

Quarterly
of Review
Literature

Walt Whitman

Notes from a Train Journey

Jean-Paul Sartre

Mallarmé

Ralph Ellison

Night-Talk

Aukema *Frozen Voices* Cardwell
Transparent Eyeball Coover *That*
the Door Opened González *The*
Schoolteacher Inman *I'll Call You*
Merwin *Three Stories* Molyneux
Moderately and Fairly Regularly
Neall *Changes* Nolledo *Cadena*
de Amor Yurick *The Before*
and After of Hymie Farbotnik

25th ANNIVERSARY

DOUBLE PROSE ISSUE \$2.50

QUARTERLY REVIEW *of* LITERATURE

EDITORS: T. WEISS

RENÉE WEISS

VOLUME XVI

NUMBERS 3-4

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QRL: published in affiliation with the Creative Arts Program of Princeton University. Address: 26 Haslet Ave., Princeton, N.J. 08540. Manuscripts: must be accompanied by stamped, addressed envelope. They will not be read between May and Sept. Subscription: 2 double numbers \$5.00. © Quarterly Review of Literature, 1969. Distributor: DeBoer. Printed in Great Britain.

CONTRIBUTORS

CHARLES AJKEMA is appearing in INTRO (No. 1) and in *North American Review* with short stories. He is at work on an experimental novel, *To the Sixth Power*.

GUY A. CARDWELL has taught at several universities and is now a professor at the State University of New York at Albany. Most recently he has been working on a volume of short stories and a book on ideas and images in the Old South. He has published in many magazines. A story of his in *Shenandoah* will be reprinted *The American Literary Anthology*.

A frequent contributor to QRL, ROBERT COOVER with his two novels and his recent volume of stories, *Pricksongs & Descants*, has emerged as one of our most daring and original writers. On a fellowship this year, he and his family are living in England: "We've temporarily rented this old (250 years) fishing cottage by the sea. Old ships' timbers for beams, soft moldy bricks holding it all up, fireplaces, district of winding streets & gas lamps & great pubs (when they're open. . .)"

This is the third portion to appear in QRL of the novel RALPH ELLISON is working on. The other sections appeared in X, 3 and XIII, 3-4.

As his translator says of him, "FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ died in 1962 in his mountain retreat in Envigado. Apart from the homage paid him as a mystic – the Wizard of Envigado he was called – by a small band of young followers, he was little known or dismissed as a political crank in his own country. His early life was active and public. He put out a prickly magazine, *Antioquia*, which was later suppressed by the national mail service. He was Colombian consul in Italy during Mussolini's rise; an appraisal of the dictator in his book, *El Hermafrodita Dormido*, caused his removal from that post. His books, all out of print at the time of his death, include the mystical *Viaje a Pie*, record of a foot journey over native soil; *Mi Simón Bolívar*, an altogether unorthodox, intuitive biography of the Liberator; *El Hermafrodita Dormido*, reactions to Italy; and several works of fiction in which he mounted on pins various well-known figures in his native city of Medellín. These portraits, and some of González's undeniably fanatic schemes – such as one calling for the capital's being moved from Bogotá to Medellín – still rankle in the memory of his countrymen. The force and originality of his work remains to be appraised."

ROBERT INMAN of Denver, Colorado, has published a first novel and has a second work of fiction under contract.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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One of our chief poets and translators, W.S. MERWIN has also distinguished himself as a writer of drama and journalism. Obviously he is one to enrich prose as well as poetry.

THOMAS W. MOLYNEUX has published stories in various magazines. On a Rockefeller Grant, after four months of London he and his wife are in France "and love it. I have finished a first draft of a novel and am struggling now to type it up on a borrowed typewriter with a French keyboard, a device which befuddles and frustrates me nearly as much as the French language. . . . next year I will teach again at the University of Delaware. . . . Meanwhile we pick wild asparagus under the occasional tutelage of an American writer who learned in turn under the tutelage of another American writer, drink wine and eat garlic in unprecedented quantities. . . ."

HILARY NEALL lived in New York City for the past nine years where she did editing for two textbook publishers. She is now living in Europe.

At the University of Iowa and fiction editor of its forthcoming literary magazine, WILLI NOLLEDO will publish a first novel with Random House, *But for the lovers* . . . , about life in the Philippines during World War II and after.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE had intended to write a study of Mallarmé. The present essay, a preface to a volume of Mallarmé's poems, is what Sartre finally produced.

Author of three novels, SOL YURICK is working on a fourth to be published by Harper & Row next year; they will also do a collection of his stories.

FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ

THE SCHOOLTEACHER

Translated by BARBARA de la CUESTA

It was by chance that I came to know Manjarres — I did nothing with the proposition of getting to know him; though it is true that I divined what was about to happen; I divined the suffering that was to come, for such is my nature; but that is beside the point.

In front of our house was an older one; it was always closed; you never saw anyone going in.

One Sunday we heard screams. We were told that one of the schoolteacher's children had fallen out of an orange tree and been hurt. We went to see. That's how we got to know Manjarres, Dona Josefa, and the rest.

How affinity operates! Who would have believed that on that afternoon I should have stumbled upon so great a store of suffering?

I must explain that suffering, agonies, funerals, are my ultimate pleasure; they intoxicate me. When I am following a funeral, or when I peer from a dark corner of the death chamber, I feel transported, weightless, and full of understanding. I was once an acolyte, not for the pay, but for the smell: as soon as that compounded odor of a funeral reaches my nostrils, I separate the cadaveral scent from the perfume of the flowers and the perfume that comes in bottles, and I wink to show them that they don't fool me, that I penetrate into the essence of the cadaver and into them who are burying it — they too are compounded. I boast of possessing the simple sentiment which I shall call "the funeral sentiment."

My happiness, during these occasions, is primarily composed of lightness: a sensation of floating, of being "There," of being certain that no one can fool me. It has to do with the sense of smell. We weak of sight and hard of hearing comprehend by means of our sense of smell. To follow a coffin, sniffing and analyzing, there is happiness. A certain pastor, whom I once served as acolyte, had a great talent for burying; his full

voice and powerful figure contrasted with the cadaver and its kin, made a mockery of their falseness.

If you were to weigh a cadaver and compare its weight with that of the same man as he was dying, you would understand that life is the vibratory movement which holds us upright. Hell is total heaviness an infinite duration.

And don't tell me that it's because of the gases of putrefaction. They aren't enough to make the difference between the weight of a live man and that of a dead one.

Manjarres was tall; his legs were long and thin. But you could see that he was meant to be fat; he was a wasted fat man. His was not a natural condition, rather a condition he suffered from: the emaciation of the schoolteacher. When thoughtful, he opened and shut an old pocketknife, which was very worn and clean from being so much handled; he also pulled out pieces of chalk from his pockets. Chalk and chalk dust are the only things that abound in a teacher's house. If you met him on the street, his hands were nervously in and out of his pockets. He was ashamed of himself; that was why the Jesuits at the school called him Veronica. Everything: walk, voice, moments of ire, moments of rest, showed up Manjarres' lack of naturalness. He was conscious of sin. This furtiveness is found only in humans. Among other animals I've only noticed it once, in a great dane owned by a charitable lady I knew; he had something of the air of the faint-hearted. How can we explain human faint-heartedness? It must come from the fact that the human personality is not simple, but compounded, sensible of sin. . . .

Manjarres thinks of himself as a great man. Is it so? I can only say that in him you can study the feelings of the "great man gone unrecognized."

We are many who feel ourselves great men: the artists, the philosophers, the poor . . . it is nature's defense against the self-annihilation of the poor.

It is axiomatic that we, the author and the reader, feel ourselves "great men gone unrecognized." We are those who go around saying that none of our public functionaries are any good, that it is the intriguers who get ahead. If we didn't hold

this opinion, we would have then to face our own nothingness. I don't know if you understand me: that he who gains the knowledge that the fault is his own — that he isn't a high public functionary because of his own incapability — annihilates himself.

Manjarres believes himself a slighted public man and a philosopher. Deep down he takes pleasure in his torn clothes. Why doesn't he shave? You don't have to be rich to shave daily. And why does he smell of sweat? He doesn't fool me. These miserable details are the unfurled banner of his pride, the proclamation of his belief in himself as a great man gone unrecognized.

When I went today to ask about the injured child, Manjarres was locked in his room. As I was saying goodbye to his wife, Josefa, he came out and accompanied me to the door, confiding hastily:

"My wife spies on me. She 'takes care of her husband,' if you know what I mean! Ha, ha. . . ."

Timid in the extreme, the type of man who is a solitary because of impotence, he used to be a messenger boy for a lawyer; later, an uncle of his taught him some law. He studied with the Jesuits; and graduated from their course in introspection — in believing oneself persecuted and condemned.

His first amorous experience was with a young mulatto, she was a virgin and strongly built. It was she who incited him, and he failed at the critical moment; this was because the reverend fathers teach young men to constantly think of repentance and hell, and the act of love becomes associated with so much pain and suffering that all kinds of inhibitions result. This was what happened to Manjarres in the case of the mulatto, and he became more solitary yet.

A cripple saved him. Elena, the cripple, Elena, gay and vital, deformed in her right hip, she turned him back — a little — toward reality. They say she died years ago. Perhaps she's the only feminine being of whom our schoolteacher speaks with tenderness: "Women deformed in the hip," he told me once, "they are hidden treasures."

Because he was serious by nature, and because all his movements were jumpy, full of shame, women didn't care for him. They fled from him in terror when he looked anxiously at them. One of them said once: "When Manjarres is in a loving mood, you can see mortal sin all over him." It was a very accurate description. He never sought out women except when he was greatly attacked by the need; and females, of course, consider love as their life's business and demand the matter to be treated leisurely. For them, the game is more important than the winning; their domain is what goes before; the outcome doesn't interest them. All they care about is being fallen in love with, adulated, showered with gifts, taken advantage of, and finally defeated.

He was left an orphan from a very early age and was brought up by that aforementioned uncle who had him as an apprentice in deceit. It was in his uncle's house, among the servants, that Manjarres found his cripple.

While he was a clerk in his uncle's law office, he began on that favorite occupation of the faint-hearted known as "training the will," the art of which is expounded in a hundred paperbacks whose front covers show a face with a pair of eyes like two burning coals.

Once (he was twenty) he made himself run over and kiss the office typist as she washed out an inkwell in the sink. She didn't even know him and she dropped the pitcher she held in her hand and broke it to pieces. These exercises of his were for the sake of "autodomination;" they had nothing to do with sensuality.

He spent an entire night standing up. He memorized the two-hundred articles of the National Mining Code. During one month, he made himself do all the things he most hated: copying out by hand, without a single error, the yearly reports of anonymous societies; or writing twenty thousand times sentences like "Rosero is an honest man," which were contrary to his own feelings. He remained for ten hours with his arms stretched out horizontally. These disciplines were supposed to be conducive to what is known as intrepid action. He crowned these practices with a system of self-development which incapacitated him for the arts of the ink-pot and brought

him down to those of chalk and hunger.

He initiated the system by giving birth to his double. It happened more or less as follows: Manjarres believed that he had found the secret of regenerating himself, the divine secret which would enable him to direct himself, to make himself beloved by all. He, Manjarres, was to be the guiding intelligence; and his double, Jacinto, the executor. As he walked along the street, he imagined Jacinto ahead of him, and he gave him orders; "Walk more slowly; stick out your chest; show your full face; go over to the courthouse and flatter the judges; flatter that rich woman over there; tell her she has a youthful figure."

"I will do it."

From that moment, he lived in terror, thinking of the moment when he would have to do it.

When he heard his victim's footsteps on the stair, he ran out of the office, embraced her in the corridor, and fell into a dead faint.

Screams. He was thrown in disgrace from the office and from the house. He wandered about for awhile, doing odd jobs, until he received an appointment as a schoolteacher, twenty-two years ago.

As a schoolteacher, he married Josefa Zapata, his cousin and the only woman to ever love him. Perhaps she loved him because he was sick and weak and enabled her to act the roles of mother and martyr for which she was born; or perhaps it was because no one else presented himself for her to marry. There could be no simple reason for marrying Manjarres.

They've lived together twenty-two years — going from school to school, having children, which is the fate of the poor. People have taken him for a conservative; he has that air about him perhaps.

I knew him just at the beginning of the "liberal revolution." He was classified then, in the teaching scale, as fifth category. The Director of Education was out to give the "godo"* a hard time.

* *godo*: a member of the conservative party. Public schoolteachers are appointed by the party in power in Colombia.

Our intimacy was begun in those bitter days. He was fifty or thereabouts then, and he looked seventy. When he wasn't in school, struggling to teach a hundred chauffeurs' sons, he was at home writing in his notebooks. He already had a hundred of them filled with diatribes against Josefa and the government, the two sources of all his misery.

What is in the notebooks can be summarized thus:

"The only ones who triumph in this world are the brave and the ignorant. It's impossible to get hold of the thousand pesos you need to start out with; the only thing to do is to rob them; thus all wealthy men are thieves or the sons of thieves."

But the dominant theme, in all its variations, is that profound complaint of Manjarres — that of being a great man gone unrecognized, a man who has not been able to perfect his Theory of Knowledge and his Art of Dominating because of Josefa.

I remember very well the day in which I gained Manjarres' confidence. I surprised him and he was mine. One has only to be attentive and to wait. It was a tranquil afternoon, mild and cloudy. We sat on a slope that overlooked the Aburra River. We were complaining:

"In this country," he was saying, "they only advance teachers who belong to the right party. The only ones who get good jobs are the ones who drink *aguardiente* with the inspectors of education. Jose Vicente had to spend eighty pesos on drinks in order not to be sent to Heliconia. . . ."

Next, we abused the president and the political leaders.

Our conversation can have no attraction for the reader. What was important was that I noticed that little by little we were getting happy. Why?

As soon as we began to survey the faults of our country, we began to feel better. God! We were on the brink of discovering the vital secret. I remember well that a cow happened to pass by us at the very moment that I understood Manjarres. He gave himself to me in an instant, and I expressed it to myself thus:

"Manjarres and I are great men gone unrecognized. This is what all of us are, all of us who have someone above us — "I am your dog, sir; but whose dog are you?" You the

unemployed reader; you, the unrecognized artist; you love to hear the president maligned, the best-selling novelist insulted. Libel is soothing to those who suffer.

We reason thus: "Imbeciles possess honors and riches. If I am poor and forgotten, it is because I am not understood. The rest of the world is at fault." Objectification of our wrongs is the root of art, myth.

It seems that man is a god, for he wouldn't exchange places with anyone, not even on his deathbed. I was just talking to Bermudez, the half-wit who delivers groceries from the marketplace; he told me he wouldn't change places with the king of England.

On that slope overlooking the Aburra River, I realized that neither Manjarres nor I — he with his twelve hungry children and his toothbrush in his breast pocket, and I, a lonely old man — would exchange places with anyone.

Even if we are misanthropic, we are sociable; we need humanity if only to blame it. What would happen to Manjarres if he were to become aware that he suffers because he is inept and an anarchist besides? He would die; he would blame himself and die.

How can man survive without objectifying the blame? That is the problem of redemption, of the Lamb of God. Otherwise our psychic cohesion must depend upon expedients, sentiments such as: "I am a hero born in an age without occasion for heroism," or "I was born in Chile," as Gabriela Mistral once said, "by mistake."

Josefa Zapata was her husband's staff. Without a Josefa to criticize, personalities like that of Manjarres' disintegrate.

"You contradict me; I'm a nobody because you, Josefa, contradict me. I haven't published my theory of knowledge because of you, because of you and because of this idiot country." When Josefa Zapata dies, well then we can bury Manjarres, for then he will have to recognize that there never was any theory of knowledge and that all his greatness was Josefa.

In my encounter with Manjarres and his family, I found

myself precisely confronted with the tragedy of the intellectual proletariat, which is losing, daily, the security of its "I." As we will see, Manjarres ended up accepting that he was to blame — the last stage of dissolution. I investigated his antecedents. His father was a certain Sabas, harness-maker, dipsomaniac, twentieth child in his family. One dark night, returning from a Negroes' dance down in Buga Hollow, he jumped over a stone wall and fell on top of a pig that raced off hell-bent with him mounted up; he called on the Virgin and woke up the next morning at the foot of Mamerto's carob tree. One of his sisters says that he had the devil, in the form of a frog, prisoner in a washbasin.

Manjarres' mother died giving birth to him.

His true father — if you mean the one that loved him, not the one that engendered him — was a dog named Holofernes, a mixture of great dane and wolf. He was almost human — without human defects. In a lunch pail grasped in his teeth, he carried the harness-maker his midday meal.

"Holofernes! Bring me ten cents worth of cigarettes from Chunga's store!"

He went, with the money tied to his collar, and came back with the cigarettes. If his drunken master fell on the street, the dog sat between his legs and God help the policeman who attempted to carry him off to jail! He could lead Sabas home too, the man weaving from side to side, the dog nudging him away from the ruts to avoid falls.

But Holofernes' true love was saved for the orphan. When the father died, after he drank impotable alcohol at the Itagui fair, and the lawyer uncle took the child away, that very night the dog ran madly out of the house toward the creek. The next day they found him run over by a bus.

"It seems that my father committed suicide," was all Manjarres would say about his family. Of course he was referring to the dog.

Manjarres, Josefa Zapata, and twelve children. The latter are beautiful and well behaved. Josefa? Manjarres knows nothing about her. They suffer; that is all there is to say.

Manjarres, victim of a dissociation complex, a being utterly useless as far as any practical, progressive, mercantile labor is concerned. All his colleagues are in agreement about this. No one goes near him. He keeps himself company, turning back on himself. In his own little nest of instincts, he has created his own society. He passes hours ruminating his problems, which are: has he sufficient spirit? Does he progress? Does he feel God's presence? Does he have extraordinary capabilities? Do people love him? Periodically, he adopts cruel resolutions for himself, to break habits. The unconscious end of all this is to feel himself, to assure himself of his paltry existence. As soon as the pain of the amputation has passed, the habit returns. Active people realize themselves outside themselves; Manjarres realizes himself inside his sick personality.

"A man contradicted by his wife is like a plant that's been urinated on; he withers away. It's Josefa's fault."

It has been twenty-two years since Josefa has been to the movies. For this length of time she has been suffering from the pressure of her "great man"; she has been afflicted by "Manjarres disease"; Is the philosopher irrational? Well, Josefa nags and contradicts him. Is he avoided by every one? It's because Josefa doesn't understand him.

The poor thing has absorbed all his reason for being. She lives in fear and trembling, awaiting the next whim of her great man. The day of the child's fall from the tree, when I first met her, she impressed me with her remoteness. A possessed one. She didn't take hold of things. How pitiable is a being whose intimate unity has been destroyed! You can see it in the eyes principally. Where there is synergy, the eyes are like hard knots; Josefa's are anarchic; they search and they don't find. All health and sickness is manifest in the optic nerves. There, speaks the desintegration of the personality; not in the wrinkles but in the eyes does the vital fatigue appear. Socrates had the superb eyes of an ox. Poor woman! In her eyes I read the progressive invasion of hopelessness; she had already lost everything of innocent, living joy.

Between the world and her vision lies a cancer of the soul. She is removed from hope; yet she doesn't complain. This kind

of serenity is known as the acceptance of the worst.

Manjarres' philosophies are killing this saint. I intuited a murder of the most despicable type: a gradual possession of an innocent being by another's obsession, a slow infection of the being nearest us, a gradual appearance of an estranging, deathly film. I never suspected, upon crossing the street to Manjarres' house, that I was to find this storehouse of agonies, that I was going to witness the tragedy of the intellectual proletariat.

This same opaque film covered her whole presence. Her nervous system was demoralized. Her teeth were still fine. She was only thirty-eight; but the yoke of poverty and introspection had doubled her years. Gaunt, short, she ought to have been plump and firm-tissued; her hair ought to have been lovely, but now it is falling out, lacking that certain erection and brilliance, that vibratory rhythm that a happy person's hair possesses. She is graying. Her belly falls forward, slightly to the right side, from carrying her children on the side of her heart.

From the very first time I saw them, I perceived that they loved each other, loved each other with that intense, hellish love of couples who are killing each other through a certain cosmic necessity. The class of murderers to which Manjarres belongs love their victims and hate themselves; they are instruments of necessity.

When I saw this, in spite of my passion for cadavers, I wished I hadn't gone.

The worst part was that the children shared their mother's hopelessness; their despair was even more opaque, for they had been born into it. Especially one of them: ten years old, a beautiful child, blind in one eye, his long hair hung down as if it were a weight and not hair. The attitude of all of them was that of those who are cellularly convinced that what is going to happen is going to hurt. They had been suckled on pain.

And Manjarres, he was another martyr. Was it society's fault? No, it was necessity.

Here it is indispensable to analyse a myth, the myth of guilt.

Guilt is an imaginary entity, the amount of guiltiness we perceive in an event is in inverse ratio to a real understanding of the event; there is no guilt.

Who is going to cause pain unless something possesses him: a universal center of gravity, shall we say?

What is a novel then? The logic of characters dedicating themselves to their destinies. By means of tragedy, all of the universe's interdependent creatures seek the center of the centers of gravity. The only companion of earthly man is necessity. The rest is opinion.

In order to win his affection, I started with the postulate that the poor feed on their own miseries and that the timid live off their fabricated wrongs. We objectify evil. Such is the origin of tragedy and mythology. The rich man and the successful man don't hate anyone; theirs is the wisdom of nature; it would be too cruel, wouldn't it, if they should possess all the property and all the power and hate us besides? They only hate what is higher than they – I am your dog, Sir, but whose dog are you? The world of imagination, the world of myth is closed to the rich man, because he is satisfied.

The master creations of misery are the "wrongs" and the "guilt." If we review the whole history of art, we find only the poor and the sick. Art, the next world, myths, they are the objectification of torment. Suppress art, take the promise of heaven from those hungry for justice, and the next day you will have the revolution.

Convince a poor man that his poverty is no one's fault, and he will become meek and die.

I understand now why Manjarres loved Josefa; he blamed her. Blaspheming her, he relieved his own bad conscience. When his soul was in torment, he broke out:

"It's your fault, because you nag me. You say I am unfaithful. These moneylenders aren't unfaithful; they are faithful enough in looking over every widow who comes to their counters. Vile descendents of Judith Restrepo, the murderer of Holofernes."

In those days they both began to fail. Josefa grew thinner and wept. The monthly salary of forty pesos went to buy liver

extract and Dr. Flower's Essence.

Shortly after the conversation in Rodolfo's pasture, I observed a new serenity in Manjarres. He always carried some remedy "for her" in his pocket, and on Sundays he went out with her to the movies. I went several afternoons to their house, getting to know even the dog and cats. The more extinguished Josefa became, the more he forgot himself; he lay on a bed in the evening, in the company of his little ones; he burned the notebooks in which he had insulted Josefa. At the same time, he grew thinner.

Manjarres was transformed. He had become a good man. He talked lovingly; he was loving at all hours. Movies. Remedies in his pockets. He sold the *Works of Spinoza* for six pesos.

What was happening? The being who was to blame for his failure was wasting away. Therefore, Manjarres began to feel guilty. It was remorse. The deaths of a mother and of a wife are terrible to bear. Supported by them, making them suffer, we feel ourselves great men. As soon as they die, we come to understand that they were martyrs of our egotism. Manjarres had become a good man because, as his wife grew thinner and thinner, his wrongs were forced back on himself more and more until they finally became subjectified.

But what a situation! He, too, was dying. The man who becomes meek and good, who is no longer an egotist, is in a state of decomposition.

Let us read some of the notes he made during those tragic days:

February – Josefa's sickness is a strange one. She is wasting away. The doctor doesn't know what it is.

The worst part of it is that the inspectors want to throw me out. They think I'm a Conservative. Yesterday, I went to the cafe on the corner of the capitol to see if I could buy them *aguardiente*. It was for this and to buy the liver extract that I sold my Spinoza. After I'd been there awhile, one of them, accompanied by the subdirector, came past. They didn't greet me. It's my fault no doubt. Everything is subject to causality, and the way I have acted could not bring me the friendship of these men, who after all are my superiors.

If I lose Josefa, if they throw me out of the school, what

will become of my children?

February 8 – A terrible night. No one ever comes to see Josefa. What pleasure have I ever given her? Conceive, bear, nurse, and be insulted. No wonder she is dying. All my acts have been destructive. They should name me as a Director of Instruction? Name me, who never even goes to a meeting, who never even votes? Why should they come looking for me to give me a promotion? I'm the one who has created the bad feeling. The ones who are in power are the ones who should be there.

Fine, but why must Josefa suffer, and the children? I have killed Josefa.

February 11 – The more I take care of Josefa, the more she dies. The worst of it is that she is blaming herself for everything: "As soon as I die," she tells me, "you will be Director of Education. Pardon me, pardon me, pardon me!"

February 15 – Last night Josefa told me: "Listen, promise me that you will get married again, to an intelligent woman who will stimulate you; and promise me that you will write your book. You have to tell me again that you forgive me. You have not been all you should have been, because of me."

Now I know what an idiot I have been. Holding my children to me, I cried in the kitchen. I cried for having murdered her. Who will take this guilt from me? It would need to be an infinite being, to wash this conscience of mine clean.

The doctor tells me that Josefa is lost and not to contradict her. "This good woman is all unstrung." He added that she had always had a predisposition to this and that the thing was far gone; he had examined her tactfully, making her believe that it was something with her liver. She complained of fainting spells, depressions and jumpiness. The menopause was near, but the trouble was that nothing could interest her anymore; it was an interesting case of the disintegration of the "I." "Patients of this type die before they breathe their last. We'll try to strengthen her . . . For now, you can take her another bottle of Biofosfan and give her lots and lots of quiet. This nervous system is breaking up. . . ."

February 20 – Today they took my school away from me. The Inspector, Pedro Alejandrino, called me a "godo."

And I, a freethinker, an anticleric. . . .

This morning I went out as usual, so that Josefa wouldn't know that I have no school now.

February 22 – I pawned my suits and books in Vasquez's shop.

About this good woman's death, I only know what a neighbor told me. These were her words: "Well, sir, she died a Christian death; to the last, she was trying to console Don Manjarres, who was on his knees beside her. She kept telling him to write I don't know what, and to get married again. The children were stuck fast to her. Her flame was going out. Don Manjarres kept bumping into things and kissing her feet. He ran out and came back with a pile of ashes: 'Look, I've burned this folly! Get better now and we'll go to the sea, to Cartagena. Yesterday, the Inspector told me he was going to raise my salary!' As he was saying this, she died. Father and children were in bed with her, kissing her until you arrived."

We gave her a good burial, in a vault. The usurer, Vasquez, lent us money for it, to be paid back double each month. During this time, Manjarres was stunned, immobile. His eyes and his moustaches were fixed as if in death. I remember that, when we arrived, he and the children were lying in bed with the body, speaking to it; and that when we put her in the box, we had a hard time pulling them loose.

It was necessary to do something for him. With what was left over from the burial money, we bought him a coal yard in the neighborhood of Guayaquil. But, already, nothing remained of him. He was already dead. With the death of Josefa, all his failures fell back on him. He acquired a false and continuous smile, as if constantly asking pardon. I tested his mental state by asking him what he thought about current trends in public education; he said he thought things were going well and reaffirmed that those who had taken his job away from him had obeyed their consciences. I followed him from a distance when he went, as he often did, to the Candelaria chapel where there is a statue of the fallen Christ. When he went in, he bought a candle, lighted it, and carried it to a pew

where he remained a long while kneeling with his eyes closed and his arms outspread, simulating a crucifix. When he got up to leave, he went to the wall and struck it with his knuckles, as if to make it open. I think he was calling Josefa, impatient to follow her to the tomb.

A finished man! One who had lost all his spirit. The man who has stopped blaming others is so vulnerable. The coal yard failed; he had given credit too often; when it occurred to him to distrust a man, he remembered that he himself was the worst of all men and gave credit.

On the fourth of March he went to bed. It's funny, the thing I most remember about the great man's last days is that as he lay there, he kept tugging at four coarse gray hairs that stuck out of his left eyebrow.

His agony, properly speaking, lasted forty-eight hours. Immobile and on his back. As his breathing failed, he made a sound like this: pe. . . , pe. . . , pe. . .

I passed two nights outside in the corridor, together with Emilia the ironing woman. Every so often we looked in on the dying man and on the children, checking also to see that the candles weren't going out. Emilia is a spinster who goes around doing ironing, always accompanied by a dog named Radio-broadcasting.

I brought a priest, because Emilia began fussing that the dogs were barking strangely at night, as if at ghosts; she said that it was because the sacraments were being neglected.

When the priest had left and I had re-entered the room, I noticed that the old woman was putting all the children and cats and dogs up on the bed – to say goodbye, she said. I was shaken by this, especially by one thin cat who stared fixedly at the dying man.

I was there in the room during the last few minutes. While I listened to him struggling to breathe, I remembered that he had said once that he wanted to be buried in such a way that no one could criticize him: "I don't want any priests or charitable ladies from the 'Drop of Milk' criticizing me."

He died, that is he gave forth his last "pe," at five that

morning. We dressed him in his "final exercises" suit, which we had to get out of Vasquez's pawn shop.

Francisco, the doctor, said that he hadn't died of any illness, simply of giving up. I liked the diagnosis.

The first of March, we buried Manjarres. We were ten: three priests, six laymen, and the box. The first of us was Father Ocampo – paunchy, ill-humored, one of the "new fat" in which you find the limbs and face thin, the belly huge and flabby. Those who are meant to be fat are fat all over. They are harmonious. The new fat are illogical. A frog ought to be a good frog and a thief a good thief; beauty consists of exactness. These thoughts preoccupied me as we walked along. I could see that Father Ocampo wasn't right in his fatness. I kept saying to myself, "He was born a thin man." At the same time, I was feeling very upset. Why was I having such strange thoughts while we were burying my friend? As soon as we would put the coffin down in order to say the responses and to sprinkle holy water, I started to think about fatness. I carried one end of the box, hanging on to a sheet; Juan Chaverra, the caretaker of the Germans up the hill, carried the other end.

The Coadjutor was young and pimply, about twenty-six years old. I didn't think anything about him because he watched the cars passing on the highway.

The other Father was one of the meek ones.

The three caused me wonder. First of all, their feet were so big: six enormous feet, cased in awkward shoes, moving beneath the three cassocks. "They look like shuffling frogs," I thought to myself as we picked up to move on.

So there we were: the priests, Juan Chaverra, and I. I carried the head end of the box; Juan, who went before, carried the feet. It happened that the cadaver travelled along the highway toward town with its feet first. "He's going feet first," This sentence echoed inside my brain the way some verses do. I guess I lost control of myself because of the shock. During the entire detestable burial, certain phrases and images possessed me. You know how the beautiful Cauca River on its journey under the palms repeats over and over: "Silence, silence,

silence . . . Well, during this burial, these phrases repeated themselves inside me: "Shoes, enormous shoes . . . ; fat, new fat; walking through the air, with his feet first. . . ."

It was at nine in the morning. It was drizzling, and the mud stuck on the shoes making them even more deformed.

From the house to the church there are fifteen blocks, then a few more from the church to the cemetery.

There were some others among us: the little servant boy, Valerio, was one. This child was very happy, because he was carrying the wreaths of flowers, one around his neck, the other two over his shoulders, like a pair of flowery wings. He grinned during our responses to show off the gap where his two front teeth were missing. One of the wreaths had been sent by the old woman of the St. Vincent Society who had had the duty of carrying Manjarres' pittance to him and of finding out if he really was "that badly off."

Behind, came the moneylender Vasquez's daughter, a thin spinster who did works of charity in order to save her father. He robs all he wants here and then has his daughter get him into heaven. Ah, the whore! Why did she come along? When we came out of the house with the box, there she was. She was moving her lips as if in prayer; skinny, acrid armpit odor, meager breasts squeamish under her blouse.

"Get out of here! Get going." I was shouting inside myself. "Why do you have to save yourself with Manjarres: Why are women so kind when one is already rotting in the grave?"

The others were a pair of laborers with shovels; they carried the kitchen chairs to put the coffin down on during the responses. I remember, during the first pause, I thought of Manjarres stretched between two chairs. This pleased me and I winked at Miss Vasquez and whispered "Miss Witch" in her ear. The last one in our company was the cadaver.

It was a third class burial. When we arrived at the north-east corner of the plaza, under the big silkcotton tree, we met Lino Uribe. He asked who it was we were carrying, and when he heard it was Manjarres, he remarked: "You don't say so! The worst part of it is that he's left his family destitute . . ." He turned into his son Libardo's little store, to criticize Manjarres

in there.

The priests sang very little and without enthusiasm. We took Manjarres to the cemetery and stuck him in a hole near a vault inhabited by a colony of honeybees, precisely the vault of Josefa Zapata. I neither saw nor thought anything worthy of recording; the mud stuck to everyone's shoes — a yellow mud, very sticky, resembling a corn pudding. It smelled bad there, because they don't seal the coffins well.

Concho dug out the hole with ease, because the ground is soft. There were bones. We lowered the coffin with ropes. The first shovelful of earth sounded sickening, and it was worse when they stamped it down — the muffled echo: tun, tun, tun . . . It sounds ugly, the coffin of a great man.

One detail: Concho, who had already been pretty drunk while he was carrying the kitchen chair, had a bottle in his jacket pocket; and while he dug, he kept visiting the jacket, which lay to one side, and taking a swig for himself. Thus it was that, by the time Valerio and Juan Chaverra began to stamp down the earth, Concho, who hadn't even known Manjarres, burst out crying and exclaiming, "This, this was a schoolteacher! The best of them! etc." Then he began to get angry and ended up inviting us out to the highway to have it out with him. His sobs lasted all the way to Chunga's corner, where we left him behind.

Our cemetery possesses an air of abandon typical of such places. As our towns get more prosperous, the people lose their preoccupation with death, and the burial places are neglected. In my village, the cemetery has only rickety wooden crosses, the color of time, rain, and sun; the color of doors on old neglected houses. It looks like a garden in a nightmare. The crosses lean this way and that, because the ground is soft; and because, when the box and the body decay, a hollow place is left in the ground, causing the crosses to lean. On many of the crosses you can still see the rusty wire hoop left from the floral wreath; dried petals still stick to some of them.

If Valerio had become mummified while he carried the wreaths, he would have looked like a cross holding two hoops.

There is another enchanting feature about my cemetery, and

that is the stench, especially on rainy days. They put the rich in vaults; but they don't know how to seal them well. Vaults are like rented houses, but without windows. The lease is for five years, which is the duration of a fleshy corruption in this climate.

Tocayo, a brother of Josefa Zapata, was buried right in the entrance way, by his own request so that everyone would walk over him.

The cemetery is square, and the vaults are against the walls, in tiers, like drawers in a filing cabinet.

The chapel, facing the entrance, is empty; it is full of ghosts.

The whole place is on a height, overlooking the highway. There are two stairways going up to it, which meet in a depressing landing at the top. Impenitents are buried outside in the adobe wall. There, they put Burgos, who committed suicide; children who pass by at night claim they see him walking.

To finish up, I must tell you that, while we were dressing Manjarres for his funeral, I found, in the back pocket of his Sunday pants, a little notebook, the kind butchers use to keep accounts. This notebook will be the source of what we have further to learn of the schoolteacher's perdition.

Poor crazy Manjarres! If my book about him brings anything, it will go to save the orphans from these "charity bitches." They will use the orphans to save themselves, and I would far rather see them damned. It's not enough that they have new cars, and gold mines; they get to be saved too! Such is the way life deals with us. I'll bet Josefa and Manjarres are in hell and that these bitches will go to heaven. The moneylender Vasquez's daughter already has a blessing the Pope sent her — the sainted Father and the sainted Whore!

The day after the burial, I went to take some food to the orphans and found the house full of charity dames. Emilia, the ironing woman had spread the news of the misery left by Manjarres. There were three fine automobiles out front; they smelled of perfume, petticoats, and incense — the sainted odor of capitalist charity. Charity smells just like Roman priests.

They were appalled by the squalor they found. It wasn't

known whether the children even knew their catechism or had made first communion. There were ladies from the Saintly Sisters, from the First Column Against Evil, The Drop of Milk, and the Altar Virgins. They came to practice their virtue on the twelve orphans who looked at them with their great sunken eyes. They got hold of Manjarres' children, hustled them into their cars and went driving around to exhibit their charity. The great harlots of virtue!

By the next day, they had spread their stories all over town and they went to have a meeting with the sublime Dr. Lince.

"But listen, Doctor . . . of course I'd like to take the oldest one home . . . but you know how it is!"

"My dears, you must proceed with caution. Every precaution is little enough. The pox, you know . . . All these follies, these absurd deaths! Because it isn't fair, either, that you should suffer for doing good. In the Ministry, my dears, we are of the opinion that charity is a function of the state. For years it's been my concern to get a statue . . . etc.

"They are syphilitic, there's no doubt about it, Doctor. By the way, Teresita, call Dr. Martinez to get an appointment for a chest X-ray for the little one. I'm sure he's tuberculous. Well, of course, Doctor, if there's so much of it among public school teachers, what hope have we! A danger for our husbands and children. You really ought to give some conferences on the subject."

"My dear ladies, for ten years it's been on my mind. In my book, *Colombian Morphology*, I maintain that the pox, as Grasset says, attacks the personality and breaks it up; thus the distracted air you see in syphilitics . . . in the Ministry . . . etc."

"Listen, Doctor, I hear that this man left some papers behind. I'm going to get hold of them so that you can look them over and see if you can find any proof of, you know, neurosyphilis."

Thus it was that this virago presented herself to me with the purpose of taking from me Manjarres' notebooks. I said to her:

"My dear woman, you ladies, traffickers of virtue that you are, can show yourselves off with the children; but I, being a trafficker in moral truth, will show off with the notebooks."

Manjarres is buried, our last duty done for the great man,

gone unrecognized. All that is left for us is to touch up his portrait with a few of his own notes.

"This morning I was in San Benito. There wasn't a single priest. I went to the Jesuits; nothing. Now I'm returning from the monastery of the Brothers of the Blessed Claret, a long trek it was, and I found them all taking naps. They have, up there, a statue of Claret, all lighted up and decorated with testimonials, advertising miracles as if they were toothpaste. In the church door stood two lottery sellers offering their temptation.

"Incontinent of words, I talked too much and talked stupidities in Agustin's shop with Barrera the delivery boy, Juancito the carter, and Gurbio. . . .

"Like me, Barrera dreams of shuffling off. . . . The situation is very bad, he says; since they've brought in so many horse carts, they don't need pack carriers anymore. I bought a knife from him and invited him to come for dinner on Sunday. He wants to get a job as a night watchman in a house or factory. Everyone laughed at him and reminded him that Abraham Lotero, who has the machine for making shoes, threw him out of one job because the night the roof of the shoe factory fell, Barrera didn't even wake up. He's no good for anything, really, except for talking about the "situation," which is always bad. He comes from Spanish people, beautiful oval finger nails, he has, and tapering fingers, but dirty. He eats at his cousin's house for \$3.50 a week; and they say he only earns around fifteen centavos a day. All the Barreras are like him, complainers; it's as if they were in exile from some beautiful fatherland, some beautiful land they couldn't locate on any map. They're enthusiastic about the idea of working, but they don't know how. Spaniards degenerate here in the tropics. Barrera and I are a pair of birds with clipped wings. We think we're gods, but we're really only park bench critics. Where might it be, that beautiful and just fatherland from which we are exiles?"

(written just before Josefa's death)

"Infinite reality, receive me. I give myself over. Receive, also,

Josefa Zapata, my woman; and the twelve children, the dog, the cats. Make us, each day, sharers of your wisdom. Receive us!"

"I will keep silent in order not to be a voluble Latin. This, silence, ought to be the ideal of our schools.

"Sobriety, quiescence, harmony, prudence, these are the virtues that should be taught to young men.

"Prudence consists in carrying the lamp of intelligence before us, as a night watchman lights his way with a lantern.

"We Latins use words as if they were ends in themselves.

"Yesterday, on Sunday, I was babbling stupidities to my brother-in-law, Felix: Josefa Zapata, latter-day Xanthippe, I was ranting. 'You say some stupid things all right,' he interrupted me. At fifty, I'm an old babbler.

"This morning I caught a glimpse of the Manjarres I would be: like a smooth stone which sheds the brutishness of our continent.

"Yesterday, I noticed my friend Jorge making small talk, making himself mad shadow-boxing with the images his garrulousness created.

"I passed the holiday pulling out sensitive plants – *mimosa pudica*, esoteric Colombian herb – from the school yard, far from Josefa Zapata. At fifty, I'm a deluded, disillusioned solitary."

"I went to the Board of Education. The priests have accused me of atheism. On the way over on the bus, there was a talkative old Negress. She started talking to me as if she couldn't contain herself. She overflowed all over me. Then a farmer got on and she started philosophizing to him:

'Money is no good stashed away, Bolivar! Just look at the little piece of land my Papa had. It wasn't anything big, but . . . and so on. Bolivar couldn't get a word in edgewise; the Negress answered herself. She cared not a whit if he agreed with her or not. I remembered that Spinoza, whom I read nights when Josefa won't let me sleep, says so beautifully that 'the prater and the drunk believe themselves free.' All of us here in America, who think we are so enlightened, so free, belong to the same species as this Negress who spills herself over Bolivar."

"Lying on my back in the schoolyard, as I lifted my hand to scratch myself, it struck me that not I but an immense animal, the Earth, was making the movement. Perhaps even something larger, the cosmos. How can we speak of the individual?"

"In the evening, walking on the terrace, under some low, dirty clouds, I saw the moon between the boughs of the silkcotton tree; it occurred to me that the silkcotton could not exist without the earth and the air, the heat and the rain; that everything conditions everything else. Then I felt love for the inspector who wants to take my school away from me. I saw the priest who accused me of atheism stooped in the church house door, talking to someone; and I loved him because he conditions me. I threw away my cigarette and decided to go to confession; it weighs on me, this personality of mine . . . contradiction? No; I am a divine gesture, nothing, but divine."

"I am he who cares for the wild *mimosa pudica*; I am the schoolteacher, the husband of Josefa Zapata, the father of twelve children, who wants to write a theory of knowledge. Now I am going to confession to tell the priest that, while Sabas who engendered me, lay in a drunken sleep, I used to steal money from his pockets. I will tell him also that I have stolen chalk and notebooks from the school."

(After Josefa's death, during the time of the coalyard)

"Since the day before yesterday, I have been calling on the Infinite to send me some guide, because for thirty years I have been lost, have been in the clutches of three passions; pride, lust, and avarice.

"The guide I petitioned has come to me. I feel the light of heaven, the ease of convalescence. I experience the sacred pain, remorse.

"Manuelito Ramirez died suddenly yesterday. My old companion riding buses over the mountains. We were together yesterday, at eleven o'clock. At four, he died. In the plaza he felt a sharp pain in the heart; he went home and departed from us . . . for where? Where is Manuelito Ramirez now? I miss him. We used to talk together about growing old and

about self-improvement programs. Virgin Mary, give him your hand and lead him to the fountain of eternal youth!

"For several days now, I pass through states of ecstasy followed by nervous perturbations. My right leg bothers me: a sensation of cold. I am exalted; enjoying myself greatly, suffering greatly. Last night I saw Josefa; she was in a star, and calling me."

"Yesterday at ten, I went to the church of San Benito to see if I could find a certain old priest — scrawny, broken, miserable-looking — who had listened to my confession fifteen years ago. The confessionals were closed. I can't bring myself to confess to priests of the type that intrigue for parishes, nor to fascist priests, nor to priests who drive automobiles, etc. There is one who looks, hunched over the steering wheel of his car, like a bus driver. Look at him! He was born to be a bus driver and he's carrying on Christ's ministry. It was this priest who called across the street to one of my colleagues: 'What do you hear of Manjarres? Is he still crazy?'

"God is calling me to him, calling. Last night I saw Josefa in my dreams, very beautiful, young. . . .

"Moments of ecstasy, constant feeling of resignation. It seems as if I live within the bosom of the good. Everything is beautiful, even though they speak of my misfortunes. I am still anxious to confess, but I haven't gone back to try to find someone at whose feet I might lay my burden of guilt. Yesterday, I read the newspaper in Suso's cafe and then I went to the church. There, I saw my children; they had just taken communion and were coming down from the chancel, palms pressed together in front of their chins. Such envy, such pleasure I felt at the sight of them. I need to feel Christ in me. Enter, Lord. Enter and purify. You who called Lazarus back from corruption. You who came back from the dead and then sat down to eat fish! How beautiful You were: who never stole, who never prated over trifles, who never put on a false front! You who were weightless and transcendent, incorruptible! Call me with more urgency! I cannot go to You; let your kingdom come. Our kingdoms have only led to prostitution. Push me; urge me, inspire me. All your symbols

call to me, flirt with me. . . .

"But a part of me lags and whispers: 'Why have they made that buffoon Vicente a sexton in the church?'"

"What does it matter? Am I not a prevaricator, a thief, a persecutor? We are the ones Jesus went around looking for: fools and thieves. Yes, Vicente is fine right where he is. When the church was just born, when it roamed about Galilea, the moneylender Judas was sexton and the big-headed Peter was hierarch; there was a publican and the rest were dirty fishermen. Old Vicente will hold the paten when the Kingdom comes. Together, we will fly out of our stinking shrouds like a pair of butterflies."

"Above us is a great silkcotton tree. 'Oh, look at it!' I say to myself. 'See how the roots begin, far up on the trunk; they stand out in relief like the splayed pages of a giant book. Look, look, concentrate on those roots; let them become an image that draws you upward from earth, diffuses you upward toward her, Josefa Zapata. Oh, heaven!'"

"This, this is what keeps us from working, what chains us here to this park bench. It is the lost fatherland that we divine beyond the benumbed flesh. Intimations of a longing to return to that place from which we were cast out."

"From this proceeds your desire to confess, I tell myself. You're not happy with yourself, because you stole those things. That's a sign that the thief wasn't you, not you who lived 'there' once, but the wretch who was exiled.

We were Gods
And they cast us out
Calling us thieves and sybarites
Vestiges of the former state —
The oval nails, the tapering fingers —
Remain;
And we sit on the benches,
Complaining

"My great sin is that I talk too much at times. So old and so stupid! My son, Raimundo, is more prudent. I shall try to contain myself.

"Another sin of mine is buying lottery tickets. So old and so deluded!

"This young wretch at the bank sends me notices without ceasing. I owe him a hundred pesos he says. The National Lottery robs me, and I rob the bank, and this young man gets angry. Who owes? No one. We are sick beings, who live under the delusion of what's mine and what's yours, thus creating the economic causality that crushes the life out of women and children and old people.

"I confessed at ten thirty this morning at the Jesuits. Tomorrow I will take part in the Last Supper in remembrance of thee, Josefa Zapata."

EPILOGUE

Manjarres is dead.

Only after many stumblings, not till I was past middle age, did I arrive at certain truths that more privileged men discovered as youths or knew from birth. This backwardness, would it be the fault of the tropics?

At last, in the shadow of death, I discover that earthly happiness lies in adapting yourself to society! The Jesuits have known this since the eighteenth century; that's why they're so contented. The king is my cock. The rest is Manjarres.

Now I say goodbye to Manjarres, the schoolteacher, who was my youth, my childhood. Now, an old man already, I'm sorry for having mistreated reality. This that they like to call truth, it is really only a dream of the maladjusted.

The schoolteacher that was I, that is now dead and buried, did nothing but make difficulties for me. He who inhabits my body now is obedient as water, and the corpse he will soon be will be carried off in a fine automobile, followed by an impressive train of senators, ministers, and general managers.

How backward we are in South America. Only here do defeated presidential candidates remain vindictive for life: that they were "robbed of their triumph" remaining their eternal cry. In other countries the defeated candidate congratulates the winner and they obey reality. How bitter is life for the poor friendless schoolteachers, living in resigned

concubinage with their old Truth.

Man is a social animal. That's why, toward middle life, the misunderstood schoolteacher begins to wake up mornings in a panic. Liberty is not permitted us.

Sincerity is for virgins. Am I a toad under a basin: Can I live under an overturned vessel, nourishing myself? Anyone who has borne more than my forty-six years under a cold clay pot in the attitude of a night toad, let him doubt my conclusions.

Of course, "glory" is reserved for the occupants of overturned vessels. Celestial bliss — food for the dead. To us, the realists, give us health, power, and love.

During the last days in which I was Manjarres, I sometimes thought I saw, as I sat in the evenings drinking coffee under the great silkcotton trees in the plaza, an automobile go by, carrying the ugly cadaver of the great man. How nauseating!

For this new man that we are now, forget the memorial bust; give him, rather, its equivalent in cash. I'll sell the gravestone too, for fifty pesos.

A mulatto just came up to me and began: "You are an intellectual . . . here are some volumes that you ought to subscribe to . . .," etc.

"If I am a distinguished thinker," I interrupted him, "then give me a peso. Don't you see! You say this because you want my money. You leave with my money and I am left with the 'glory' of being an intellectual. Get out with you! Give me my glory in cash."

Manjarres is dead, but he stirs in his grave, thus this long epilogue to finish him off for good. I, dear sirs, believe now only in money, health, and love. From now on, my candidates will be the ones to win. I renounce philosophy to become a prophet of reality.

But to kill Manjarres, who inhabits us from birth, is not so easy. Nietzsche and Marx thought they had killed him: "Down with those who preach about the other world!" they shouted; then they both proceeded to create their own other worlds out of dreams.

Don't speak to me of contradiction! The moment after I was born, I was already different from him to whom my mother — who made me proud and unfaithful as life — had given birth.

Am I a fence post? Am I just a dwelling place for ideologies? No, I am flesh and bone; I suffer passions; I suffer and react. Today I laugh and tomorrow I cry.

Fortunately, suffering, eating straws of hope, fortified my arm for the blow I dealt to Manjarres' heart. Just yesterday I read that a miserable old woman brought a painting she had found to the Yankees. They examined it with their machines and . . . it was a Rembrandt! Seven-hundred-thousand dollars! and the painter died in misery, the most painful of deaths. Ah, Manjarres must be killed!

Our youth, be victorious. Let the cock which wins be our cock. The rest is life in the shadows, life in which there is no appetite, in which fingers have nothing to touch, palates have nothing to taste, noses have nothing to smell.

Now, instead of books and art, we will draw up reciprocal loans, like Marceliano. I'll sell my property at one quarter interest, to be paid a year in advance. Am I a bastard? No; that's what I was before; that's what Manjarres was.

And as to honesty. A relative of my wife's who lived many years and who was called Macario, never could find the precise boundary between swindling and business. When he died, he was still in doubt as to which of the two he had carried on in his store all those years. The Jesuits and the Christian Brothers change their text books annually, so that they can make money in their publishing. Are they businessmen or thieves? It's all the same, call it what you will. On Adam and Eve's earth, there is only causality, cold, inexorable.

If there is only cold causality, then we ought to carry in our pockets a notebook in which we note down how we ought to act on given occasions. To what end are we intelligent animals: So that each of our acts might be purposeful. Naturalness pertains to animals. Intelligence pertains to humans. The naturalist school of thought, when applied to education, wipes out good manners and rules for conduct, sinking man again into primitive animality.

Saying just what he thought and felt was the atrocious practice of Manjarres. This leads to nudism and such things.

Saying what you ought to say, hiding your prejudices is the norm, the norm that killed Manjarres.

Give me my bust in cash!

But how hard it is to turn into a Don Sharper, a sycophant. I just came from the airport where we went to meet our candidate. The party heads were drunk, and looked suspiciously at me as if to say, "What's Manjarres doing here?" It seems that I drag the schoolteacher's corpse about with me; it won't leave me alone. I spit on it!

The party chiefs sweated to push themselves near the candidate so he would see them. He didn't see me; Manjarres' cadaver paralyzed me in a corner. I made an effort and bought a campaign button with my candidate's picture on it. "Aren't you ashamed, sporting this on your lapel like a lackey?" sneered the cadaver, and I couldn't carry it through.

I am a tangle of uncertainty. I ask myself, "Will I who killed the schoolteacher be now condemned to be the corpse of the great man? Can I never escape my interior demon?"

I heard of a clerk on the Tribunal whose wife was barren fifteen years. He ingratiated himself with the great; they raised his salary and a year later his wife gave birth.

Thus it was that when a barren woman came from Bogota to pray to the Fallen Christ at Candelaria and to drink the waters of Ayura, which they say are miraculous, the scribe told her, "Never mind the waters; and your prayer, make it to the Standing Christ."

All these things that are called miraculous proceed from vital energy; and vital energy is adaptability, health, money, and power. Vitamins, unlike the insipid food of the dead, cost money. The powerful have the money. The powerful protect those who adapt themselves. Thus, Manjarres must die!

They say that the "geniuses" like Manjarres look toward a future reality. . . .

Whether they announce it or not, it will come; and when it comes we will be with it. Geniuses are those who won't eat the dinner that's on the table because they smell a better one cooking in the kitchen; and when the next one is served, they won't touch it either, because they smell still another. Geniuses; Fallen Christs, chaste, abstemious codfish.

So I conclude with the announcement that the schoolteacher of Envigado is definitely dead. Whatever is done by the

Colombian people will be done by the Don Sharper that I am now. Everything that Don Bernardo of the Tobacco Co. of Colombia can do, I can do better; any act, however atrocious — except perhaps one, which I won't say for fear such an admission will damage my career; it's time to set out on the wide path. . . .

I take it back. I will do it. The voices from the tomb grow fainter. Why shouldn't I do it? I come from a region where people sell everything. Why shouldn't I do it?

Requiescat in pace. Now, in truth, I am dead.