tensión propia de la España moderna entre «la barbarie ibérica» y «las normas clásicas» estaba ausente — según esta visión ideal — en la Edad Media.” (Dougherty, *Valle-Inclán* 31)

21. “Se ha dicho del *Tirano Banderas* que es antipatriótico porque hace escarnio del Español en América, pero esto es tener un sentido muy estrecho y mojigato del sentimiento patriótico. Cuando Valle-Inclán critica el mal ‘gachupín’ en América, está criticando al mal Español en España.”

22. “En *Tirano Banderas* hay, además, la voluntad literaria de sumar al castellano castizo el vocabulario creado en la América Española. Claro que para esto me ha sido necesario la invención de una república con geografía imaginaria. En cuanto a la trama, pensé que América está constituida por el indio aborigen, por el criollo y por el extranjero. Al indio, que tanto es allí, alguna vez presidente como de ordinario paria, lo desarrollé en tres figuras: el Generalito Banderas, el paria que sufre el duro castigo del chicote, y el indio del plagio y la bola revolucionaria, Zacarías el Cruzado.

[/] El criollo es tipo que, a su vez, desarrollé en tres: el elocuente doctor Sánchez Ocaña; el guerrillero Filomeno Cuevas y el criollo cargado del sentido religioso, de resonancia del de Asís, que es don Roque de Cepeda. [/] El extranjero también lo desarrollé en tres tipos: el ministro de

España; el ricacho don Celes y el empenista señor Peredita. Sobre estas normas, ya lo más sencillo era escribir la novela.”

23. “En la forma [de Filomeno Cuevas] de su amor a la tierra, y en la de estar constituida su familia [...], en sus renunciamentos serenos, en su decisión de *hacer historia* al embarcarse en la revolución, Valle-Inclán coloca, y muy expresivamente y atinadamente, cuál ha de ser el papel de la auténtica casta criolla.” (Zamora xx)

24. “El Coronel Licenciado López de Salamanca [...] Nieto de encomenderos Españoles, arrastraba una herencia sentimental y absurda de orgullo y premáticas de casta. De este heredado desprecio por el indio se nutre el mestizo criollaje dueño de la tierra [...]” (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 66).

25. “México no se parece a ninguna otra de las repúblicas americanas; su raza es de roble, es la raza de los incas.”

26. “Los gachupines poseen el setenta por cien de la propiedad territorial; — Son el extracto [*sic*] de la barbarie íbera — La tierra en manos de estos extranjeros [*sic*] es la más nociva forma de poseer. Peor mil veces que las manos muertas. Nuestro México para acabar con las revoluciones tiene que nacionalizar la propiedad de la tierra y al encomendero. [.../. . .] La revolución por la independencia, que no puede reducirse a un cambio de visorreyes, sino a la superación cultural de la raza india, a la plenitud de sus derechos, y a la expulsión de judíos y moriscos gachupines. Mejor, claro está, sería el degüellen.”

27. “Cf. *El Noroeste* de la misma fecha: «Dijo que en España se había logrado hacer una unidad religiosa, pero no política, calificando de disparate la expulsión de los moriscos»” (Dougherty, “Valle-Inclán” 81). Though this opinion may seem to contradict the thesis of this article, notice that Valle-Inclán complains specifically about the expulsion of Muslims in the seventeenth century, not about that of Jews in 1492. In *Tirano* the ‘bad’ Spaniards — just like the bad Europeans — will be associated with Judaism; “Sonrió el gachupín [Peredita] con hieles judaicas” (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 125). Thus, the German Ambassador is “semita de casta” (237) as well.

28. “La simetría, a mi juicio, tiene por misión especial la de subrayar, confrontando y contraponiéndolos llamativamente, los contrastes.”

29. Concerning this concept of the “real” Spain Díaz-Plaja states: “Cuando Valle Inclán, en la línea que le solicitara Ortega, desciende de su esteticismo en procura de cosas *humanas*, se encuentra, pues, con aquella ‘España oficial’ retórica y teatral que le parece la antítesis o contradicción de la España viva, tradicional y foral, haciéndole intuir las formas liberales de la política vigente como destrucciones de la autenticidad Española.” (Díaz-Plaja 87)

30. Díaz Migoyo prefers the concept of syncretism to synthesis, a word that emphasizes the internal contradictions instead of a homogeneous outcome (173).

31. “El Español de *Tirano Banderas* es un lenguaje vivo, resucitado, enriquecido por afluentes de todos los ámbitos americanos y peninsulares. Contra todo academismo anquilosado, Valle-Inclán veía en él un renacimiento, no sólo de la lengua, sino del espíritu de los pueblos hispánicos. Esta vez, se daba a este lado del Atlántico. ¿No es ésta también la actitud de Vasconcelos en la *Raza cósmica*?” (Souto Alabarce, xv)

32. “El Océano Pacífico acompaña el ritmo de sus mareas con las voces unánimes de las razas asiáticas y americanas, que en angustioso sueño de siglos, han gestado el ideal de una nueva conciencia, heñida con tales obligaciones, con tales sacrificios, con tan arduo y místico combate, que forzosamente se aparecerá delirio de brahamantes a la sórdida civilización europea, mancillada con todas las concupiscencias y los egoísmos de la propiedad individual. [...] Nosotros, más que revolucionarios políticos, más que hombres de una patria limitada y tangible, somos catecúmenos de un credo religioso. Iluminados por la luz de una nueva conciencia, nos reunimos en la estrechez de este recinto, como los esclavos de las catacumbas, para crear una Patria Universal.” (Valle-Inclán, *Tirano* 62)

33. “Había dicho Valle-Inclán en 1924 que en el *Tirano Banderas* le preocupaba llenar el tiempo

como el Greco llenaba el espacio. Y no es un tiempo largo el ficticio que se encuentra en el *Tirano*: la tragedia transcurre en tres días. Pero el novelista gallego, a quien le horroriza el vacío como suele ocurrir a los artistas barrocos, lo alarga y distorsiona, llena esos días mediante la perspectiva múltiple, los ojos compuestos y prismáticos que desdoblan la acción en mil figuras yuxtapuestas. Los planos se dan libremente en el tiempo y en el espacio. Es la visión cubista que el propio Valle-Inclán manifiesta en una frase de la novela misma: ‘visión cubista del circo Harris’.” (Souto Alabarce xxi)

34. “No tiene Cervantes necesidad de salir de España para ver la grandeza de su país; pero Valle-Inclán, encerrado en el ruedo ibérico, estrecho, minúsculo, rompe las barreras, salta gallardamente, y no pudiendo calarse la cimera ni tomar la lanza, empuña la pluma, firme el pulso y serena la razón, para convertirse en el primer soldado de ese ejército que sólo se mueve en la estrategia del corazón puro, y que tiene como objetivo la reconquista de América por el espíritu de una misma lengua.”

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