



Raimond Chaves

El Toque Criollo (The Criollo Touch)

“EL TOQUE Criollo” is a short story about Latin America and the Caribbean constructed from the covers of old phonograph records discovered in flea markets.

The terms *criollo* in Spanish, *creole* in English, *créole* in French and *crioulo* in Portuguese have an approximately shared meaning based on ideas of ethnicity. But beyond that, what gets described as *criollo* in Spanish America exhibits shades of meaning depending on the countries and contexts where the word is used.

Here “El Toque Criollo” is the autochthonous touch or the mixed-race (*mestizo*) touch. The rather mischievous mood of these images, that look at two sides of the same matter, are memory and its projection into the future. On a continent that is in a constant state of ferment, where it would seem that there are bigger priorities than remembering the past, I like dusting off those old discs to find what ought to be said, right on their covers. To speak of what happened and recount what’s happening.

This is an arbitrary and capricious narrative. Yet I hope it is still an open one and that the images I’ll present retain their power to evoke and suggest.

It seems important to highlight that there is something arbitrary here for a couple of reasons. This story I’ve allowed myself to read Latin America through is also constructed from an ambiguous and mobile space. It is the position of a Colombian/Catalonian artist who must

explain where he comes from, time and again, who needs to explain what he's confronting, what he doesn't understand and what fascinates him every time he looks around. And no matter how much I may be inside it, my reading is made more from without, with inevitable passes by certain stereotypes, simplifications and the tyranny one engages in when trying to "explain" things.

I lot of the arguments I'm putting out there are tinted with a "Barcelona" outlook (so as to localize it somehow) and I think it's always a good idea recognize what lenses we use to see things.

I should add the irreverence of many of the album covers I used allows me to posit a conversation that avoids consensus, so that in these times of (often enough self-imposed) unanimity, more and more versions of what we agree to call History can be proposed.

But let's return to the images that have brought me here. Powerful images to which I've succumbed, that demand explanation, a response to the questions they bring up, or how they were constructed, where and why they were bought, the music they contain, etc... They are images that speak unwittingly yet wittingly of the very context where they were born—and hide. They distort as much as they expose and suggest.



Welcome to the Hits, Discos Chaves, Colombia, 1973

To conclude I'll tell you that these records are the remains of what were once local culture industries with quite a bit of power and an autonomous ability to elaborate images. They were vehement, daring, disconcerting, ambiguous, capricious and ironic images, that I now find are lacking.

If you compare these covers with their current equivalents, the cheap photocopies that come with pirated CDs sold in Latin America's streets, you can really understand the impact globalization and neo-liberal policy have had on our continent.

Here come the hits!

Les habla Kako (Kako Speaks)

Ejem (someone clearing his throat)

This is Kako speaking to you all, in the name of "Lo Alegre All Star" (sic)

—*No: the plural los*

—Spaking to you... (sic)

—*Kako speaking to all of you*

This is Kako speaking to all of you in the name of the "Lo Alegres All, All Star" ... (sic), this is Kako speaking to all of you in the name of the "Los Alegre All Star" ... (sic)

—*"All Stars"*

One more time..., this is Kako speaking to all of you out there in the name of the "Los Alegre All...All", this is Kako speaking to you in the name of the "Las Estrellas Alegre"...

(laughter)

Introduction to "Sono Sono". Kako and the Alegre All Stars.

New York (1960s)

Discos Chaves

To begin with, the best thing to do would be to go back to the beginning and talk about my uncle from America.

Ramiro, my father's brother, a person from a humble background who moved up in the world—became, in time, a sort of local hero—and had a record company: Discos Chaves, dedicated to the promotion of Andean music and located in Pasto, part of Colombia's southern Nariño province.

Nevertheless, he sometimes dipped into other styles and themes, and released the most widely varied compilations: some of these were commissions, others were commemorative records, self-help manuals,

and recordings by local poets, which he used to vindicate his father, my grandfather, with the idea of dignifying that man's somewhat irregular poetry. Other times he did records by Fray Anselmo, the Italian friar who fancied himself a pop singer.

In Pasto, my uncle also had a store that was open to the public where he sold musical instruments in addition to records and cassette tapes. The Discos Chaves brand covered all of Ecuador and the south of Colombia and got as far as Cali, a city where certain sisters of his, Aunt Blanca and Aunt Aura, sold records in a family store.

This is my cousin María Eugenia... In that first period it wasn't she, but her brothers, the brothers' girlfriends and other family members who made up the record company's image. Each Christmas my uncle would send a package with the latest new records as well as some impossibly colored jackets that no one wanted to wear, and *chocolate de maní* sweets, all of which were completely hard to come by in Barcelona.

This is a special record for a number of reasons, since my uncle had his international adventure years before anyone spoke of globalization. Emerald Records was the subsidiary my uncle started in Spain; a great minor milestone in the history, on its own scale, of a business that



Vacation in Spain, Emerald Records, Colombia, 1974

pioneered the trans-nationalization of multimedia corporations. It was something worth praising once, in the mid-70s, when it wasn't about money-laundering, there was no internet and nobody was talking about world music.

The adventure didn't turn out well because the Barcelonan S.O.B. my uncle took on as a partner swindled him at every turn. But before going under he managed to put out several titles with a mix of musical genres that was thirty years ahead of the fashion for everything *mestizo* and Latin crossover. The record features a still-fashionable mix of *rumba catalana*, Flamenco, *pasodoble* and even *sardona* tracks, among others. It's also an important record because I never stop being delighted by the fact that someone's mother—in this case mine—appears on the jacket in the Plaza de Cataluña.

With the passing of years, things changed, and they began to replace the more innocent portraits of some cousin's girlfriend with images of comely, scantily clad *señoritas*. And if those *señoritas* had been cousins I'd not have complained.

My uncle was strict and debonair; his ambitions were as modest as they were decent. They were qualities that Spanish multinationals can no longer boast of having, as they are largely dedicated to despoiling Latin America in these globalized times. I can't stop comparing them to him.

Oh! And before I forget—half the people in this image are my cousins.

The following record covers aren't by my uncle, but they evince similar standards and in spite of their age they tell very current stories.

Todos Vuelven

*Todos vuelven a la tierra en que nacieron,
al embrujo incomparable de su sol,
todos vuelven al rincón donde vivieron,
donde acaso floreció más de un amor.*

*Bajo el árbol solitario del pasado
cuántas veces nos ponemos a soñar,
todos vuelven por la ruta del recuerdo,
pero el tiempo del amor no vuelve más.*

*El aire que trae en sus manos
la flor del pasado, su aroma de ayer,*

Everyone Returns

*Everyone returns to the land where they were born
To the incomparable enchantment of its sun
Everyone returns to the corner where they lived,
Where hardly more than one love ever flourished.*

*Underneath the lonely tree of the past
How many times do we begin to dream,
Everyone comes back along memory's road,
But the time of love never returns.*

*The air that it has in its hands
The flower of the past, with its scent of yesterday*

*nos dice muy quedo al oído
su canto aprendido del atardecer.*

*Nos dice con voz misteriosa,
de nardo y de rosa,
de luna y de miel,
que es grande el amor de la tierra,
que es triste la ausencia.*

*Sings the sunset song it learned
Quietly into our ears.*

*Its sings it with a mysterious voice,
Of tuberose and rose,
Of moon and honey,
How grand the earth's love
How sad its absence.*

Peruvian waltz, 1941. Words and music by César Miró. Lima, Peru (1907-1999). Performed by Maravilloso Dueto Las Dos Colombia, 1970's

Soy Campesino... (I'm a Country Boy...)

That's what Amado Rodríguez, the sentimental voice of the Peruvian Ancash province tells us, on a record found at the Lima flea market.

What Amado doesn't tell us, but time—that never tires of telling stories—does, is that, once more, lots of people from the country are no longer people from the country. This is thanks to efforts on the part of governments to facilitate the large-scale production of African palms in



Terrorismo Rumbero, Los Tupamaros, Colombia, 1977

Colombia and Peru, or soybeans in Brazil, two crops that turn people who work the land into slaves.

Lots of peasants have given up being peasants thanks to agricultural imports and agricultural subsidies on the part of richer nations. And the imposition of genetically modified crops. Thanks to demand for cocaine and freebase. Thanks to ranchers, paramilitaries, the army, the state and guerrilla warfare in the case of Colombia.

Thanks to the timber companies and the oil companies, the multinationals and the free trade agreements and everybody so eager to bring them about.

And they're also giving up being peasants because of their own desire to move through the world freely.

As we say around here: I'm not [what you think I am] any more, not because I went away, but because I stopped being it.

Chilean president Salvador Allende said:

"People who fight for their emancipation must logically adapt the tactics and strategies that will lead to transformations of their own realities. The people, because of their characteristics, their history, have moved forward selflessly, making conquests; they have grown aware and understood that it is neither within capitalist regimes nor reformist regimes that they can become a nation that is master of its economic independence and be capable of life and existence on a higher level."

Interview with Salvador Allende, 1971. From an LP released in commemoration of Fidel Castro's visit to Chile the same year.

No se por qué será...

...que las mujeres le tienen tanto amor a los choferes.

No se por qué será que las mujeres le tienen tanto amor a los choferes.

No se por qué será que las mujeres le tienen tanto amor a los choferes.

I Don't Know Why It Has to Be...

...that women love drivers so much.

I don't know why it has to be that women love drivers so much.

I don't know why it has to be that women love drivers so much.

La Mujer y la Gasolina. Los Molineros. Colombia, 1970's

¡Qué Mosquern! (What a Mosquern!)

This is an image that cannot be understood because of the text that appears on it. It makes me realize the same thing happens with every other image: there's always something in them that's beyond our comprehension. In fact, this Puerto Rican dust jacket isn't even understood by a lot of Puerto Rico natives (*boricuas*) that I've spoken to on several different trips to the island. No one remembers what this expression, now no longer used, ever meant.

Iris Chacón, Puerto Rico's most famous star, singer and derriere, upbraids a lack of manliness in her partner and he responds to her saying something we can't understand: *¡qué Mosquern!*

Both not knowing and the inconsistencies present in these images let us talk about the two-edged sword that characterizes stereotypes as applied in Latin America, as well as gender relations that are produced there, which puts images and stereotypes, as well as their uses, reutilization and the responses that are made to them, into play: it's a loop of meaning within which the macho and the exuberant and powerful star—the fecund *mamacita* and the Latin Lover, and probably many other figures besides—dance.

As an artist friend who had just finished a decorative mural in a Bogotá disco told me, one time a workman had come up to him and said, in praise of the his work: “Very elegant. Very drag queen.”

Tiros Bailables (Danceable Hits)

“¡Qué Rico!” (“How Delicious!”)

Caracoles de Colores. Los Molineros. Colombia, 1970's

Encerrona Criolla (Encerrona Criolla Party)

On the other hand, this is a story like every other rhumba gone wrong; time sees to it that things get more and more tragic. In this case it's drugs and this Fania All Stars record is the perfect introduction to talking about it.

This record is an homage to Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, also known as *El Mejicano*, who was Pablo Escobar's right-hand man. It's not a “prohibited *corridos*” or “*norteño corridos*” record. Instead, when Gacha was gunned down by the police at the end of the 80s, someone, probably a family member, hired an orchestra and a composer who put together a sort of homage and took on laying down these tracks. Pacho, the town

he was originally from, is in the Cundinamarca province, right next to Bogotá.

“El Mano a Mano” (“The Main Event”)... Here we see our old acquaintances the Mafiosi. *Narcos, traquetos, los mágicos*... Sometimes they’re squared off, as is seen in this image, and as we’re used to seeing in gangster films. What is not seen in the image, and what they’re trying to hide, is the new political/social order that’s been brewing in recent years throughout most of the country—I’m talking about Colombia—due to an alliance between extreme-right paramilitaries, drug traffickers and politicians. This alliance is the real Mano a Mano of the year—so watch out, Mexico.

“Siempre Soñé” (“I Always Dreamt”)... What Margarita María, who was Miss Colombia in 1968, never dreamt was that beauty pageants, and even the world of beauty in general, would come to be what they are today: yet another emblematic bastion of the mafia lifestyle. Beauty pageants where not only is there money-laundering, with beauty queens and courts purchased by the highest bidder, but where new beauty standards have been imposed based on silicone, scalpels and mafia-style glamour. In a conversation a while back with a Cali cousin of mine, I was told that Margarita María ended up marrying one of the Ochoa Family members—known throughout Cali as drug traffickers. They say that sometimes the biggest curse is having your dreams come true. I’m sure you all remember the case of Laura Zúñiga, also known as the *Reinita*, the flamboyant Miss Sinaloa from 2008, who was recently detained in the company of seven hit-men, armed to the teeth and carrying 53,300 dollars in cash supposedly for a shopping spree in Colombia and Bolivia.

Pedrito Rico lets us talk about narco-architecture. In Cali they’re still talking about the *narcos* and Club Colombia. This was an exclusive club for the Cali elite that at one point barred membership to Mafiosi, who sought to rub elbows with the city’s most esteemed fortunes and names. The *narcos*, snubbed, built a replica of the club, but with better and more luxurious installations, across from the club that had turned them away. We could discuss narco-architecture forever, along with neighborhoods like Cali’s Ingenio, or the real-estate chicaneries and the mix of concrete, money, blow and blood that seem to be necessary if you want to build a city with cache.

In Peru, an *encerrona* is a party to which you invite a *criolla* musical group and in the center of which you put an enormous clay pot filled

to the rim with booze. The custom is that everyone's house keys be tossed into the pot, so no one can leave until all the liquor is consumed. "Encerrona Criolla" reminds me of the *modus operandi* practiced by guerrillas, *narcos*, paramilitaries, banks, arms traffickers, the United States and even our own governments, all working away so this sub-rosa business can continue to warp existence in Latin America. Beyond devising real alternatives to transcend this state of affairs, it would seem we are condemned to live inside that messy punchbowl, but with no end in sight.

Chanchullo...

...bailemos pero chanchullo.

Chanchullo...

gocemos pero chanchullo.

Chanchullo...

...bailemos pero chanchullo.

Chanchullo...

gocemos pero chanchullo.

Chanchullooo..."

Racket...

...Let's dance, but it's a racket

A racket...

Let's enjoy it, but it's a racket...

A racket...

Let's dance, but it's a racket...

A racket...

Let's enjoy it, but it's a racket...

A raaaaaacket..."

Chanchullo. Tito Puente. Performed by the Fania All Stars. New York 1970's

Genuine Products from the Land

Urabá is a region in the north of Colombia, near the Panama border that's known for its enormous banana plantations. Plantations that have been in the news recently because the press discovered that the Chiquita Brands multinational—previously known as the United Fruit Company—had for years been paying a substantial sum to far-right paramilitary groups. It ended up being the cause of a judgment against the company in US courts. I'll point out two things about the decision. One, that even though the company was found guilty it wasn't ordered to compensate the victims of its financial schemes but rather, was merely required to pay a fine that benefitted the US government. Secondly, the leader of the Chiquita defense team is Eric H. Holder, who was an assistant attorney general during the Clinton administration and today, after having been an Obama campaign advisor, has been named Attorney General by the new president.

Getting back to the matter of the plantations, the press also recounted how to this day those same paramilitaries are obliging small

landholders to sell their lands well below market cost, under coercion. More than anything, Urabá is synonymous with killing and massacres. These are common events, beginning at end of the 70s, that expose the unrestrained power conflicts surrounding the banana industry and its production mechanisms.

From time to time, those involved in the conflict—including the state—remind us of the blood that seems to be required for banana growing.

This is getting good...ready to be served, piping hot and freshly made, like some great dish, an incredible image. Long live Peru! Or as they say there: Long live Peru, motherfuckers! No comment...

This is even better: A potato harvest on a record cover. Neither Siniestro Total or the Residents would be capable of putting something like this together. At the same time it moves me with its ingenuous reference to local identity. It so suggested the power of the *multitude* to me, and I deliberately say *multitude* to use a current term: a *multitude* of potato farmers.

What an avalanche!

And well, here we have some old friends. As much from the land as bananas, beans and potatoes. In this case it's Peruvian Soldiers, in charge of producing sufficient quantities of blood for the production of potatoes, along with Shining Path guerrillas, during almost twenty years.

They're Latin American Soldiers, specialists in preserving order and the status quo and that no one rebel or get out of hand. Latin American Soldiers: bad when they fight against the people, and I'm not sure they're not worse when they say they're on the side of the people. National heroes, warlords generals, colonels, founding fathers, the big daddy you can't live without. "Tell me where, tell me how, tell me what for..." Could it be that so much mess and so much flavor make this dose of discipline necessary?

President Uribe says:

"You, my soldiers, my nation's soldiers. It's critical you repeat—that you tell your comrades everywhere: a soldier must be an aggressive soldier with initiative and he must be a transparent soldier. We need these two elements so that along with aggression we achieve security and that along with transparency we gain trust."

Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of Colombia

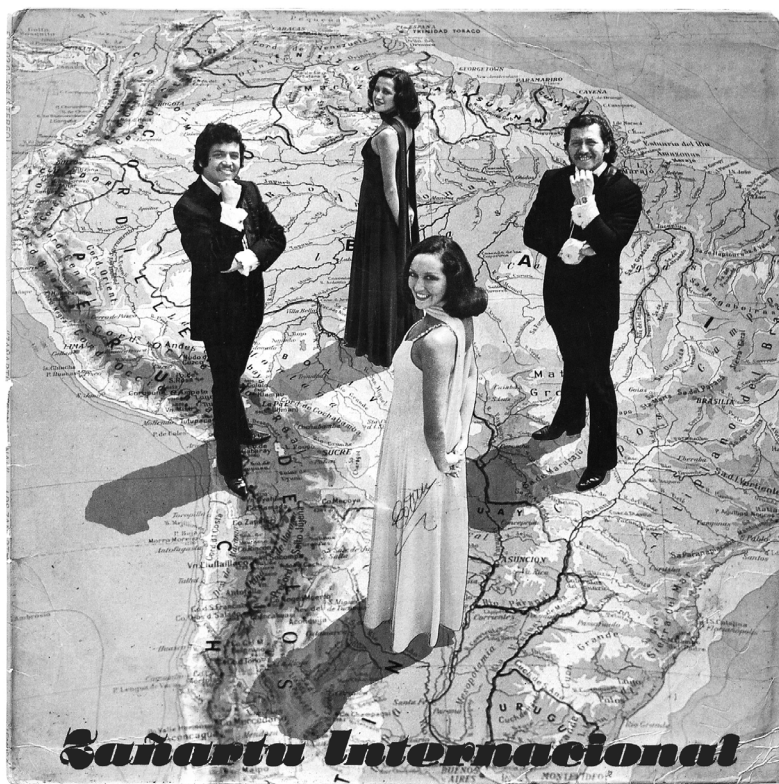
Address to soldiers. 14 September 2006

http://www.presidencia.gov.co/prensa_new/banco/2006/septiembre/voces/voz1484.mp3

Military Fabrications

This record cover, released by an Argentine army famed for its Military Fabrications, is curious, strange and ultimately disturbing. For its part, and for years, the Colombian army engaged in the sinister practice of murdering peasants, women, children and the elderly, only to disguise them and present them as guerrillas killed in combat and therefore mask the army's own self-interested incompetence; and this is one of the many factors that explain war's longevity in Colombia.

In 2002, President Uribe—whom we just heard—came to power and under the aegis of the so-called Colombia Plan favored by the United States. Colombia's military was egged on with incentive policies granting promotions, vacations and other privileges in exchange for combat deaths. This has meant a process of industrialization and sophistication on the part of the “model” Military Fabrication army. Recently it has begun to round up victims with false promises of work in some rural area; then the victims murdered as part of a particular bit of play-acting. So the young urban unemployed, drug addicts and the indigent are added to the usual peasants and presented as those killed in combat. It is a sinister



Zañartu Internacional, Hermanos Zañartu, Perú. 1970's

methodology where in some cases supposed casualties in guerrilla activity are presented, and in others it is boasted that extreme-right paramilitary groups were being fought, when in reality these and the army were competitively rounding up innocents to advance their aims.

Today a suddenly scandalized press speaks of more than 1000 cases of “false positives” in the last six years, “false positives” being the euphemistic name such crimes have been assigned. The government, in spite of having removed some twenty high military commanders from duty, and in spite of the army’s commander-in-chief having tendered his resignation, the government—I repeat—insists upon its tired old story that these are isolated incidents caused by a few bad apples. Unfortunately, the new head of the army has also been implicated in alleged cover-ups, abetting—or at least not doing anything to prevent—false positives, in the same place he spent his military career. Military Fabrications, extra-legal mass execution, more and more death in this war of the poor against the poor.

An anonymous witness testifies:

“Paramilitary actions are committing numerous outrages against the community throughout all the provinces, such as Bajo Patía, and around La Dorada, Putumayo, San Miguel... They break into houses and pull out any girl over thirteen...”

Anonymous witness before the Southwestern Colombia Human Right Commission. 7 July 2006

<http://colombia.indymedia.org/news/2006/07/45887.php>

Musical Invasion:

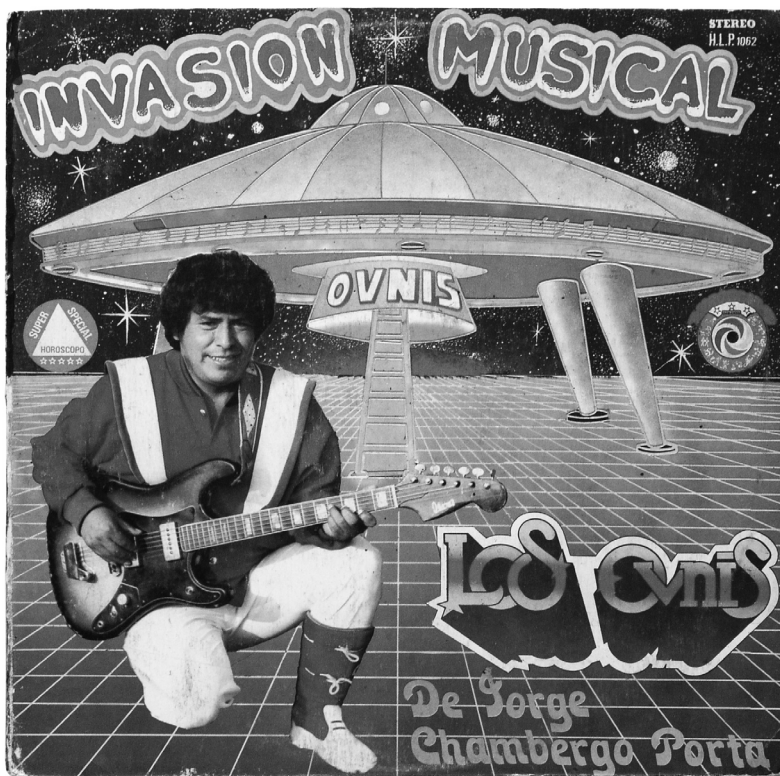
Country-to-city migration is common in every Latin American nation. The almost always traumatic process, beginning in the 1940s and reaching one of its highest points in the 1980s, changes cities socially, physically and culturally.

In the case of Peru this process has been consolidated in a quite peculiar way, especially as regards *Chicha* music. *Chicha* is also known as Andean *cumbia tropical*. The term quite clearly illustrates the migratory movements that have fomented it and also describes the cultural agglutination process that migrants undertake as they cross the Andes from the

jungles toward the coasts. More than a rereading of Colombian *cumbia tropical* from the 60s, filtered through the Andes, *Chicha* is enriched by Andean music and genres like *huaino*, to which it adds a rereading of *chicano* rock and psychedelic music.

The role played by the Inca in Peru's national symbolic imaginary is highly significant. As such, he was noble, just, handsome, six feet tall, aggressive and industrious. His system of governance is associated with a near-perfect socialism. The Inca—currently evoked in such prosaic items as the Inkacola soft drink—lends meaning in time to a national identity, even if it is an improbable one in the opinion of many.

In contrast, the Inca's descendant—the migrant who comes to Lima—represents everything that the mythical ancestor is *not* to the citizens who take him in: the new arrival is a *cholo*, a hillbilly, or in the 80s, a terrorist. Additionally he's short, ugly, dark, lazy and a thief—someone who merits no trust, much less respect. These migrants, nonetheless, start up processes of local modernity that create social fabric, modest progresses, and symbolic/cultural affirmations—something that theoretically more prosperous classes and groups ought to have done.



Musical Invasion, Los Ovnis, Perú, 1980's

It's fascinating that someone labeled this way could present himself, perhaps unwittingly, not as an Other, but rather as the "indigenous alien" who is also aware that his culture is more than just a musical invasion.

Governing the Poor Is a Pleasure

The poor, frankly, don't make much of a fuss. That's why for the longest time they were forgotten. Often, politicians ignore them because they aren't out in the streets setting up protest camps or protesting against the government. Often the poor want little more than bread, whereas every time a rich man comes near you, he's looking for another billion. That's why it's so pleasant to be a politician for the poor.

The poor don't have the money to come to Brasilia and protest, much less to rent buses. Mostly the poor don't belong to political parties, they don't go to college, and they don't even join unions. They just go to church to pray and ask for God's help. Being a politician for the poor is a very pleasant thing indeed.

Remarks by Brazilian president Inácio Lula da Silva at a speech in Contagem, Minas Gerais, in June of 2006.

Disputed Nature

Vitold de Szyszlo, the father of Peruvian painter Fernando de Szyszlo, was a traveler and scholar stationed in Lima where he ended up being the Polish consul in Peru. In the 40s and 50s Vitold traveled the Peruvian jungles, always formally dressed in a wool jacket, just as he appears in photographs. He also published several books and pamphlets about his visits there and to other places.

The narrative of his journeys is compelling. De Szyszlo went along the bends of rivers and as he ascended or descended along them he made reference, one by one, to every kind of tree, plant, bird, insect or four-legged creature he might come upon. It was landscape as inventory, path-finding as an enumeration. These are narratives full of faith and optimism with regard to the future, wherein a vision of the forest, in the here and now, is merged with a vision of plantations and every other expression of future agricultural development. Superhighways as well. These are ways of seeing the jungle as a list and ultimately as a tamed and cultivated parcel of land, and undeniably today's way of seeing. An example is when he refers—and I quote—to an "*Amazon...opened on all four sides.*"

This is that same jungle, though this time it's in Colombia, several decades later.

After six years as a captive in the hands of the FARC, Ingrid Betancourt—kidnapped along with Clara Rojas—was freed as part of the much-celebrated “Operation Jaque.” It was twenty-first century technology applied to a problem whose origins go back to at least to the nineteenth century. Is it really possible to confront a problem like something out of the early twentieth-century novel *La Vorágine* using *Mission Impossible*-style equipment? Can Tom Cruise “read” *Vorágine* author José Eustasio Rivera?

Behind the media buzz caused by her liberation, there's a detail that has been relegated to a second plane. The participation of the United States—interested in freeing three CIA agents that were kidnapped along with the Colombian politician—took the form of, among others, locating microphones and video cameras in the jungle, with the idea of catching a glimpse of the hostages.

It's well known that the implementation of technological advances and their full range of applications is a process that cannot be reversed. I'm quite afraid that all that zeal and dedication will not go to waste.

América está dormida (America Is Sleeping)

...but not for long—the winds that bring liberty are starting to blow.

Ya Empieza... Los Amerindios. Chile, 1971

Tropical Terrorist Attack

During the 70s and 80s in Colombia there were companies with an eye on Christmas that would buy the rights to 12 or 14 songs and then commission an LP that they'd give to employees, clients and friends during the holiday season.

In Colombia, in addition to hardware stores, banks, insurance and real-estate companies, petroleum or petroleum-related companies would also put out these sorts of records.

There's petroleum in Colombia. This has transformed regions like Arauca, along the Venezuelan border, into prized booty for the oil companies—not just local ones, but also those from England, the States and Spain. Thanks to the government's fine auspices and cooperative agreements, these companies often not only make money from the petroleum

they extract and sell in other markets, but they are also indemnified by the Colombian government thanks to contractual riders that anticipate every market variable.

According to the press, and the newspaper *El Espectador*—to which I recently referred—we shouldn't be surprised that the greatest number of US military advisors in Colombia can be found in Arauca. Given the US's textbook imperial history, it's clear that, more than just the nation's fate, what's truly at stake here is the control of certain resources that are vital to the United States. In spite of having no sympathy for the US's local enemies—what I call “post-leftist guerrilla trusts”—it wouldn't be a bad idea to remember that we all pay for the damage occasioned by this kind of neo-colonial situation.

Here we some guerrillas dynamiting pipelines and other installations in Colombia a few years ago, which once again exposes the uncontrolled power conflicts that surround petroleum and its mechanisms of production.

In or out of Colombia, I don't know which is worse, the sickness or the cure.

Hombro con Hombro (Shoulder to Shoulder)...

... Hand in hand

Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand

Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand

Hombro con Hombro. Los Amerindios. Chile, 1971

Fogoso Impacto (Fiery Impact)

This record called out to me because the place depicted on the cover is just next to the house where I live in Lima. But I quickly realized that this cover belongs to that group of unintentional artworks that are—and in reality, this is—a synthetic and very low-budget version of Marcel Duchamp's artwork entitled *The Large Glass* that is also known as *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even...* I'm not a Duchamp expert but I'll risk pointing out certain similarities based on a reading Octavio Paz made of the object.

The similarities that we find between the protagonists are quite notable: uniformed bachelors like those seen in the *Large Glass*, nine in the case of Duchamp, eight on this dust jacket. We also find similarities among numerous other elements. Artifacts that are present for no

apparent reason. Phallic fire extinguishers, a chocolate grinder, in this case taking the form of a fire truck. The same tension between fire/desire and fireman/control.

Perhaps the absence of the bride is not merely illusory: She's somewhere outside the scene, but not very far from it, since she's been present in the other covers, and everything takes place in the same desolate place Duchamp called the The Cemetery of Liveries and Uniforms, also known as the Eros Matrix. What is this Chorrillos riverbed (this part of Lima is called Chorrillos) if not a kind of dry, arid matrix? Let's not forget that the bride is present in her absence.

That the land is arid and dry should not deceive us, because what land does do in Peru is shake, and boy, does it. So I can't help smiling each time I pronounce the name of this ancient town that's since been absorbed into greater Lima. The heroic village of Chorrillos. Heroic because it succumbed, supposedly, with honor when attacked by Chilean troops in the nineteenth century, and Chorrillos because of the streams of water (*chorritos*) that fall from its cliffs to the Pacific Ocean.

I can't stop smiling because during passionate combats, our manly members end up being mere mini-extinguishers capable only of ejaculating little discrete squirts that don't do much to put out the bride's fires. They're little splashes that end up being Drip Sculptures. Little *chorrillo* squirts.

There are too many similarities. So many I can't stop praising the poetic arbitrariness present in the two works. Even the same crack unites them, although in this case it looks like a circular abrasion. Though as I think on it, maybe it's better that it's an abrasion, since an abrasion, say in the case of a match, lets someone set fire to something again, and a crack can't do that.

Finally I'll say that maybe this version goes even a little beyond the original, since it also enjoys the status of being mechanically reproduced. *Chapeau!*

Es interesante que sea América Latina... (It's Interesting That It's Latin America)

"It's interesting that it's Latin America that's produced the phenomenon that is grabbing the world's attention right now. And this is the moment; this is the opportunity to have everyone nearby, face-to-face in open dialogue with regard to ideas that interest all humanity."

Narrator's voice, 1971.

From an LP released to commemorate Fidel Castro's visit to Chile and his 1971 meeting with Salvador Allende.

Credits

Other instrumental songs used to accompany the images during parts of the presentation where no text was read:

"Poincinana" by Esquivel y su Orquesta, "Lobos al Escape" by Los Orientales, "Ya Ya Ya" by Kassin +2 and "Hace tiempo", a sound collage based on "Cualquier Cosa" by Los Kipus.

Raimond Chaves,
Barcelona, Lima, São Paulo and Mexico City
2004-2009

